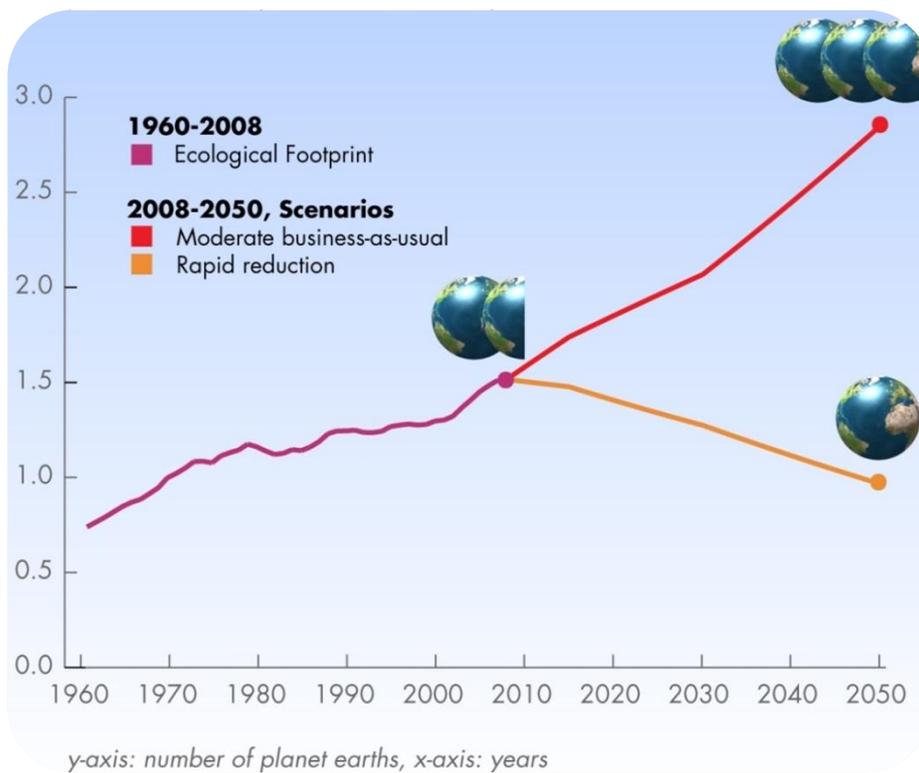


## Do you dare to be aware?

Figure 1: Resource consumption



Source: [http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world\\_footprint/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint/)

In 2010, 70 billion tonnes of natural resources (biomass, fossil fuels, ores, minerals and water) have been used up by humanity. Being 7 times more than in 1950, it represents more or less the consumption of one and a half planets earth (25/30 tonnes per capita and par annum)<sup>1</sup>. Due to the extensive usage of resources and their dangerous impacts on the environment, this mass production and consumption led to climate change, reduced food security, water scarcity and air pollution.<sup>2</sup>

If we continue with this 'business-as-usual' scenario (increasing world population and prosperity) for the next 35 years, we will soon need almost 3 planets to fulfil our needs<sup>3</sup>.

Mass production/consumption and its impacts

<sup>1</sup> UNEP, *Sustainable Consumption and Production, A Handbook for Policymakers*, 2015, p12

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p12

<sup>3</sup> Footprint Network, [http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world\\_footprint/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint/)

## Why do we consume so much?

Normally, the natural resources of our planet should be sufficient for everyone. But, as Gandhi said, “*Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed*”.

According to the UNEP, the problem is that “*Current economic and business incentives are still tailored to the experience of the 20th century; a time of low resource prices that justified investing in labour productivity at the cost of resource productivity*”<sup>4</sup>. The problem with this approach is that it strips away the environmental costs of every product or activity and that it ignores the fact that most of our resources are finite. With this philosophy, products are very often easier and cheaper thrown away and replaced than repaired or recycled.

## What can be done to reach a sustainable consumption and production?

In order to prevent damage caused by overconsumption, as well as to guarantee a decent lifestyle for everyone with our limited resources, it is absolutely necessary to reach a Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

Defined by the UNEP as “*a holistic approach to minimising the negative environmental impacts from consumption and production systems while promoting quality of life for all*”<sup>5</sup>, SCP implies that economic growth and the development of society should always consider environmental degradation, as well as the resource needs of future generations.

Figure 2: What is SCP?



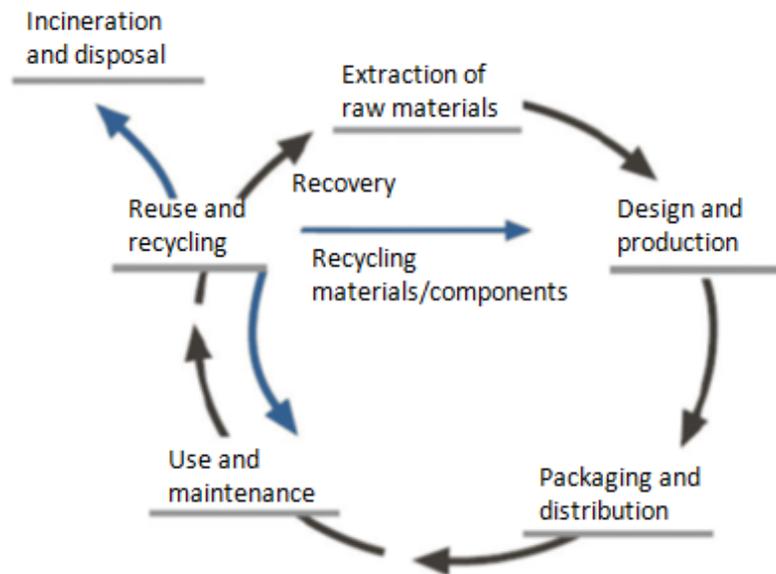
Source:  
<http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Home/WhatisSCP/tabid/105574/Default.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> UNEP, *Sustainable Consumption and Production, A Handbook for Policymakers*, 2015, p12

<sup>5</sup> UNEP, *Paving the way for Sustainable Consumption and Production*, 2011, p.2 :

[http://www.unep.org/10yfp/Portals/50150/downloads/publications/Paving the way/Paving the way Summary Fenglish.pdf](http://www.unep.org/10yfp/Portals/50150/downloads/publications/Paving%20the%20way/Paving%20the%20way%20Summary%20Fenglish.pdf)

We therefore have to reduce our use of material and energy to decrease greenhouse emissions and waste from extraction, production, consumption and disposal. One of the solutions is to develop what is called a functional economy where we only pay for the service that procures a good, but do not own the good itself. We also have to consider the impacts made to the environment through all life-cycle stages of the production and consumption process.



Source: UNEP, Sustainable Consumption and Production, A Handbook for Policy makers, 2015, p37

To summarise, the aim of a SCP is not only to promote a more sustainable development, it is also to allow a broader part of the world population to benefit from the natural resources and to improve their quality of life.

## How to succeed thanks to dematerialisation?

A lot of different solutions exist to tackle waste that is produced due to an unsustainable production/consumption process. Dematerialisation, which stands for using less or no material to deliver the same level of functionality to the user, is one of the key elements to implement a SCP.

For example, we can share or rent our goods between neighbours so we do not need several products to fulfil a common need. For example, if you need to mow your grass, you can rent a mower from your neighbour instead of buying one. Internet will be a really interesting tool to make those share networks easily doable. Our mails, CDs, books, newspapers can also be dematerialised and allow us to save more energy and material for the same service (under the condition that our electronic equipment is eco-designed and not thrown in a landfill of course).

Of course, for those who prefer not to face a screen, solutions also exist. Public libraries for books, newspapers and even CDs can be a good solution to avoid overconsumption of materials. Buying our goods at second-hand markets is also a way to circulate products between those who need a product, and those who do not need this product any longer.

All those different ways to consume are known to constitute a more cost-effective economy. The functional way to consume also allows people to meet more easily and to make the act of buying and selling less commercial and more social. Providing the same services with a reduced amount of energy and materials, they are considered being more sustainable.

**Now, you are aware! So let's start doing more with less!**