



Summary of Rebound Book by Tilman Santarius.

Increasing energy efficiency – by way of LED light bulbs, electric cars, house insulation etc. – can deliver a key contribution to environmental sustainability. But what kind of ‘undesired side effects’ do such technical solutions for sustainability bring about?

At the center of Tilman Santarius’ work lies the question: To what extent do energy efficiency improvements cause so-called rebound effects, which increase demand? His comprehensive analysis explains why relative energy savings are often countervailed, or sometimes cancelled out, by an absolute increase in energy service demand. Santarius opens up new horizons, because he shifts the research frontier from economics into other scientific disciplines and, hence, for

the first time presents an interdisciplinary exploration of the rebound phenomenon. To start with, he critically presents and reflects the current state of rebound economics and describes how efficiency improvements reduce prices and alters markets. As a result, increasing energy demand makes sense economically. Then, he deploys psychological theories to investigate how efficiency improvements change consumer preferences. In effect, individuals may actually want and wish to raise their demand. And finally, he draws on sociological theories to manifest how technical efficiency improvements accelerate production, consumption and the speed of life. Yet social acceleration depends on increased energy consumption.

Under such conditions, a sufficient absolute decoupling of energy service demand from economic growth cannot be realized. Technological use, economic action, and personal motivation need to be re-embedded into broader societal goals. Santarius concludes that only a development towards post-technicism, post-capitalism, and post-liberalism would pave the way for a socio-ecological transition of society.