

# Rebound Comics

## Understanding the rebound effect with the aid of examples

### Overview

Participants explore the practical ramifications of the rebound effect by discussing comics. Working in teams, they examine a comic and then present their findings to the rest of the group. In this process, the following questions are explored: How are efficiency and rebound related? How can the rebound effect be mitigated?





### Instructions

#### Background

The strategy of reducing resource consumption by increasing efficiency while continuing to enjoy economic growth is known as decoupling. This process is the basis for the assumption by growth advocates that it is possible for economic growth to continue without causing higher levels of resource consumption and environmental damage.

However, in recent years several studies have shown that greater efficiency does not lead to resource savings as anticipated. One of the reasons for this is a phenomenon known as the rebound effect, which counteracts technological developments. Rebound refers to an increase in resource consumption caused – or at least enabled – by increased efficiency. As a result of the rebound effect, a significant portion of the efficiency gains are simply squandered.

This diminishes the ecological benefits of efficiency in the overall balance. Without greater acceptance of sufficiency goals and corresponding lifestyle changes, efficiency goals are difficult to achieve. Further information on the rebound effect can be found in the supplementary materials on the accompanying CD.

	10-25
	30 minutes
	Laptop, projector (if used) Downloadable materials ( <a href="http://www.endlich-wachstum.de">www.endlich-wachstum.de</a> ): Rebound comics, background text
	In preparation for the discussion of rebound effects, the facilitator should ensure that the participants have a clear grasp of the concept of efficiency, and the role played by the strategy of increasing efficiency in sustainability discourse (e.g. using the method “Three strategies towards sustainability”, chapter 2).

#### Preparation

The rebound comics must be printed out or copied.

#### Execution

##### 1. Comic analysis (15 min.)

The participants form small groups of 3 or 4. Each group receives a comic to analyse in regard to the following aspects:

- › Begin by describing what you see in the picture.
- › How do the characters justify their behaviour?
- › What are the effects of their actions on the environment?

## 2. Definition (15 min.)

The small groups then present their comic to the rest of the group. For this step, the comics can be displayed using a projector. The group discusses the meaning of rebound effects and how they operate. A definition of the concept of rebound is formulated and displayed on the board/pinboard. For example, rebound can be defined as follows:

*Rebound describes the paradoxical effect whereby greater environmental impact is observed despite increases in efficiency. The anticipated efficiency gains are squandered by increased consumption or changes in consumption behaviour.*

### Evaluation

Possible questions:

- › Can you think of rebound effects in your own lives?
- › What role is played by rebound effects in our society?
- › What steps could be taken to counteract these effects?

#### Variations

If less time is available, the comics can also be analysed by the entire group together. For this variation, the comics are displayed one after the other using the projector (supplementary materials: presentation) while the participants exchange views on the questions listed above with the person sitting next to them. The key results and a definition are then brainstormed.

#### Tips for facilitators

It is a good idea for facilitators to familiarise themselves with the rebound effect in advance. A suitable introduction is provided by the background text on efficiency and rebound effects (supplementary materials). Additional information can be found e.g. here: <http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/support/ReboundEffect>.

#### Suggestions for follow-up

This method can be followed by a deeper exploration of the topic of decoupling, e.g. using the method “Decoupling – a myth?” (chapter 2, currently only available in German - see [www.endlich-wachstum.de](http://www.endlich-wachstum.de)). Another option is to examine alternative strategies such as consistency and sufficiency (e.g. by means of the method “Three strategies towards sustainability”, chapter 2, or “Exit cards”, chapter 5).