

Scenarios for lifestyles in a low-resource society.

Modern industrialized societies live far beyond sustainable levels with regard to their use of natural resources. Whereas there is almost unanimous agreement that environmental and climate protection is a necessity, the question remains, what a future society living on sustainable principles may look like. First of all, resource use and allocation is not just a technical issue but deeply rooted in culture and social practices. Therefore, a conversion towards a society with a lower consumption of natural resources can only be successful if accepted and promoted by the members of this society.

In order to understand what kind of changes people are ready to support, a qualitative social research project was implemented. In a first step, five future scenarios were developed on the basis of already existent trends and tendencies. These scenarios are distinct with respect to the underlying basic values and drivers, leading to diverse narratives which uncover different options for low-resource societies. Then, the five scenarios were discussed with citizens from all age groups, social milieus, and strata. The respondents participated in focus groups and a three-week moderated online community reflecting issues of sustainability, social change and reasons for acceptance or rejection of the single scenarios.

Altogether, the participants rarely doubted the concept of a low-resource society itself. However, they showed – unsurprisingly – different levels of openness towards the individual scenarios and their constitutive elements. Moreover, the reflection of the scenarios pointed at significant desires and yearnings for change, not only motivated by ecological but, even stronger, by social considerations.

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