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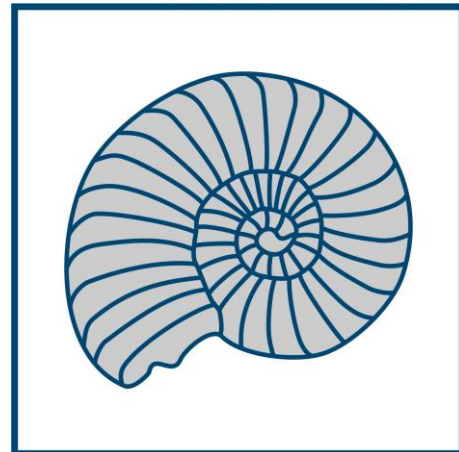
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Warning of Fossils

Sustainability has long since ceased to be a niche issue. Recently, the fund company BlackRock has also discovered the business model "Sustainable Investing" for itself. From now on, decisions for shareholdings will depend, for example, on whether companies use fossil fuels or, even more problematically, have business models that cannot do without them. In addition, there are many other factors for assessing sustainability.

In February we were able to take part in the annual kick-off event of the HWWI¹ in Bremen. On the podium, a panel of experts from research and teaching had gathered to talk about impulses from politics to get our economy going. I would like to mention by name the only woman in this circle, Claudia Kemfert, an expert on energy, transport, and the environment at the German Institute for Economic Research.



Ms. Kemfert noted that there is "fossil capital" on the balance sheets of many companies – technology that requires fossil fuels or meets a large energy requirement. This is particularly true of the automotive industry, but smaller companies are still betting on it. Such business models will be the cause of problems in the coming years. This can be an increasing carbon tax, which severely limits profits. However, this can also be the refusal of customers to buy, who want to live more sustainably and no longer purchase products that are produced in an environmentally harmful manner. This warning can also be applied to other sectors that are damaging the environment.

But there are also opportunities in every risk. We experience this time and again in our projects when we work together with our customers to develop ways to turn risks into opportunities. Most companies have special skills that can also be used for new, contemporary, and sustainable business models. As part of a strategy project, these can be tracked down and used.

Start-ups can also take care not to fall into the CO2 trap at the start-up. Many start directly with digital products and projects. This may not cause visible "dirt", but it costs a lot of energy, for

1 Hamburg World Economic Institute.

example for software, servers, and research. Here, too, environmentally conscious customers could ask the question of which sources the energy comes from.

For companies that work a lot with vehicles, it makes sense to deal with the topic of "hydrogen" in good time. More than electromobility (with battery technology, which is also based on fossil elements), this could become the drive technology of the future. In Bremerhaven, a cluster is developing in which expertise in this field is being built up.

In the coming years, companies and organizations of all industries and size classes will be forced to develop and present a sustainability strategy. Well-informed consumers, consumers and investors will increasingly pay attention to where they buy and invest their money.

Even if there are more and more possibilities and regulations for financial CO2 compensation or even political coercion for levies, it is better to make new or existing business models sustainable as soon as possible.

If you want to keep your nose in the lead and not become a fossil, you are starting now.

Editorial Notes

About the Author

Wiebke Brüssel is a graduate in business administration and managing partner of Strategiebüro Nord (Strategy Office North) in Germany.

We moderate planning processes and take over documentation, from a single question to strategic corporate planning. Our clients are companies and organizations in the private, social, and public sectors, companies at the beginning of their development, and founders.

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