

Colloquium

Judgments on relevance in sustainability assessments. Expert judgments, best guess, and gut feeling

Prof. Armin Grunwald, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS), Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)

Abstract

For assessing sustainability impacts of e.g. products, the boundaries of the system under consideration must be determined in advance. This is usually done by applying arguments of relevance: relevant factors are included, factors assumed to be not that relevant may be excluded. This is a familiar approach in sustainability assessments, such as in LCA and related approaches. However, what is an argument of relevance and how can we check their validity? Surprisingly, little attention is paid to these questions in spite of the well-known fact that the choice of system boundaries heavily influences the assessment results and that mistakenly neglecting relevant factors may corrupt the entire assessment study. Therefore, I will address the issue of relevance from an epistemological point of view. What is the meaning of relevance, how and how far can it be made measurable, and how is it used in argumentative reasoning? Thereby, I hope to be able to enlighten this issue a bit.

Literature

- Grunwald, A.: Nachhaltigkeit verstehen: Arbeiten an der Bedeutung nachhaltiger Entwicklung. München: oekom 2016
- Grunwald, A.: Relevanzbeurteilungen in der Nachhaltigkeitsforschung. Von Experteneinschätzungen, Bauchgefühl und Urteilskraft. In: Lüdtke, N., Henkel, A. (eds.): Das Wissen der Nachhaltigkeit: Herausforderungen zwischen Forschung und Beratung. München: oekom 2018: 89–106

Brief Bio

Armin Grunwald studied physics, mathematics and philosophy. He absolved his dissertation in Theoretical Physics and the habilitation in Philosophy. Armin Grunwald is a Full professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Technology at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany. He is director of the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis at KIT (ITAS) and Director of the Office of Technology Assessment at the German *Bundestag*. His professional backgrounds include technology assessment, ethics of philosophy and theory of sustainable development. He is member of several advisory commissions and committees in various fields of the technological advance. More information is available at www.itas.kit.edu/english/staff_grunwald_armin.php.

24 June, 2020, 16:00-17:15 p.m.

Online