

Green Growth, De-growth and Sustainability

Ph. D. course organized jointly by Oslo University College and Aalborg University

(See the following link: <http://phd.plan.aau.dk/phd-courses/4765213>)

Place:

Oslo University College, Oslo

Time:

October 27-29, 2010

Organizers:

Oslo University College and Aalborg University jointly. Responsible persons: Prof. Petter Næss (Aalborg University) and Prof. Karl Georg Høyer (Oslo University College)

Lecturers:

Professor Joan Martinez-Alier, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Professor Kate Soper, London Metropolitan University
Professor Ove Jacobsen, Bodø University College
Senior Researcher Rolf Golombek, Ragnar Frisch Center for Economic Research, Oslo
Professor Arne Johan Vetlesen, University of Oslo
Associate Professor Finn Arler, Aalborg University
Professor Petter Næss, Aalborg University
Professor Karl Georg Høyer, Oslo University College

ECTS: 5

Requirements:

All participants write and present a paper – approx. 3000 words – which must be submitted electronically no later than October 11, 2010 to urban@hio.no

Deadline for application:

September 27, 2010

Application:

By email to urban@hio.no

Economy: Participation is free of any economical charge. Participants cover their own travel and subsistence costs. Further information at [VisitOslo](http://www.visitoslo.com) : www.visitoslo.com

Description:

Historically, economic growth has been closely tied to increasing consumption levels as well as increasing loads on the environment. During the 1970s, this gave rise to claims that economic growth should come to an end and be replaced with a 'steady-state' economy operating within limits set by the natural environment. Since the mid 1980s, however, this 'limits to growth' position became largely marginalized, replaced by the currently dominant view that a 'de-coupling' of economic growth from negative environmental impacts can and will take place. Such a 'de-coupling' was emphasized by the World Commission on Environment and Development as a key strategy of sustainable development in their report 'Our Common Future (1987). In

line with the parallel discourse on ecological modernization, the World Commission pointed at *eco-efficiency* and *dematerialization* as the ways to make economic growth compatible with environmental sustainability. In the recent few years, the assumptions of the ecological modernization paradigm have been increasingly challenged by critics who from different perspectives argue that the quest for economic growth in affluent countries should be replaced by policies aiming at zero-growth or even *de-growth*.

The Ph.D. course will critically scrutinize the possibility of compensating for continual and long-term economic growth by dematerialization and steadily increasing eco-efficiency. The role of institutional frameworks in facilitating or discouraging dematerialization and increased eco-efficiency will be addressed, as well as any physical/technical limits to the level of de-coupling between growth and environmental impacts. The role of economic growth in supporting human prosperity and well-being will also be discussed, along with various moral arguments for and against economic growth. Moreover, the role of economic growth in a profit-driven economic system and the possibility of a capitalist economy to adapt to a long-term zero-growth situation will be discussed.

The above issues will be addressed in the light of different theoretical perspectives and empirical examples from economics (Martinez-Alier, Jakobsen and Golombek), moral philosophy (Soper, Vetlesen and Arler), urban development/the housing sector (Næss) and mobility and energy systems (Høyer). A strong emphasis will be laid on interdisciplinary discussions across these different sectors and systems, where the consequences of policies within one sector or system to other fields of society and the environment will be addressed. The course will be organized as a combination of lectures and group work. The target groups of the course are Ph.D. students within economics, sociology, environmental management, and planning.

Indicative program:

Wednesday October 27

0930 – 0945

Opening of the course and presentation of participants

0945 – 1015

Karl Georg Høyer: The ecological traces of growth – a historical perspective

1025 – 1055

Petter Næss: The theory of ecological modernization: Eating the cake and having it too?

1105 – 1135

Ove Jakobsen: The concept of de-growth

1135 – 1230

Lunch

1230 – 1500 (including breaks)

Can economic growth be 'decoupled' from environmental degradation? Three perspectives from economics:

- Ove Jakobsen (1230 – 1315)
- Rolf Golombek (1325 – 1410)
- Joan Martinez-Alier (1420 – 1505)

1505 – 1530

Coffee break

1530 – 1700

Discussion: To what extent is decoupling possible?

Thursday October 28:

09.00 – 13.00 Presentations from PhD students, with feedback from the rest of the students and course lecturers

13.00 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 15.55 Presentations from PhD students, with feedback from the rest of the students and course lecturers

16.00 – 17.00 General discussion based on the issues addressed in the PhD students' presentations

Friday October 29:

0900 – 1005

Case studies of growth and prospects for decoupling

- Mobility and transport: Karl Georg Høyer (0900-0930)
- Housing and urban development: Petter Næss (0935-1005)

1015 – 1100

Joan Martinez-Alier: Socially sustainable de-growth – how?

1115 – 1245

Panel debate with the course lecturers: Can capitalism survive without growth?

1245 – 1330

Lunch

1330 – 1345

Moral perspectives on growth, zero-growth and de-growth

- Finn Arler (1330-1400)
- Arne Johan Vetlesen (1410-1440)
- Kate Soper (1450-1520)

1520 – 1545

Coffee break

1545 – 1700

Discussion: Economic growth in affluent countries – necessary, desirable or neither?

1700 – 1715

Course wrap-up and goodbye

Required reading

- Daly, H. E. & Cobb, J. (1989): *For the Common Good*, the Introduction chapter. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Daly, H. E. (1993): 'Sustainable growth: an impossibility theorem', in H. E. & K. N. Townsend, eds, *Valuing the Earth: Economics, Ecology, Ethics*, Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Griethausen, P. v. (2010): 'Why are we growth-addicted? The hard way towards degrowth in the involuntary western development path.' Forthcoming in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 18.
- Jackson, T. (2009): 'Beyond the Growth Economy.' *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, Vol. 13, pp. 487-490.
- Kerschner, C. (2010): 'Economic de-growth vs. steady-state economy.' Forthcoming in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 18.
- Kovel, J. (2002): *The Enemy of Nature: The end of capitalism or the end of the world?* Chapter 3 (pp. 28-50). Zed Books/Fernwood Publishing.
- Mol, A. P. J. & Spaargaren, (2000): 'Ecological modernisation Theory in Debate: A Review. In Mol, A. P. J. & Sonnenfeld, D. A. (eds.): *Ecological Modernisation Around the World*, pp. 17-49.
- Nordhaus, W. (1993): 'Reflections on the Economics of Climate Change.' *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 7, pp. 11-25.
- Næss, P. & Høyer, K. G. (2009): 'The Emperor's Green Clothes: Growth, Decoupling and Capitalism.' *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, Vol. 20, pp. 74-95.
- Røpke, I. (2005): 'Trends in the development of ecological economics from the late 1980s to the early 2000s.' *Ecological Economics*, Vol. 55, pp. 262-290.
- Schneider, F.; Kallis, G. & Martinez-Alier, J. (2010): 'Crisis or Opportunity? Economic Degrowth for Social Equity and Ecological Sustainability.' Forthcoming in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 18.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): *Our Common Future*, chapter 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Xue, J; Næss, P. & Arler, F. (2010): Arguments for and against economic growth. Paper currently under review for publication.