

Publication

A formal framework for theories of sustainability

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In the sustainability discourse we find much disagreement about the idea of sustainability resulting in an unsatisfactory situation that is different, or even contradictory, policies are provided as contributions to sustainable development. In the sustainability sciences we are facing an analogous situation since we do not have clear criteria to decide whether a research project contributes to these sciences or not (1). Examining various strategies to solve the challenge of arbitrariness we argue to adopt a meta-perspective (2). In the central part of this paper, we thus describe a formal framework for theories of sustainability consisting of fundamental and practical modules (3). Subsequently, we visualise the framework's functionality by the discussion of a management rule (4). We conclude that the framework strengthens sustainability sciences and its self-conception insofar as the proposed framework provides an instrument to decide if a research project can be counted among these sciences, and that it may provide a helpful basis to solve the policy problem (5).

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