



*sustainability*



DYNAMIX

# Call for Papers

## Sustainability Journal

### Special Issue on

### **“Policy mixes for resource efficiency – conceptual issues, design and assessment challenges”**

#### **Overview**

Since the 1950s the global consumption of natural resources has skyrocketed, both in magnitude and in the range of resources used. Closely coupled with emissions of greenhouse gases, land consumption, pollution of environmental media, and degradation of ecosystems, as well as with economic development, increasing resource use is a key issue to be addressed in order to keep the planet Earth in a safe and just operating space. This requires thinking about absolute reductions in resource use and associated environmental impacts, and, when put in the context of current re-focusing on economic growth at the European level, absolute decoupling, *i.e.*, maintaining economic development while absolutely reducing resource use and associated environmental impacts.

Changing behavioural, institutional and organisational structures that lock-in unsustainable resource use is, thus, a formidable challenge as existing world views, social practices, infrastructures, as well as power structures, make initiating change difficult. Hence, policy mixes are needed that will target different drivers in a systematic way.

When designing policy mixes for decoupling, the effect of individual instruments on other drivers and on other instruments in a mix should be considered and potential negative effects be mitigated. This requires smart and time-dynamic policy packaging.

This Special Issue aims at investigating the following research questions: What is decoupling and how does it relate to resource efficiency and environmental policy? How can we develop and realize policy mixes for decoupling economic development from resource use and associated environmental impacts? And how can we do this in a systemic way, so that all relevant dimensions and linkages—including across economic and social issues, such as production, consumption, transport, growth and wellbeing—are taken into account?

In addressing these questions, the overarching goals of this Special Issue are: to address the challenges related to more sustainable resource-use, to contribute to the development of successful policy tools and practices for sustainable development and resource efficiency, (particularly through the exploration of socio-economic, scientific, and integrated aspects of sustainable development), and, finally, to inform policy debates and policy-making.

More specifically, this Special Issue aims to:

- Discuss and deepen scientific knowledge on the concept of policy mixes in the context of system analysis methods, including resource efficiency, circular economy, life cycle assessment, and absolute decoupling;
- Contribute further scientific knowledge on the relevance of shifting socio-political paradigms from growth to well-being, but also in terms of production and consumption patterns;
- Highlight (methodological) challenges and options for assessing cumulative effects of policy mixes vs. individual instruments in resource policy;
- Present and analyse practical applications of policy mixes that were designed to achieve (absolute) decoupling by highlighting challenges in the delivery phase and the governance mechanisms, and how to overcome them.
- Present and discuss findings of (*ex-ante* and *ex-post*) assessments of decoupling policy mixes in the light of environmental economics,
- Discuss the need, limitations and options for policy making and governance mechanisms to think in longer-term, time-sequencing integration of policy instruments and related policy objectives.

The Special Issue will draw on findings from the EU and other countries to offer lessons of international relevance for policy mixes for more sustainable resource-use, with findings of interest to policy makers in central and local government and NGOs, decision makers in business, academics, researchers, and scientists.

### **About the scope of the special issues:**

The special issue invites submissions covering the following topics:

- Conceptual foundations of policy mixes in the context of resource efficiency and sustainable development (e.g., what is distinctive of a policy mix and how to design effective policy packages?)
- Examples of successful applications of policy mixes on resource efficiency and decoupling: Exploration of practical implications and effects (e.g.: burden shifts, rebound effects), as well as new types of interactions occurring between the environmental, social and economic dimension.
- Conceptual foundations of absolute decoupling and paradigm shifts in the context of natural resource use and environmental management (e.g., in terms of shifting from growth to well-being as the dimension to decouple resource use and environmental impacts from)

- Methodological challenges and options for assessing policy mixes' effects vs. those of individual instruments
- Qualitative, quantitative or combined *ex-ante* or *ex-post* assessments of decoupling policy mixes in relation to environmental, economic and/or social impacts (e.g., modelling results of econometric, economic, system dynamic and environmental model simulations; qualitative impact assessments; impacts on decoupling objectives, on the labour market; distributive impacts);
- Analyses of policy frameworks, limitations and potential changes needed to enable wider application of policy mix thinking.

## Contributions

The decision on full paper contributions for the special issue is done in a two-step process.

- 1) Authors are invited to submit an Abstract of up to 500 words to the editors by September 25, 2015.
- 2) On the basis of this abstract, the co-editors will invite a number of authors to submit articles (full papers) which, after completion by January 15, 2016, will undergo a double-blind peer-review process.

## Timeline

Contributors with proposals for articles are encouraged to communicate with the editors by e-mail. The following schedule will be used to guide the project:

- Call for papers issued: July 9, 2015
- Submission of abstracts (maximum 500 words), new deadline: September 25, 2015
- Response to authors on abstracts: October 18, 2015
- Submission of invited articles (full drafts): January 15, 2016
- Provision of peer-review feedback: February 26, 2016
- Submission of revised drafts: March 30, 2016
- Final Decision and handing over final paper to journal: April 30, 2016
- Publication: during 2016

## About the context of the Special Issue:

Starting in September 2012, the FP7-funded project “DYNAMIX: Dynamic Policy Mixes for absolute decoupling of environmental impact of EU resource use from economic growth” has been developing promising policy mixes for absolute decoupling based on in-depth *ex-post* analysis of drivers for inefficiency and of successful and failing policies. Policy mixes have been developed for the areas of land and metals as well as for an overarching, more transformative dimension. They are being assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively against their environmental, economic and social impacts as well as for their legal and socio-political feasibility. The DYNAMIX project is coordinated by Ecologic Institute (Germany) and involves consortium partners from eight European countries. The five guest editors (their personal homepages are hyperlinked above) are consortium partners of the DYNAMIX project. Project homepage: <http://dynamix-project.eu/>. The project will be finished in early 2016.

### **Other Information**

Articles should be no longer than 10,000 words in length, including references and any footnotes. Illustrations, photographs and/or figures that enhance the text are welcome. Additional technical and style requirements will be conveyed in accordance with the above schedule.

More information on “Instructions for Authors” can be found at the homepage of the Sustainability Journal at [www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/instructions](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/instructions).

The call for papers can be found at the web address:

[http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special\\_issues/resource-efficiency2015](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special_issues/resource-efficiency2015)

**Abstracts should be sent to:**

**Please send your abstracts until 25 September 2015 to:**

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