

## EVENT

Dinner Dialogue  
International Development  
Global Environment

# The Ecological Footprint: How should we define prosperity in a world of scarce resources?



On 15 September 2010, an Ecologic Institute Dinner Dialogue took place in Berlin on the topic of the „Ecological Footprint“. The guest of honor was Mathis Wackernagel, president of the Global Footprint Network. At the center of the discussion was the thesis that wealth and prosperity must be redefined in a world characterized by resource scarcity and that, in this context, biocapacity could become an appropriate unit of measurement.

The evening’s discussion was devoted to the insufficiency of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measuring unit for the well-being of an economy. Mathis Wackernagel argued that biocapacity, i.e. nature’s ability to produce raw materials and break down pollutants, could be an appropriate measuring stick, especially on the global level, to divide nations into so-called ecological “borrowers” and “lenders.” In so doing, an indicator would be provided that enabled economies to analyze and compare themselves with one another from the viewpoint of sustainability.

A central focus of the discussion was the question of how information from such analyses could be made useful for political decision making. It was observed that the political will to implement such information into concrete actions is often lacking.

To counteract this lack of political will, one could make clear that the ecological footprint is not directed toward economic growth and does not preach consumer reluctance. Rather, as Mathis Wackernagel clarified, it would be left to each nation to decide to

what extent it wants to consume its resources. Hereby, the ecological footprint could be used to demonstrate the consequences of this process as well as highlight the insufficiency of the GDP as a measuring unit for wealth and prosperity.

#### Further Links:

- [Mathis Wackernagel](#) [1]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Beyond GDP - Measuring progress, true wealth, and the well-being of nations](#) [2]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Integrating Mainstream Economic Indicators with Sustainable Development Objectives \(IN-STREAM\)](#) [3]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [One Planet Economy Network \(OPEN: EU\)](#) [4]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Ecological Footprint](#) [5]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Potential of the Ecological Footprint for monitoring environmental impact from natural resource use](#) [6]
- Ecologic Institute Project: [Arctic Footprint and Policy Assessment](#) [7]

15 September 2010  
Berlin  
Mathis Wackernagel

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#### Speaker

Mathis Wackernagel

#### Date

15 September 2010

#### Location

Berlin, Germany

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#### Links

[1] [https://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/our\\_team/](https://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/our_team/)

[2] <https://ecologic.eu/2506>

[3] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2510>

[4] <https://www.ecologic.eu/3380>

[5] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1997>

[6] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2367>

[7] <https://www.ecologic.eu/3382>