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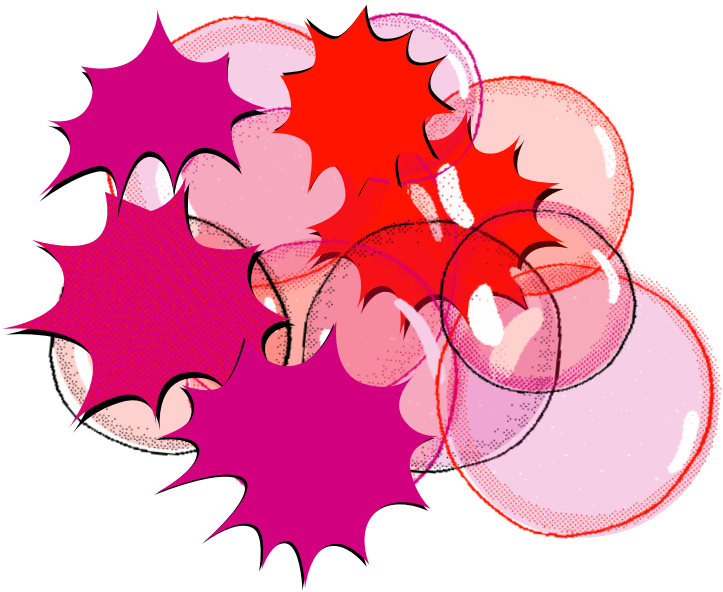

BRAVE GREEN WORLD

The Green Economy myths

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The Green Economy, we hear, will end climate change, prevent the extinction of species and, as an added bonus, create millions of jobs. This miraculous instrument will solve the global financial and economic crisis, as well as our ecological problems, all in one go. However, what exactly is the Green Economy? By creating certain political framework conditions, greater amounts of capital are to flow into "greening" the economy and possibly creating new "green" jobs. Companies are to pay a "reasonable" price for the environmental damage they cause. The state, too, is to orientate its purchases (public procurement) along ecologically sustainable criteria and make infrastructure environmentally friendly.

In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro coined the term "sustainable development", which then for many years served global politics as a leitmotiv. Two decades later, at the Rio+20 UN conference, the "Green Economy" replaced sustainable development as the new magic formula.

For 25 years now, therefore, we have been enthused with the idea of "greening" capitalism. However, it is also evident that the results of sustainable development are meagre. CO_2 emissions continue to increase, whilst biodiversity is declining dramatically; the soils are overexploited, and hunger, poverty and inequality are on the rise in many countries. The acclaimed "reconciliation of economic and environmental goals" proves tough to implement. As a response to the current financial and economic crisis, states applied more "traditional" and often only barely sustainable growth strategies. There is much reason to doubt the potency of the Green Economy magic formula.

This brochure will show that the definition of the Green Economy is contested. Depending on the underlying interests, the concept stands for very different and in part contradicting ideas. On the following pages, we aim to show why certain proposals are too superficial, and we will analyse cases where proponents too readily compromise with the dominant powers and how such an approach tends to suppress rather than support ecologically and socially just alternatives. Other questions will include the possible alternatives to the Green Economy, and what they could look like. A Green Economy that only aims to "green" or even expand capitalism will soon lose its appeal. Society needs a pluralistic project for a socio-ecological transition and not a new growth programme.

CONTENTS

"THE GREEN ECONOMY IS NOT A UNITARY CONCEPT"

Discussions surrounding the need for an ecological modernisation of the economy date back at least to the 1990s. However, it was only in the wake of the 2008 global financial and economic crisis that the term "Green Economy" really gained prominence. During the crisis, many governments developed programmes to boost their economies involving measures to promote "green growth". Governments spent around 430 billion dollars on such measures. At the 2009 G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh, the heads of state and government committed themselves in the final declaration to "greener and more sustainable growth".[1]

The Green Economy, i.e. a "green" economy, promises to take the economy onto a sustainable development path. In 2008, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established its Green Economy Initiative and in 2011 published the Green Economy Report.[2] This defines a green economy as one that results in "improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities".

The UNEP report, too, considers the current crises of climate, biodiversity, energy, food and water. However, the report identifies the "misallocation of capital"[3] during the last two decades as the main cause behind the social and ecological problems. Next to financial and asset-based capital, the report considers people and social capital as also in need of increasing. Even nature is seen as a kind of capital that needs conserving, expanding and where necessary re-constituting.[4] Many sides have since employed the term, particularly in the run-up to and during the Rio+20 summit in June 2012. Nevertheless, what the Green Economy actually is, remains unclear.[5]

1 Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) (Ed.): GreenTech made in Germany 4.0. Environmental Technology Atlas for Germany, Berlin 2014. **2** United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): Towards a Green Economy. Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, Geneva 2011. Web: www.unep.org/greeneconomy/Portals/88/documents/ger/ger_final_dec_2011/Green%20EconomyReport_Final_Dec2011.pdf. **3** United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): Using Models for Green Economy Policymaking, Geneva 2014, p. 2. **4** International Institute for Sustainable Development & UNEP: Trade and Green Economy: A Handbook, Geneva 2014. **5** See: blog.postwachstum.de/woruber-reden-wir-denn-eigentlich-die-green-economy-im-vorfeld-von-rio20-20120129.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – a forum for industrialised nations – upholds "green growth" as the new paradigm.[6] Here, the Green Economy fulfils a function as a catalyst for growth, in what is clearly an attempt to find a shared denominator for a consensus between nations that prioritise economic growth. International UN climate negotiations, however, speak of "sustainable economic growth". This aims to enable the countries of the Global South to deal with the challenges of climate change.[7]

Germany's green party, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, (and most prominently its faction in the EU parliament), however, demands a "Green New Deal" for Europe – echoing US President Roosevelt's historic New Deal in the 1930s – which, according to the party, could provide "an encompassing response to the current economic, social and ecological crisis".[8]

A newer 2014 initiative emphasizes a fundamental growth orientation. "Better Growth, Better Climate" is the new magic formula of the self-proclaimed Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.[9] A great danger therefore exists that Green Economy strategies remain attached to the long outdated logic of growth and prove incapable of solving the existing social and ecological problems.

These examples also show, however, that different people use the concept of Green Economy very differently.

6 OECD: Towards Green Growth, Paris 2011. Web: www.oecd.org/greengrowth/towards-green-growth-9789264111318-en.htm. **7** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: Report of the Conference of the Parties on its eighteenth session, held in Doha from 26 November to 8 December 2012, Addendum, Part Two, Geneva 2013, p. 10. Web: http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/cop18/eng/08a01.pdf. **8** See: www.gruene.de/themen/wirtschaft-arbeit/green-new-deal-konkret.html und www.gruene-europa.de/der-green-new-deal-7804.html. **9** The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate: Better Growth, Better Climate, Washington 2014. For criticism see: Spash, Clive: Better Growth, Helping the Paris COP-out? Fallacies and Omissions of the New Climate Economy Report, Institut für Regional- und Umweltwirtschaft, Vienna 2014. Web: http://epub.wu.ac.at/4325/1/sre-disc-2014_04.pdf.

1

"THE GREEN ECONOMY INVIGORATES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

People frequently allege the ineffectiveness of sustainable development strategies and point to the lacking political will and weak environmental institutions. Now, the remedy for these problems is the Green Economy, as a new economic paradigm capable of finally implementing the concepts of sustainable development.[10] The idea is that, in cooperation with national governments, strong international political institutions will set the political framework conditions. We will all profit. Companies will gain new markets, employees attractive and meaningful positions and the countries of the Global South will get their fair share in the "green sectors" of the global market. And greater resource efficiency will benefit society and nature alike.[11]

What are the facts?

In spite of numerous successes at the level of individual cases, the policy of sustainable development has largely failed. The concept has not solved the ecological, social and economic problems. Between 1990 and 2013, global CO_2 emissions have risen from 22 to more than 35 billion tons. The search for answers, though, remains strangely superficial. Blaming "weak political institutions" points to a lack of political will to create strong institutions, i.e. institutions that national governments and companies would subordinate themselves to. Neither, however, is alleging that "a lack of political will" is a satisfactory answer, which only leads to the next question: why does "politics" lack sufficient will?

The true reason is that the governments of the economically powerful nations are not keen to question the Western mode

10 On where sustainable development and the Green Economy differ and where they converge see: Wissen, Markus: Post-neoliberale Hegemonie? Zur Rolle des Green-Economy-Konzepts in der Vielfachkrise, in: Kurswechsel 2/2012, pp. 28–36. **11** See: UNEP: Using Models.

of living and production; they prefer instead to hold on to an uncontrolled form of capitalist globalisation. The competition for global market shares drives this process and ensures rapid and increasing environmental pollution and resource consumption. The basis for this is the contradiction between a business logic and the protection of the environment and/or a sustainable use of natural capital. So far, cheaply exploiting nature's resources or using it as a waste dump has proven far more profitable. Nature supplies resources free of charge and does not charge for waste disposal. Absurdly enough, this often makes the production of short-lived, resource-intensive products economically more profitable than the environmentally friendly production of goods that will be used for a long time.

Beyond the competition for global market shares, states compete over the distribution of Green Economy costs and profits. "Not surprisingly, the most obstructive groups impeding the transformation process are those which will experience material or status losses as a result of the intended change," assesses the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU).[12] Unfortunately, a Green Economy is only advantageous for the winners and not for everybody. As the former Deutsche Bank CEO Josef Ackermann pointedly puts it: "Make no mistake: a new world order is emerging. The race for leadership has already begun. For the winners, the rewards are clear: Innovation and investment in clean energy technology will stimulate green growth; it will create jobs; it will bring greater energy independence and national security."[13]

A Green Economy therefore is not a win-win-situation. Instead, it drives capital-intensive and socially exclusive mining and other large-scale infrastructure projects, expensive offshore wind farms and emissions trading. Capitalist rationality is the basis for the Green Economy.[14] Those who already own and can in-

12 German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU): World in Transition – A Social Contract for Sustainability, Berlin 2011, p. 187, unter: www.wbgu.de/fileadmin/templates/dateien/veroeffentlichungen/hauptgutachten/jg2011/wbgu_jg2011.pdf. **13** A statement given by Josef Ackermann in December 2010 when he was still CEO of Deutsche Bank AG. Quoted in: Jaeger, Carlos C. et al.: A New Growth Path for Europe. Generating Prosperity and Jobs in the Low-Carbon Economy. Synthesis Report. European Climate Forum e.V., Potsdam 2011, p. 6. **14** Wichterich, Christa: Kapitalismus mit Wärmedämmung. Feministische Kritik und Gegenentwürfe zur Green Economy, in: Informationen für die Frau 5/2011, pp. 5–7; Brunnengräber, Achim/Haas, Tobias: Green Economy – Green New Deal – Green Growth. Occupy Rio plus 20, in: W&E-Hintergrund November 2001.

vest capital remain the most powerful. There is no questioning of the logic of constant investments, of profit and competition. For companies, the maxim remains "profit maximisation"; and for states the "maximisation of national economic growth". The concrete ecological costs incurred in many parts of the world, and also the social costs of this ecological modernisation, however, remain secondary. Such an approach only postpones and by no means solves the problems. As an example, we can of course fill our cars with biofuels in Europe. The cost, however, could be the expropriation of peasants in Indonesia or the felling of tropical forests to make way for German cement plants or oil palm plantations, or the outsourcing of particularly environmentally harmful production processes to the countries of the Global South by companies from the Global North.

The concept of the Green Economy therefore does not replace the drive for profit with a drive to protect people and the environment. Instead, the Green Economy continues to base all economic activity on the need to make a profit. The protection of the environment is subordinated to this principle. State regulation, too, only has a limited influence (see point 6 "A strong state is good for the environment and sustainability"). This makes it at least debatable whether the Green Economy is really the acclaimed magic formula that will allow us to implement the established goals of sustainable development. Real change will only occur if we stop insisting on renewing capitalism again and again after each disastrous crisis. A fundamental transition towards a cooperation and solidarity-based mode of production and living should be more than an abstract goal taken from some glossy brochure. In the implementation of goals, too, people and nature should no longer be viewed simply as economically exploitable resources.

6

2

"THE CRISIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A GREEN ECONOMY"

Many politicians in their speeches emphasize that the current crisis is an opportunity for fundamental modifications to the economy. Its proponents claim that the Green Economy will boost the economy. One such institution is the United Nations. Between 2010 and 2050, the organisation reckons a "green investment" scenario could lead to higher growth rates than "business as usual". Business as usual in this context means continuing on the current and unsustainable path of development.

In 2010, the EU Commission developed a plan for sustainable growth to promote a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy.[15] On the one hand, the crisis is an opportunity for the Green Economy. Yet it is also a remedy against weak economic growth. The solar, biomass, wind energy and recycling industries are indeed growing particularly strong today. In 2014, excluding hydroelectric power, the share of renewable energy rose by 16 per cent globally.[16] Studies estimate that of the 7,000 billion invested in electricity generation until 2030, around two thirds will have gone into renewable sources (including hydroelectric power).[17] That makes for great hopes.

For Germany, such pro-Green-Economy studies estimate an economic growth of 2.4 per cent for 2020, as compared with 1.8 per cent without an ecological transition. Model calculations (for the "green scenario") suggest an unemployment rate of 5.6 per cent, which would be clearly less than the 8.5 per cent expected in the "traditional scenario".[18]

15 EU Commission: Europe 2020 – A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Brussels 2010. Web: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/investing-in-research-european-commission-europe-2020–2010.pdf **16** PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC): Two degrees of separation: ambition and reality. Low Carbon Economy Index 2014, London 2014, p. 7. Web: www.pwc.co.uk/assets/pdf/low-carbon-economy-index-2014.pdf **17** Ibd., p. 8. **18** See: Jänicke, Martin: Green Growth. Vom Wachstum der Öko-Industrie zum nachhaltigen Wirtschaften, Forschungszentrum für Umweltpolitik, Berlin 2011, p. 8. Web: www.wfg-ww.de/uploads/tx_news/Gruenes_Wachstum_Report.pdf.

What are the facts?

To begin with, such growth forecasts are highly uncertain. Even under "normal" circumstances – i.e. without the economic crisis, an unstable banking sector or fundamental modifications to the economy – economists are often unable to accurately predict economic growth for the next six months. In the year prior to the crisis, prognoses for 2008 forecast between 2.4 and 2.2 per cent growth. The economy actually only grew by 1.1 per cent that year. The spring and autumn 2008 prognoses were even further off the mark. For 2009, they forecast economic growth of 1.4 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively. The economy did not grow at all in 2009, but rather shrunk by 5.1 per cent. Adjusted for prices, the German economy grew by 0.4 per cent in 2013, in spite of a prognosis by the German Institute for Economic Research DIW of 1.6 per cent.[19]

We should therefore treat prognoses spanning various decades with even greater caution. They mainly express tendencies and expectations. Many factors influence the capitalist economy and its expansion, allowing only for a limited amount of planning. Importantly, and contrary to the generally optimistic outlook, a crisis is a bad environment for the Green Economy. In the wake of the global financial crisis, many states ran up heavy debts. The struggle against the crisis of the euro is characterised by measures to bolster economic growth at all cost, for example by alleviating the financial burden on companies. Whilst politics makes a show of preaching the benefits of the Green Economy magic formula, in practice it opts not to implement it. Faced with a costly crisis, there is a reluctance to foot the bill of an ecological transition or stricter environmental legislation. As early as 2009, the economists Nicolas Stern and Ottmar Edenhofer put forward proposals on how the G-20 could lead a "global green recovery". These proposals were never implemented. Instead, many states followed the German and Austrian example and developed schemes offering users premiums to scrap old cars and thus boost their automobile industries, without regard to the environmental consequences. The result of this policy?

19 See: www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/prognose-des-diw-fuer-deutsche-wirtschaft-fuer-2013-ist-optimistisch-a-859187.html.

2010 emissions levels were the highest ever recorded. "For the first time in this century, emissions among G-20 nations rose stronger than economic growth," Achim Brunnengräber and Tobias Haas wrote, concluding, "in particular with regard to today's multiple crises, the outlook for the future is bleak."[20]

In spite of the strong growth of renewables, they still only hold a 2.2 per cent share in global energy production (up from 1.9 per cent). Factoring in hydroelectric power, the share is 8.9 per cent, up from 8.6 per cent. Yet due to the large dams the technology relies on, it is often everything else but sustainable at the social level. The main reason for this is that the use of fossil fuels has also increased significantly.[21]

Even if governments were to focus 100 per cent on "green" to solve the crisis, it is not clear whether this would actually benefit the environment, simply because a Green Economy does not lift the economic growth imperative.[22] The following example should make the implications of unlimited growth very clear:
In Germany, there are currently 52 cars for every 100 citizens. Statistically, therefore, nearly one in two people own a car.[23] Achieving German levels of car-ownership at the global level would require a massive – and profitable – expansion of the transport infrastructure, but also an increase in the total number of cars from today's one billion to around five billion. Even if this is achieved by a massive introduction of electric cars, such a step would nonetheless use up large amounts of resources, energy and require additional carbon sinks[24].

20 Brunnengräber, Achim/Haas, Tobias: Rio+20: Die grüne Beliebigkeit, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 2/2012, p. 18. **21** PwC: Two degrees of separation **22** Le Monde Diplomatique/Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften (Ed.): Atlas der Globalisierung. Weniger wird mehr, Berlin 2015 **23** See: www.zeit.de/mobilitaet/2014-10/auto-fahrzeug-bestand **24** A carbon sink is a natural reservoir such as a forest or ocean that temporarily or permanently accumulates and stores carbon and thereby counters the effects of global warming.

3

"THE GREEN ECONOMY RECONCILES ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS"

Independently of the current crisis, the proponents of the Green Economy say that it reconciles environmental and economic goals. As the German environmental protection agency UBA (Umweltbundesamt) ascertains: "Environmental protection is becoming an increasingly important economic factor. The development of the environmental economy and green futures markets clearly shows this. The trend includes eco-friendly energy generation, enhanced energy, resource and material efficiency, sustainable mobility, and a sustainable water, waste and circular economy. A progressive environmental policy makes sense even from an economic standpoint."[25] The prominent researcher Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker argues: "A wave of new and fascinating technological innovations holds the greatest hopes for a new boom."[26] To counter the increasing destruction of nature therefore we must establish and assign a price tag to the value of nature. The assumption is that once nature's value in the form of "natural capital" becomes a factor in business calculations, the protection of nature will follow suit. "Prices should express ecological truths" – a sentence that certainly sounds sincere.

Green technology, the UBA assessed a few years ago, already accounts for 8 per cent of German GDP and this share is set to increase to 14 per cent by 2020.[27] The expansion of global green technology lead markets reflects this trend, the volume of which has reached wholly new levels.

25 Umweltbundesamt (UBA): Grüne Zukunftsmärkte/Umweltschutzwirtschaft, Berlin 2015. Web: www.umweltbundesamt.de/themen/wirtschaft-konsum/wirtschaft-umwelt/gruene-zukunftsmaerkte-umweltschutzwirtschaft. **26** Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich von/Hargroves, Karlson/Smith, Michael: Faktor Fünf: Die Formel für nachhaltiges Wachstum, Munich 2010, p. 25. **27** BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 2.

Table 1: Market volume for German and global green and energy efficiency technology 2013 (in billions of euros)

	Global	German (global market share in brackets)
Energy efficiency	825	100 (12%)
Sustainable water management	505	53 (11%)
Environmentally friendly power generation, storage and distribution	422	73 (17%)
Material efficiency	367	48 (13%)
Sustainable mobility	315	53 (17%)
Waste management and recycling	102	17 (17%)
Total	2.536	344 (14%)

Source: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) (ed.): GreenTech made in Germany 4.0. Environmental Technology Atlas for Germany, Berlin 2014, p. 48 f.

Table 2: Global market projections in key sectors

Global market volume	2007	2020	Yearly growth until 2020
Solar thermal energy [Mio. m²] **	31	337	+20%
PV [GWp] *, **	3	65	+27%
Wind energy [GW] *	20	137	+16%
Fuel cell drive [in billions of euro]	1	52	+39%

*** newly installed capacity, ** gigawatts peak power under test conditions**

Source: Source: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) (Ed.): GreenTech made in Germany 4.0. Environmental Technology Atlas for Germany, Berlin 2014, p. 63.

What are the facts?

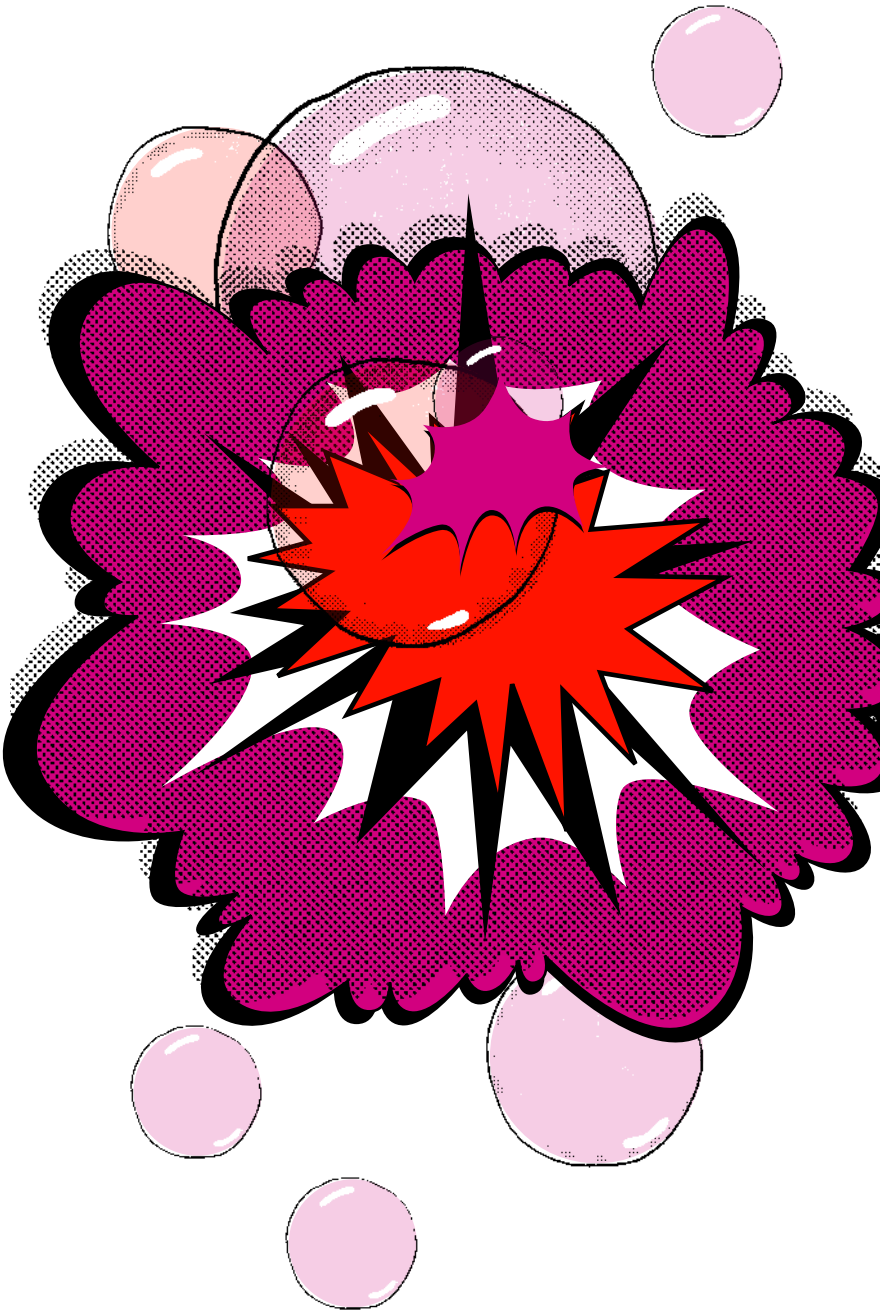
First, the concept of "reconciling economic and environmental goals" requires some explaining. What seems a good idea at first cannot be achieved for as long as the Green Economy obeys a capitalist logic. Green economic innovations frequently end up causing environmental destruction elsewhere. Often, production continues to rely on resources that are extracted under unsustainable conditions and that follow long supply chains to reach the end producer. Take electric cars: to produce them requires metals, so-called rare earths.

Secondly, the approach potentially exacerbates social imbalances; for example, by steadily increasing the importance of dirty and cheap coal for energy supply or by relocating environmentally detrimental production and endangering the health of workers in other countries. Further examples include the chopping down of rainforests for the production of agrofuels (so-called biofuels), for which people are displaced from their land and countries, and the rejection of emissions trading due to a fear of the costs to local companies. These examples clearly show that, even when cloaked in green, the imperative for economic growth and growing private sector profits leaves no room for social justice.

Rare earth extraction (rare earths are actually not as rare as their name suggests) mainly in China takes place under ecologically and socially catastrophic conditions: displacement, large-scale destruction of nature, poisonous emissions and the employment of cheap migrant workers are among the most problematic "side effects". That we then use these rare earths in our "green" products can hardly be considered an excuse.

Thirdly, the demand that "prices should express ecological truths" masks the fact that many of the important functions of nature cannot be expressed in the form of prices, which actually is fortunate. Nature is a commons that we should not subject to a logic of value and prices. A sustainable use of nature requires the application of social and ecological criteria instead of pure economic calculations.[28] Current proposals for a Green

28 Helfrich, Silke/Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (ed.): Wem gehört die Welt? Zur Wiederentdeckung der Gemeingüter, München 2009; Ostrom, Elinor: Was mehr wird, wenn wir teilen. Vom gesellschaftlichen Wert der Gemeingüter, München 2011.



Economy threaten to deepen the capitalist valorisation of nature. In climate policy, REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) is a prime example. The mechanism promises massive sums for the reduction of emissions caused by deforestation and destructive forest management. The international report "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity"[29] also recommends pricing biodiversity for protection. Establishing the economic value of certain ecosystem services in terms of money can demonstrate how essential these services are to our economy and society. Nonetheless, making a profit should not be the only incentive for climate and biodiversity protection measures.[30]

An abstract focus on "green growth" is therefore not good enough. The decisive questions are what the overall conditions for this growth are. Is it the large energy companies with an interest in major developments such as offshore wind farms and energy grid monopolies that control this growth? Or is the development driven by a decentralised and democratically controlled form of energy production? Who decides what is recycled and how, and why is preventing waste not the primary goal? Who controls the Green Economy and whose interests does it serve? Whose interests does the capitalist growth imperative serve?[31]

29 See: www.teebweb.org **30** See: Chapelle, Sophie: Rio+20: Comment multinationales et marchés financiers comptent s'accaparer la nature, posted on 18 June 2012. Web: www.bastamag.net/article2479.html and also: Comment s'enrichir en prétendant sauver la planète, Interview with Christophe Bonneuil on 20 June 2012. Web: www.bastamag.net/article2484.html **31** See: Binswanger, Hans Christoph: Die Wachstumsspirale in der Krise – Ansätze zu einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung, in: Held, Martin et al. (eds.): Institutionen ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit, Marburg 2011, pp. 183–200; Brand, Ulrich: Kapitalistisches Wachstum und soziale Herrschaft. Motive, Argumente und Schwächen grundlegender Wachstumskritik, in: Prokla 2/2014, pp. 289–306.

4

"THE GREEN ECONOMY CREATES GOOD JOBS"

As well as generating growth, the transition to a Green Economy should also create jobs. In Germany alone, energy transition created nearly 400,000 new jobs. According to a UBA commissioned study, a European energy transition could create up to 6 million further jobs. To take advantage, the EU would have to take its CO_2 emissions reduction target from 20 to 30 per cent.[32] "Positive development in the market for green products, processes and services thus opens up new employment opportunities in Germany. Many German green tech firms are looking to create new jobs in the medium term. Across the environmental technology and resource efficiency industry as a whole, companies expect to see their workforce expand by an average of 6.7 percent per year between now and 2018."[33]

Only in dirty industries will the number of jobs decrease. These jobs, however, will be increasingly replaced by "green jobs" at least from 2030 onwards.[34] Companies expect the new jobs to be particularly attractive and well paid. "Low-carbon industries tend to have a significantly larger share of the high-skilled workforce […]," the International Labour Organization ILO writes.[35]

What are the facts?

Today, the "green sector" already employs many people. "In 2012, this cross-sector industry gave work to around 1.5 million people in Germany, and even this figure only includes employees who work at companies specifically assigned to one of the six defined lead markets."[36] This growth continues. According to the Report on the Environmental Economy, nearly every 20th job in Germany is related to goods and services in the so-called environmental sector.[37] Employment in this sector is set to grow by a rate of 10 per cent and more. Questions, however, remain.

32 Jaeger et al.: A New Growth Path, p. 4 f. **33** BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 9. **34** UNEP: Towards a Green Economy, pp. 505–533. **35** International Labour Organization (ILO): Towards a Greener Economy: The Social Dimensions, Geneva 2011, p. 3. Find a criticism of this position in: Hermann, Christoph: Green new deal and the question of environmental and social justice, Geneva 2015, p. 9. Web: www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/GLU_Working_Papers/GLU_WP_No.31.pdf. **36** BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 9. **37** However, the types of employment that are defined as protecting the environment remains unclear. The 2011 Report on the Environmental Economy simply states, that the environmental economy is a "cross-sectoral industry comprising all businesses that supply environmental goods and services". See: BMUB/UBA: Report on the Environmental Economy 2011, Berlin 2011, p. 14 f.

First, green jobs are not necessarily good jobs. In the emergent eco-friendly sectors, labour conditions are often bad and the rate of union organisation is low. In many of the mostly medium-sized companies, there are no collective wage agreements.[38] Below-average wages are widespread. A few years ago, based on interviews with work council members, Germany's IG Metall union asserted that "the working conditions in the wind energy sector are not particularly appealing for employees, and in many regards need improving. High pressure, limited salary perspectives, a lack of the necessary training opportunities and an increasing number of temporary jobs characterise the environment."[39]

Second, not all employees will profit equally from the "green technologies" transition. The labour market in this sector has a tendency to make low-skilled and elderly workers redundant. "For those currently employed in the automobile industry or in certain branches of the chemical and energy industry, a structural transition towards 'green technologies' or renewable energy does not imply that they can simply switch from one branch to another. A shift towards producing more electric vehicles does not mean that jobs will be created at the same location; i.e. that jobs will not be lost and production not relocated to other countries."[40] A socially just transition requires accompanying measures.

Moreover, many of the newly created jobs in the eco-technology sectors mainly benefit men. "Green New Deal investment programs mainly profit male-dominated sectors and professions, meaning that most of the newly created jobs will be held by men. Men profit even though women frequently work in less resource-intensive and hence less environmentally damaging sectors such as health care and education."[41]

Third, it is crucial who sets the conditions for the transition.[42] Hardly ever does the promise of green jobs include information

38 Hexel, Dietmar: Sonne, Wind, Arbeit, in: Atlas der Globalisierung, p. 60 f. The situation in retail is no better. In February 2012 ver.di unionist Janet Dumann stated: "none of the organic supermarket chains pays according to the collective wage agreements in the sector and neither has any of them got a works council." See: www.tip-berlin.de/essen-und-trinken/wie-fair-ist-bio-wirklich. **39** Board of the IG Metall union: Windkraft-Industrie 2007. Aktuelle Branchentrends, Frankfurt am Main 2007, p. 15. **40** Candeias, Mario: Konversion – Einstieg in eine öko-sozialistische Reproduktionsökonomie, in: Candeias, Mario/Rilling, Rainer/Röttger, Bernd/Thimmel, Stefan (eds.): Globale Ökonomie des Autos, Hamburg 2011, p. 260. **41** Herman: Green new deal, p. 19. **42** Ibd.

on who invests and therefore determines the jobs created, namely the capital. In times of crisis, as the solar industry showed, employees are at the mercy of their managers. In this respect, too, the Green Economy is no different from the traditional economy.

Fourth, the promise of "green jobs" fails to recognise that a transition to a society based on solidarity and sustainability will require more than growth and new jobs in environmentally friendly sectors, but also an expansion in local healthcare, training and education services.[43] Work in society in general, whether salaried or not, will need to be fundamentally reorganised. The current trend, however, is towards badly paid services contracts without social security contributions, a flexibilisation of working time and a replacement of fixed salaries with variable salary components. This helps companies to reduce labour costs and increase profits.

Faced with increasing insecurity, many people cannot earnestly think about their future. Social security and meaningful work, however, are two essential components for any truly sustainable society. Such an understanding of sustainability would imply questioning the relations of power implicit to the division of labour in society: Who receives how much money and recognition for which kind of work? Who has the power to shape his or her daily activities? Who does society even consider for certain jobs and who is destined to be a cleaner for the rest of his or her life? Clearly, the issues at stake are far greater than simply creating green jobs.

Green technology jobs do not automatically resolve social inequalities and injustices. To achieve sustainable forms of production and consumption, we will need to tackle gender and class relations, ethnic divisions in society, and a country's position in the global economic hierarchy.[44]

As a characteristic feature, a sustainable society will need to find solidarity-based and democratic ways to organise, distribute and execute the necessary and the desirable work, whether salaried or not.[45]

43 Wichterich, Christa: Die Zukunft, die wir wollen. Eine feministische Perspektive, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin 2012. Web: www.boell.de/sites/default/files/Feministische_Zukunft-i.pdf. **44** Ibd. **45** Biesecker, Adelheid/Baier, Andrea: Gutes Leben braucht andere Arbeit, in: Politische Ökologie 125, 2011, pp. 54–63; Leitner, Andrea/Wroblewski, Andrea/Littig, Beate: Green Jobs. Diskussion von Arbeitsbedingungen und Beschäftigungspotentialen, Vienna 2012.

5

"THE 'EFFICIENCY REVOLUTION' BOOSTS GROWTH WHILST REDUCING RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS"

As its advocates argue, the Green Economy will depend on and lead to a more efficient use of resources. The expectation is "that countries able to increase the productivity of scarce resources will gain important competitive advantages over those who ignore these scarcities".[46] Improved technology and a better organisation of production will result in an "efficiency revolution". Each euro worth of economic output will require an ever-lower amount of resources and lead to ever-less pollution. "Decoupling" economic growth and wealth production from resource usage and the over-exploitation of ecosystems and CO_2 sinks is the way forward. "An 80 per cent increase in resource productivity is not only conceivable, it is actually possible," write Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, Karlson Hargroves and Michael Smith.[47] Ultimately, this should ensure limitless growth indeed becomes possible.

Recent discussions surrounding the concept of industry 4.0 or the fourth industrial revolution further develop this argument. Increasing digital networking and self-optimising "intelligent" systems promise greater resource efficiency in ever more spheres of society. "Smart grids", i.e. intelligent energy distribution networks, already aim to enhance the efficiency of urban energy distribution and reduce energy consumption. The terms "smart factory" and "industry 4.0" express the hope for a complete restructuring of industrial production, which will increase resource and energy efficiency and simultaneously create huge markets of future growth.[48]

46 Ibd., p. 33. **47** Weizsäcker et al.: Faktor Fünf, p. 235. **48** See Pfeiffer, Sabine: Industrie 4.0 und die Digitalisierung der Produktion – Hype oder Megatrend?, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (ApuZ) 31–32/2011. Web: www.bpb.de/apuz/209955/industrie-4-0-und-die-digitalisierung-der-produktion?p=all

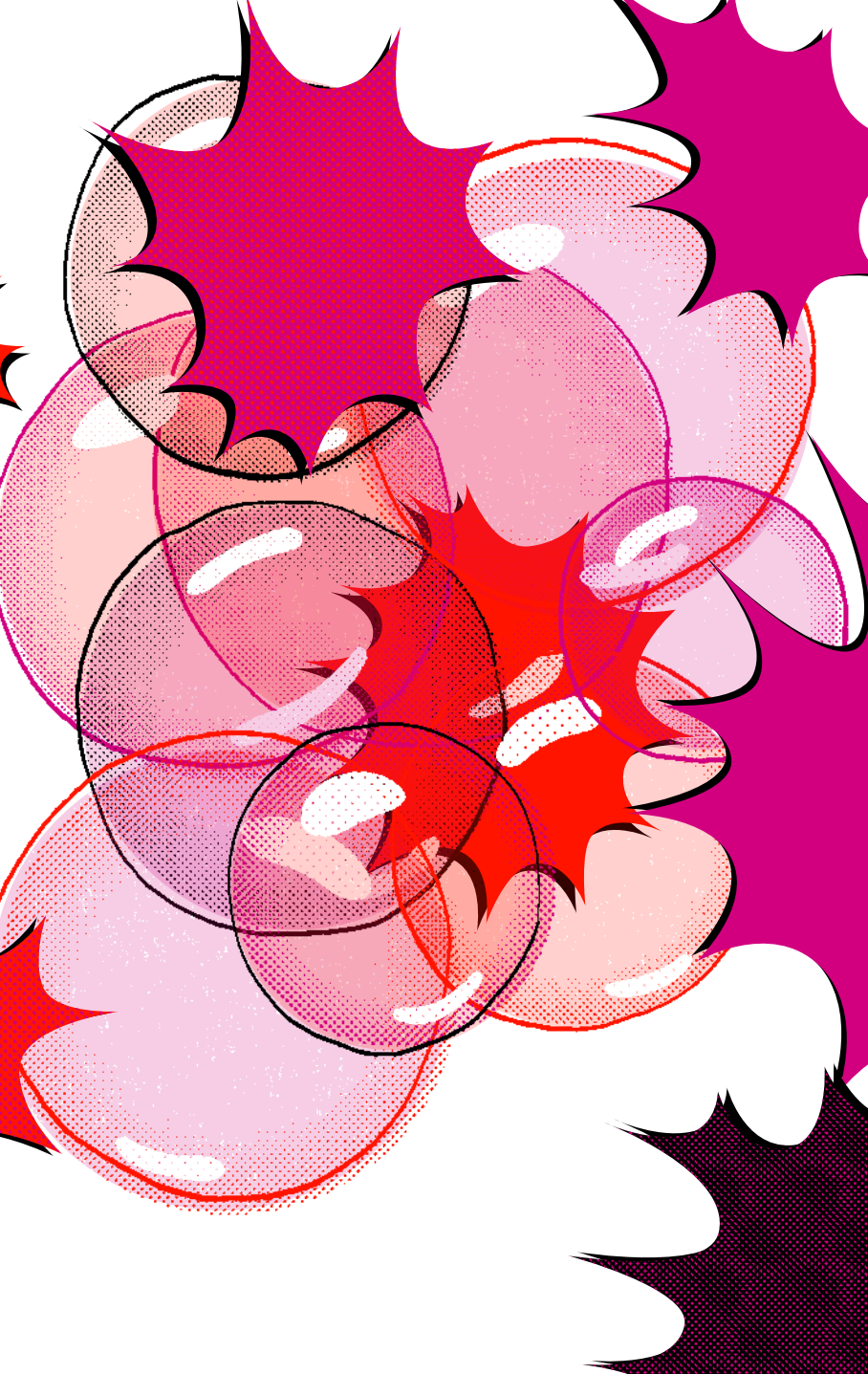
What are the facts?

Economic growth with lower resource consumption – that does sound great. Germany, however, is a good example that decoupling does not happen on its own. True enough, every unit of GDP today requires less and less resource input, and CO_2 emissions too have decreased substantially between 1992 and 2008. For several reasons, however, such efficiency gains do not automatically save the climate.

First, companies relocate energy intensive steps of production to foreign countries. As the fact-finding commission of the German parliament "Growth, wealth, quality of life" assessed in its final report: "The products consumed in the industrialised nations are increasingly produced in emerging and developing nations. Environmental damage generally occurs in the countries of production (including greenhouse gas emissions). Whereas greenhouse gas emissions of industrialised nations have more or less stabilised, total global energy-related CO_2 emissions increased by 38 per cent between 1990 and 2007, in part due to the relocation of industrial production from industrialised to emerging nations. […] Between 1990 and 2008 the CO_2 emissions of industrialised nations decreased by two per cent. If one, however, compares this reduction with the CO_2 imported from emerging and developing nations, the figures for 2008 show that 520 per cent more CO_2 was imported than saved."[49] Furthermore, Germany is a special case, as the post-1990 de-industrialisation of East Germany considerably helped improve Germany's climate balance.

A second argument for greater resource productivity is that the users of these new technologies save costs, for example for resources. Greater efficiency increases profits. Undeniably, though, dirty forms of production remain more profitable. If protecting the environment through gains in efficiency was automatically in corporate interests, politics would hardly have to beat the drum so hard. In the Green Economy, protecting the environment by means of enhanced resource productivity remains linked to the profit interests of companies. Companies do

49 Fact finding commission: Final report of the fact finding commission Growth, wealth, quality of life of the German parliament, Bundestagsdrucksache 13/300, Berlin 2013, p. 424.



not implement unprofitable processes. This is why measures to protect the environment often lag behind what would be technologically possible and ecologically necessary.

For as long as the protection of the environment remains simply a strategy to maximise profits, these measures will remain subjected to the vicissitudes of markets and business calculations. High profits do not automatically lead to sensible re-investments to increase efficiency.

Thirdly, there is a further reason why the hopes for greater efficiency conflict with the capitalist imperative for growth.

"To believe that the capitalist drive for efficiency could somehow stabilise the climate or protect us from resource shortages is simply illusory," Tim Jackson, a British environmental economist wrote in the daily newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* on 7 April 2011. Historically, production has always grown increasingly efficient. Nonetheless, the economy has grown at an even higher rate, leading to increased resource requirements and greater environmental pollution. Due to this rebound effect, efficiency gains are usually "eaten up" by greater consumption: greater resource efficiency in automobile production made cars cheaper, which simply led people to buy bigger cars. "Off-road vehicles and SUVs are becoming ever more popular (sales increased by 20.6 per cent). Today, the segment represents a tenth of all new car registrations. […] Sales of executive cars went up by 12.2 per cent, whilst the figures for all other types of car dropped," Germany's Federal Motor Transport Authority reported on its website in February 2011.[50]

Whilst increasing efficiency is not everything, it nonetheless remains important. Let us continue with the example of the car. True environmental protection measures would require more progressive socio-political decisions, for example a complete re-organisation of transport. Instead, we are witnessing a global expansion of roads for private and goods vehicles, with many

50 Santarius, Tilman: Umweltfreundlich mehr verbrauchen, in: Atlas der Globalisierung. p. 56 f; and by the same author: Der Rebound-Effekt: Ökonomische, psychische und soziale Herausforderungen von Wirtschaftswachstum und Energieverbrauch, Kassel 2015.

countries even dismantling their railway systems. As a glance at the number of cars produced confirms, growing road networks also lead to an expansion of traffic. More than 67 million cars were produced in 2014, whereas in 2001, the figure was still below 40 million.[51] Forecasts reckon the number of cars worldwide could increase from today one billion to 1.6 billion in 2030. For the environment, this scenario is catastrophic, but very promising for Germany as a business location. Because in Germany, the economic journalist Stephan Kaufmann writes, "the automobile industry is the most important or (combined with machine construction) the second most important branch of German industry in terms of capital investments, export and import, direct investments, value creation, research and development, as well as employment."[52]

The question therefore is how to prevent efficiency gains from decoupling, in relative terms, from wealth accumulation and resource usage and instead linking them to an absolute reduction in resource requirements. Obviously, the usual political instruments cannot keep the growth imperative in check. The effects of decoupling, which are emphasized by green parties in particular, are often no more than wishful thinking. We must therefore critically appraise the concept of efficiency gains and strengthen the many concrete options for sufficiency.[53]

A true transition must take place; one that recognises that the biological and physical bases of the economy cannot support an efficiency-orientated market logic in the long-term. A profound socio-ecological transition (see conclusion) will also need to deal with the inherent imbalances in our society. Ecological criteria and an assessment of whether we really need particular goods and services will have to guide this process.

51 International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA): Production Statistics. Web: oica.net/category/production-statistics **52** Kaufmann, Stephan: Globale Ökonomie des Autos, in: Candeias et al. (eds.): Globale Ökonomie des Autos, p. 20. **53** See: Winterfeld, Uta von: Vom Recht auf Suffizienz, in: Rätz, Werner et al. (eds.): Ausgewachsen! Ökologische Gerechtigkeit. Soziale Rechte. Gutes Leben, Hamburg 2011, pp. 57–65.

6

"A STRONG STATE IS GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY"

On the one hand, the concept of reconciling economic and environmental goals stresses the importance of environmental protection to companies. Many have meanwhile realised, though, that the position of nature in business calculations is often weak. In other words, because they leave many aspects unconsidered (externalised) we cannot rely on business calculations alone to protect the environment.[54] As we have seen, economic policy in the Green Economy continues to rely on growth. Yet, to cushion the negative impacts of growth on the environment, many proponents now demand that the state develop and implement strict rules. Without sophisticated environmental legislation and an active promotion of innovative, resource-saving and environmentally friendly technologies by the state, historically, "the developing mode of production and consumption […] would have killed itself."[55] Moreover, the state is to create or secure ownership rights over nature, to enable companies to plan and calculate. According to the argument, it is only when rules apply equally to all companies that environmentally friendly companies are not at a competitive disadvantage. Corresponding guidelines could improve the technological capabilities of companies and enhance their competitiveness. Prominent researchers such as Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker demand: "We wish to emphasize that the market alone will not lead a transition towards a resource-efficient and sustainable economy and society. In this respect, the state has a key role to play."[56]

Meanwhile, the nation state is in many cases considered powerless and incapable of implementing efficient policies to protect the environment and resources. Allegedly, too many free riders currently overexploit the "global commons" – the most prominent one being a stable climate. Some states are said to exploit the commons without protecting them. Many problems are

54 Lutz, Christian/Zieschank, Roland/Drosdowski, Thomas: Green Economy: Nachhaltige Wohlfahrt messbar machen unter Nutzung der umweltökonomischen Gesamtrechnungs-(UGR) Daten, Berlin 2015. Web: www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/378/publikationen/texte_69_2015_green_economy_nachhaltige_wohlfahrt_messbar_machen_0.pdf **55** Ibd., p. 108. **56** Weizsäcker et al.: Faktor Fünf, p. 238.

therefore global problems that also require a global solution, i.e. through international cooperation. Strengthening international agreements then becomes important to codify binding rules.[57]

Basically, we expect the state to create adequate framework conditions for a Green Economy, but we doubt that this makes sense or is even possible at the nation state level.

What are the facts?

State regulation (and corresponding financial resources) are important for companies and employees, research institutions, associations and the public, as well as consumers as they provide orientation, planning security and concrete support whenever necessary. International agreements, for example on climate policy, prevent free riding and inform processes of learning: it is an opportunity for countries to develop policies analogous to the most innovative and leading nations in the field of sustainability. However, questions and valid objections remain.

One such question is the concept of a "strong state". Green Economy proposals often overlook the fact that states are not neutral when they create rules. Rather, the state reflects the relations of power in society, as evidenced for example by the subsidies and powerful political support granted to non-sustainable sectors of the economy. Stimulus programmes set up during the crisis did not focus on financing "green" sectors per se. Rather, they tended to be structurally conservative, as the scrappage programmes in Germany and Austria clearly show. Instead of backing the Green Economy, the state sided with companies and employees in traditionally strong economic sectors. Moreover, in liberal democracies with a system of competing parties, politics is structurally short-term and election-oriented, which makes long-term commitments difficult to achieve.

Even the strongest state will not contribute towards greater sustainability if its strength is not used to serve people and the environment but rather aims solely to increase competitiveness and growth and support the rich. Ever more frequently, however, this is precisely what is happening: Over the past decades, wel-

57 Leitschuh, Heike et al. (eds.): Gesucht: Weltumweltpolitik. Jahrbuch Ökologie 2016, Munich 2015.

fare states have become "national competitive states" (Joachim Hirsch). Their main aim is to increase the competitiveness of "their" national companies in the global competition between business locations. For regional policies, such as European Union policies, the situation is similar. The EU aims to become the world's most competitive region by 2020. In the face of increasing scarcity of and competition for resources, states – and regional federations such as the EU – have adopted policies to secure access to these resources. A global "war over resources" is by no means synonymous with a humane and environmentally friendly approach.

Hopes for an international agreement, too, are deceptive. The developments over the past 20 years surrounding the Framework Convention on Climate Change illustrate this particularly clearly. At the international level, there is basically no cooperation; states confront each other as "national competitive states". Obviously, this makes achieving agreements to protect the environment very difficult. International climate politics in particular threatens to fail because there is so little common ground at the international level. The countries of the Global South, and in particular the emerging economies, insist on their right to increase emissions, because global warming has been caused mainly by the industrialised countries. The states of the Global North, for their part, criticise the "Global South's dirty industries". The only thing that both sides agree on is that measures to protect the environment are not to interfere with economic growth. Consequently, instead of cooperating to find solutions, at these international conferences states compete over the distribution of the costs and profits of climate protection.

Conclusion: The state and international politics are naturally very important if we wish to develop a solidarity-based and sustainable mode of production and living. However, the state is not neutral. So far, the German, Austrian and Swiss states – notwithstanding individual intelligent policies – have propped up the profit interests of companies. The relatively new term of *resource diplomacy* masks the openly imperial ambitions of German and European policy. To orientate needs towards people and the environment will require a transition of the relations of power and development perspectives in society.

7

"BUSINESS IS THE MOTOR OF THE GREEN ECONOMY"

Neoclassical economic models and the neoliberal doctrine recognise only two "economic" actors: companies and consumers (or private households). For these, the state creates rules, for example regarding competition or environmental and social standards. Within this framework, companies drive social innovation. This also applies to the Green Economy (even though the role of the state is not seen quite as critically as in the economy textbooks, see above). Due to the pressure created by competition with other companies and consumer demand for certain products, but also because of the political framework conditions, companies will act more or less sustainably.

A keyword is "corporate social responsibility". "The voluntary financing of climate neutrality by economically strong players and their suppliers, i.e. a certain segment of the private sector, is perhaps a key element for a functioning world climate regime. In future, the selling of back-loaded certificates could provide for the yearly 100 billion dollars required for North-South cooperation as part of the Green Climate Fund also agreed in Copenhagen."[58]

What are the facts?

Within a capitalist market economy, so much is clear, the protection of the environment and a sustainable use of natural capital depends on business. In sectors such as solar and wind energy, new companies develop. The large energy corporations promote research and development for resource-preserving technologies and products. Companies also react to changing consumer demand.

Companies, however, also play a key role in maintaining our non-sustainable mode of production and living and therefore block alternatives. If they wish to stay afloat, capitalist compe-

58 Radermacher, Franz Josef: Klimapolitik nach Doha – Hindernisse in Lösungen verwandeln, in: GAIA 22/2, p. 91.

tition and the interests of shareholders force in particular private corporations to generate profits. Profitability often leaves no room for expensive environmentally friendly forms of production. "In light of profitability considerations, the major impetus for greater ecological transformation is not expected to come from companies themselves in the next ten years if conditions remain as they are. Developments in this dimension of transformation will likely be driven by external factors instead. Consequently, the economic feasibility of measures such as investments to improve energy efficiency can be positively influenced by financial incentives from the public purse."[59] We cannot therefore expect too much from companies; and should carefully scrutinise when and where efforts are sincere or mere "greenwashing".

British Petroleum (BP) is a good example. The world's third largest oil company struggled for decades to create a convincing green image. Fundamental business policies, however, changed little. In 1999, BP bought the PV company Solarex for 45 million dollars and began calling itself the "largest solar company in the world". The green image campaign for the project cost nearly four times as much. Between 2005 and 2009, BP invested around 2.9 billion dollars into its "alternative energy" division; a meagre 4.2 per cent of the company's total investments during those years. "BP's solar energy output is about one tenth of a per cent of its oil and gas output," the German daily *Tageszeitung* quoted from a *Wall Street Journal* report.[60] During this time, BP also began exploiting Canadian tar sands, a particularly environmentally polluting process. In the wake of the environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, the company forfeited all credibility for its ecological ambitions.

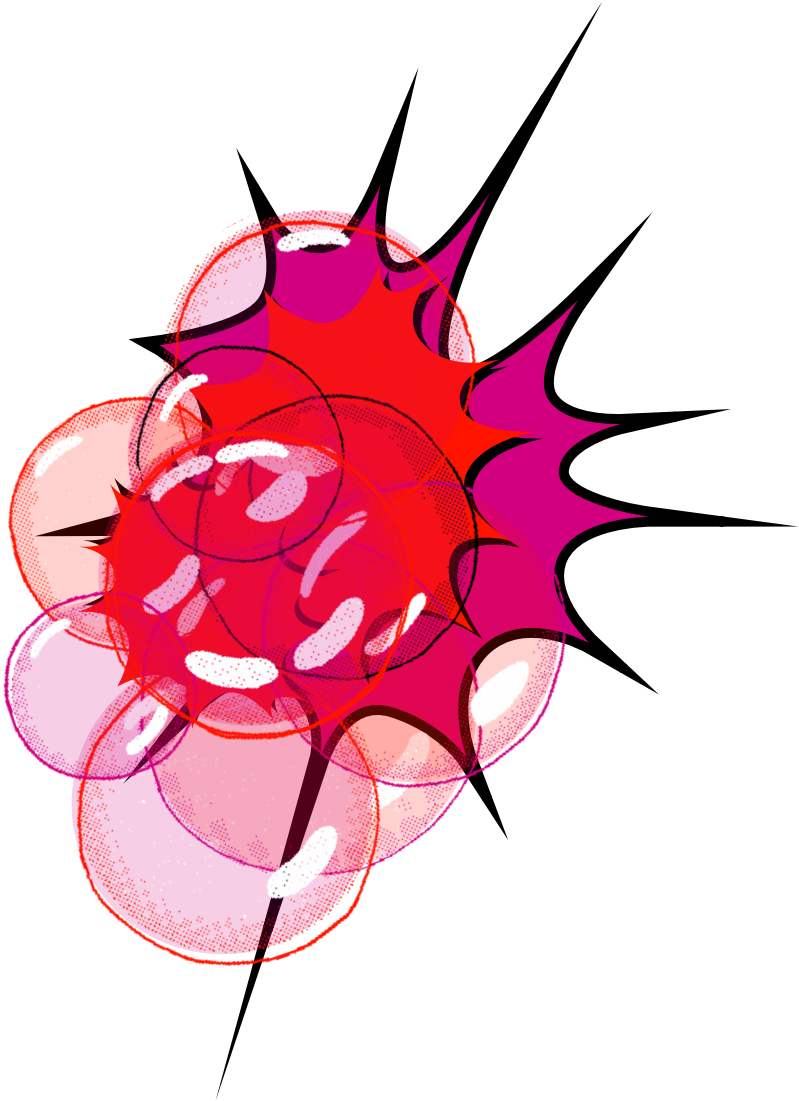
The non-sustainable interests of corporations also have an effect on society. Large corporations and economic groups do not simply react to but also actively shape consumer demands. Product development and marketing in turn are both based on profitability considerations. Companies do not base decisions for new products on some form of process of economic democ-

59 BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 168. **60** Staud, Toralf : Greenwash von BP: Klarsicht dank Ölteppich, in: die tageszeitung, 25.4.2010. Web: taz.de/!52966

racy; they do not involve employees or other groups in society. To the contrary, wherever society still actively participates in the production of goods and food, companies often take over. Focussing on private companies is also a form of large-scale privatisation. Monsanto, the genetic engineering company, for example, has been trying to prevent seed saving by farmers for around 20 years. Monsanto's and other seed company giants' target markets are precisely those regions in the Global South where peasant communities still save seeds.[61]

Finally, when it comes to state regulations, companies are not simply passive actors. Their economic power exerts considerable political influence. Companies are therefore an important factor in protecting the environment and in a sustainable use of resources. In order to avoid being guided solely by profit principles, as it is set by management, shareholder interests, banks and the rich, we need politics to enforce rules, society to strictly control compliance with these rules, and an ecologically conscious workforce that has a right to participate in all fundamental business decisions. Conscious consumers and a broad civil society basis that is capable of criticising companies and discussing alternatives are equally important factors; i.e. a "public production sphere". For that matter, the abovementioned Copenhagen Green Climate Fund to promote cooperation between the Global North and South so far basically lacks funding.

61 ETC Group: Who will control the Green Economy. ETC Group Communiqué No. 107, Ottawa 2011. Web: www.etcgroup.org/files/publication/pdf_file/ETC_wwctge_4web_Dec2011.pdf



8

"EMPLOYEES AND UNIONS BLOCK THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION"

A regularly heard argument is that in spite of the "green employment" that the Green Economy promises, unions nonetheless refuse to integrate a systematic green strategy into their political programmes. In countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the unions vehemently defend their country's position as attractive locations for industry, and this defence extends even to environmentally hazardous economic branches. Yet in resource-efficient branches such as wind energy, they are brazen enough to defend collective labour agreements and work councils against all odds. This endangers newly created or potential jobs in companies that have to compete globally with locations offering lower salaries.

What are the facts?

It is true that people such as Frank Bsirske, president of Germany's services trade union ver.di, also sit on the board of energy corporation RWE. Unfortunately, this leads Bsirske, whose position should predestine him to emphasize the particular resource-efficiency and eco-friendliness of employment in the services sector, to champion the expansion of opencast coal mining. In Germany in particular, unions continue to uphold climate-damaging forms of production – in spite of promises for new jobs in the Green economy.

To a certain degree, competitive corporatism, which still runs strong, is to blame. In Germany, Austria and Switzerland unions frequently prefer to defend their country as an attractive location for (in many cases polluting and non-sustainable) industry. Due to strong ties between unions, management and owners and also to state representatives, unions still find it hard to face environmental policy and other issues. Further reasons lie in the union tradition. In the past, workers won the recognition of central demands in the coal and steel industries.

Nonetheless, we need to strengthen the forces within unions and among employees that actively promote a reorientation towards a greater responsibility of society for sustainability.[62] Without the unions as socio-political actors, the socio-ecological transition will not happen in many countries. This is mainly because the concrete form such a transition should take is a contested issue, even among unions. Unions indeed represent the legitimate interests of wage earners, and in particular of their members. Frequently, however, they are caught up in the dilemma that the ecological transition comes at a cost for employees. Successfully undoing this knot and tying employees and workers into the socio-ecological transition will be key.

Approaches in other parts of the world already aim to unite both aspects in their political struggles. The dirt of polluting industries is a problem not only for the workers in these industries, but also for everybody living in the regions where they are located. These people are fighting for a conversion of the modes of production and living that is at once ecological and provides a good and healthy working environment. Their approach therefore takes into account the social environment.

Here, too, unions are beginning to demand a fundamental structural transition. What kind of future is there for the regions if we no longer use coal as an energy source? The German, Austrian and Swiss unions are exceptional cases. In a global comparison, they have a large membership base and therefore potentially great bargaining power. As a last point, we need to recognise that any economy that sticks to capitalist-driven growth will remain environmentally polluting. As a tendency, any such model will maintain and further exacerbate social injustices. Frequently this also implies that poor people have only limited access to goods such as water and electricity. As a consequence, they in particular have to worry about losing their jobs.

62 See for example the many interesting approaches presented in the special issue 2/2015 Gutes Leben für alle (A good life for all) in the magazine Wirtschaft & Umwelt of the Austrian Chamber of Labour. Web: http://akwien-ftp.arbeiterkammer.at/akfs/WUM_02_2015/.

Conclusion: Unions urgently need to re-assert their socio-political mandate. For too long they have focussed on maintaining a core membership in particular sectors of the economy. Many experiences show that labour struggles per se do not contradict environmental goals. This, however, requires a different form of politics. An intact environment is as much in the interests of employees as their job.[63]

Union policies and the socio-ecological transition should therefore not focus solely on companies or particular sectors. The environment in which wage earners live must also be taken into account. What about the adverse health effects of fine dust caused by lignite opencast mining on workers and people living close by? Is it in the interests of workers that mines lead entire villages to be razed, villages to which they have personal ties?

Also within unions and among employees this requires a rethink. A policy focus on formal employment is insufficient. Changes to the fundamental workings of the economy must begin with those who provide the economic output. This includes the productive industries and care work. A transition requires a broad, society-wide discussion of what we want to produce and need to consume in the face of the socio-ecological crisis and in terms of a good life for everyone.

63 See for example the research project financed by the Austrian climate and energy fund at the University Vienna *Die Rolle von Gewerkschaften und Arbeitnehmer_innen-Interessen bei der Gestaltung einer sozial-ökologischen Gesellschaft.* Web: http://trafo-labour.univie.ac.at/

9

"GREEN MONEY STIMULATES A GREEN ECONOMY"

The Green Economy aims to channel capital from "dirty sectors" into "green sectors".[64] This will require large-scale investments into the energy sector, infrastructure and agriculture and the development of sustainable industrial products. Banks and investment funds will provide the necessary funds, either in the form of loans or by developing their own projects. As well as useful investments to promote renewables or the refurbishment of old buildings under energy considerations, they will buy land to cultivate plants such as oil palms, sugar cane, soy or maize to produce biofuels.

After years in which financial markets were "decoupled" from the real economy, the UBA writes, we now need to reassess their function in society. They need to finance and secure "green" investments. "Astoundingly, in spite of a central bank induced expansion of the money supply, many countries are experiencing financing shortfalls for their entire economies and therefore also for a Green Economy. Debts and in consequence a lack of funds threaten as much public households as also 'green' companies (public households due to constraints to reduce the public debt and green companies due to the meagre capital base of banks that ushers in a more restrictive lending policy)."[65]

What are the facts?

Increasingly capital indeed seems to be flowing into new sectors.[66] Although in general we should welcome this development, we need to analyse it in the context of the increasing financialisation of the economy since the 1980s. As a term, "financialisation" describes not only the increase in speculation, but more generally the "growing role of financial motives, financial markets, actors and institutions"[67] in the economy and

64 UNEP: Towards a Green Economy. **65** Lutz et al.: Green Economy, p. 136. **66** Zeller, Christian: Die Natur als Anlagefeld des konzentrierten Finanzkapitals, in: Schmieder, Falko (eds.): Zur Kritik der politischen Ökologie, Bern/Berlin 2010, p. 103 ff. **67** Epstein, Gerald A.: Financialization and the World Economy, London 2005, p. 3; Journal für Entwicklungspolitik 2/2014: The Financialization of Land, Food, and Nature; Kill, Jutta: Ökonomische Bewertung der Natur. Der Preis für Naturschutz, Brussels 2015.

for economic policies. Financial capital, seeking investment opportunities, has grown strongly in the wake of the deregulation of financial markets. The industry introduced new financial products, and pensions were (in part) privatised. The increased profits of many companies, savings of private individuals and the enormous trade surpluses of emerging economies – all of this capital is looking for profitable investment opportunities.

Financialisation also has its impact on the resource sector and ecology. Increasingly, capital flows into resource and energy companies and commodity futures exchanges, even by generally conservative investors such as pension funds, life insurers and foundations.[68] Emissions trading too has become a field of investment. According to the World Bank, in 2011 the global carbon market had a total value of 142 billion dollars.[69]

Apparently, therefore, not only the "traditional" resources-based economy, but also the Green Economy are good business for investment capital. With the growing power of finance capital, the question of whether politics sets the standards for the economy or whether it is rather strong market forces that use politics to enforce their interests will become a more pressing issue. Moreover, the powerful trend towards a financialisation of nature marginalises other alternatives. If capital flows into buying land to produce "clean" biofuels, small farmers will find it hard to survive.[70] Green Economy strategists must have realised that capital looking for opportunities for valuation exerts economic and social power. Capital's priority is not to solve the ecological, social and economic problems and in most cases simply strives for high returns.

A joint study by the environmental NGOs BUND and Sandbag on climate policy published a couple of years ago evidenced the fact that "far from being an added cost to German manufacturers, the ETS has been a 'cash cow' providing large surpluses of free carbon allowances that they were able to sell as a revenue stream, or retain to protect them from future compliance costs

68 See: Schneeweiß, Antje: Spekulation im Schatten. Nachhaltigkeit und Investitionen in Rohstoffe, Siegburg 2011. **69** See: https://sandbag.org.uk/ **70** Pichler, Melanie: Umkämpfte Natur. Politische Ökologie der Palmöl- und Agrartreibstoffproduktion in Südostasien, Münster 2014.

under the scheme."[71] The study based its findings on companies that produce in Germany. Emissions trading "afforded opportunities to profit by as much as 1.2 billion euros from being in the scheme to date".[72]

Alone the nine "refineries, chemical plants, and iron, steel and cement companies active in Germany received one billion CO_2 certificates free of charge that they did not need. According to the EU Commission, there are currently around two billion more CO_2 certificates within the European emissions trading system than the companies active in the EU need."[73]

71 Morris, Damien – BUND/Sandbag: Der Klimagoldesel 2013: Carbon Fatcat Companies in Germany, Berlin, 2013, p. 3. Web: http://www.bund.net/fileadmin/bundnet/pdfs/klima_und_energie/130212_bund_klima_und_energie_klimagoldesel_studie_englisch.pdf. See also: FERN – Kill, Jutta/Ozinga, Saskia/Pavett, Steven/Wainwright, Richard: Trading carbon: How it works and why it is controversial, Brussels 2010. Web: www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/tradingcarbon_internet_FINAL.pdf. **72** Morris/BUND/Sandbag: Der Klimagoldesel 2013. **73** Dehmer, Dagmar: Schwerindustrie profitiert vom Emissionshandel, in: Der Tagessspiegel, 17.3.2014. Web: www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/europaeische-klimapolitik-schwerindustrie-profitiert-vom-emissionshandel/9623656.html.

10

"GERMANY CAN USE GREEN TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND ON ITS POSITION AS A WORLD MARKET LEADER"

According to the UBA, German companies in the green technology sector currently hold a 6 to 30 per cent share in the global market, which they are likely to expand. By 2020, the green energy and energy storage lead market could expand to over 600 billion euros.[74]

"German providers of products, processes and services in the green technology and resource efficiency sectors are highly present on international markets. The analysis of company data reveals a 39 per cent export ratio for the green technology branch, which means that this cross-sectoral industry generates 39 per cent of its turnover abroad. More or less this corresponds to the German economy's 2013 overall 40 per cent export ratio." The main reason is Germany's edge in resource efficiency technologies.[75]

This also serves competitiveness. "German companies are benefiting substantially from growing global demand for 'green' products, processes and services. In the lead markets that are driving this demand, German companies already have a strong presence and excellent positions for future growth. With environmental and efficiency technologies, they are generating and sustaining growth – including significant growth in exports."[76]

What are the facts?

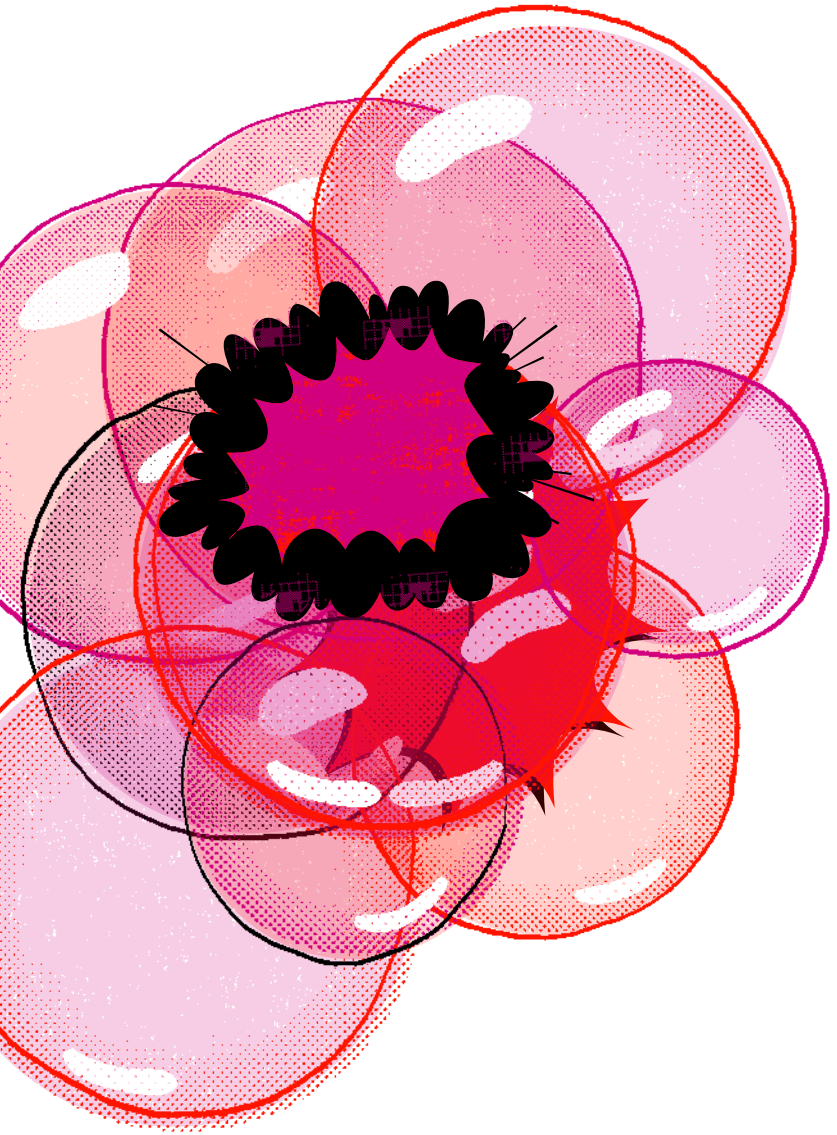
It is not only for countries such as Germany with a strong industrial base that the development of green technology is important and desirable. The concept of the Green Economy is based on the "greening" of the global market and innovation through the competition principle by providing supportive state policies.

74 BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 3. **75** Jacob, Klaus et al.: Strategien und Optionen zur Stärkung der Ressourcenpolitik im Rahmen einer Green Economy, Berlin 2015, p. 5. **76** BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 4.

However, the first question would have to be which products we are actually talking about. Are they really the right ones to advance us towards a sustainable society? Although they do not question the principle of private motor transport, generally electromotors are considered an element of the Green Economy. Offshore wind farms are another example for the ambivalence of green technology. They cement the monopoly of large energy corporations, can have catastrophic ecological consequences and lead to conflicts surrounding the high-tension electricity lines from the coasts to the central locations of consumption.

Secondly, in the solar energy sector, one of the central energy sectors, we witnessed how in spite of German high-tech industries the production of PV modules has been increasingly relocated to China, simply because production costs there are lower. Clearly, technology leadership is just one factor among others such as salary levels and resource availability. That China can overtake Germany is often interpreted as a defeat for Germany. From the point of view of the climate, however, it does not matter which country produces the PV modules (although we can criticise China's environmental and social standards). German politics, therefore, is clearly less concerned with the climate than with increasing German exports.

Thirdly, whilst we praise the merits of competition, we should not forget that innovation is not the only result of competition. There are also always the losers. Competition pushes many people in less innovative countries into the role of resource providers for the green technology industries of countries such as Germany. They remain poor and dependant. Outcompeting the economies of weaker countries, as we can currently witness in Europe, leads to crises, the devaluation of production structures, unemployment and poverty. The purported drive for "technological leadership" in reality masks the drive for global dominance. The protection of the environment becomes a tool for German or European leadership, whilst it should actually be the other way round.



Fourthly: In a system where companies compete globally for market shares, technological innovation remains a central factor to ensuring the competitiveness of companies or countries. This effectively blocks the sharing of such technologies. From an environmental point of view, it would be best if all countries had the cleanest available technology. However, technology, its price, as well as possibly the monopoly over a certain technology are themselves part of global competition, and companies want to profit from them. The economically powerful and their political arm have a tendency to privilege large-scale and capital-intensive technologies that they can control. More often than not, they block gentle and locally adapted technologies and non-technological, sufficiency approaches that German exporters cannot benefit from.

Fifthly, the production of high-tech often requires rare or increasingly rare resources. This exacerbates the geoeconomic and geopolitical competition over resources, which in turn can lead to conflicts.

11

"WITH OUR SHOPPING BASKET WE CAN FORCE COMPANIES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT"

Many contributions to the Green Economy debate make the point that values in society have already transitioned to focusing on ecological products and lifestyles. "The representative survey conducted for the study *Umweltbewusstsein in Deutschland 2012* (Environmental Awareness in Germany 2012) showed that more than one third of Germans have never purchased organic products. Respondents either considered organic products too expensive or questioned their benefits. However, a look at the retail statistics goes at least some way to putting this negative attitude into perspective: Sales of organic foods in Germany rose from 3.5 billion euros to 7.55 billion euros between 2004 and 2013. German households spent about seven per cent more money on organic food and drink in

2013. This trend can be interpreted as a sign of a change in consumer behaviour that will advance the green transformation."[77] For Austria, the relative figures are even higher.
The idea therefore was to build on this. The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU), which advises the German government, also believes that the emerging "post-material values"[78] could become an important basis for a sustainable economy. Through the power of consumption decisions, consumers will force companies to produce "clean" products; a concept labelled "consumer sovereignty". This will mean providing information and creating greater awareness.[79]

What are the facts?

Actions by individuals, responsibility and related processes of learning are important. This also applies to consumption decisions. Do I always have to have the latest mobile phone model? How often do I have to fly? Yet, before celebrating the power of consumers and the self-determined "customer as king"[80], we should first remember: in the capitalist economy, it is companies that determine research and development and on products and methods of production. The social and environmental conditions under which companies produce, for example, a mobile phone and which components it is made of, are a company decision and therefore based on the profit expectations of investors and banks. The many small and medium-sized pioneers of an alternative economy often find it hard to prevail amid the competition.

Second, the production chains of the final consumer products are often long and include many suppliers from all over the globe. For consumers it is nearly impossible to assess how sustainable production is at each link in the chain and usually very little or no information is provided. That companies try to "greenwash" their products – often based on false claims as

77 BMUB: GreenTech made in Germany 4.0, p. 205. **78** WBGU: Welt im Wandel, p. 100. **79** Jacob et al.: Strategien und Optionen. **80** Grunwald, Armin: Ende einer Illusion, Warum ökologisch korrekter Konsum die Umwelt nicht retten kann, Munich 2012, p. 14.

the many food scandals have shown – further limits the power of consumers.

Thirdly, to a great degree, the power of consumers therefore depends on the size of their purse. More money awards more freedom of choice: Will my holiday involve a long-haul flight, or do I just go to the Baltic Sea? Poor people do not have this choice: they are *forced* to do without. Moderation, sufficiency and doing without are important leitmotivs of a socio-ecological transformation. But people will only act accordingly if they can take such a decision out of free will.[81]

Fourthly, consumers do not always have a choice. If the local train for example cancels its services, this will force people to switch to cars. When work becomes condensed, less time is left to prepare food. If industrially produced and elaborately packaged food is cheaper, poor people have a significantly lower degree of choice than others.

81 Noll, Heinz-Herbert/Weick, Stefan: Lebenszufriedenheit steigt mit der Höhe der Konsumausgaben. Analysen zur Struktur von Konsumausgaben und subjektivem Wohlbefinden, in: Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren, 51, 2014, pp. 1–6.

12

"THE GREEN ECONOMY OFFERS THE GLOBAL SOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT"

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Green Economy is not only a means of fighting climate change and energy insecurity, it also offers countries of the Global South a path out of poverty. Allegedly, the Green Economy reduces CO_2 emissions, enhances resource and energy efficiency and limits environmental pollution. The Global South can export eco-friendly products and offer ecosystem services – such as the protection of forests. Moreover, the Green Economy could decrease the vulnerability of marginalised groups in society, who are generally more affected by resource scarcity and environmental pollution. As a strategy, "inclusive green growth" describes an approach that considers social concerns. If economic growth and investments no longer caused environmental pollution, then rich and poor countries alike could strive for more sustainable development.[82] This, at least, is the hope.

What are the facts?

Even UNEP employees suspect that this might not be that simple to achieve.[83]

First, even though an economic boom has indeed freed many people in the Global South from poverty, even in the current crisis one fact nonetheless remains: the impressive economic growth of some countries in the Global South is based on non-sustainable modes of production and living, namely on catch-up industrialisation, leading to increasing environmental problems in the countries involved.[84] China's low-salary and polluting production environment, for example, ensures the country's high growth rates; a fact which also applies to China's production of solar panels for the Green Economy.[85]

82 UNEP: Towards a Green Economy, p. 16. **83** Ibd. **84** International Institute for Sustainable Development & UNEP: Trade and Green Economy, p. 20. **85** Blume, Jutta/Greger, Nika/Pomrehn, Wolfgang: Oben hui, unten pfui? Rohstoffe für die «grüne» Wirtschaft: Bedarfe – Probleme – Handlungsoptionen für Wirtschaft, Politik & Zivilgesellschaft, Berlin 2011. Web: power-shift.de/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/PowerShift-ForumUE-StudieRohstoffe-Gr%C3%BCneWirtschaft-2011web_klein.pdf.

Secondly, since the implementation of structural adjustments in the 1980s, many African and Latin American as well as some Asian countries have been reduced to the status of resource suppliers for the Global North. Often, the literature refers to this development model as "neo-extractivism".[86] As the Green Economy also depends on resources, for example on maize, soy or palm oil to make "sustainable" biofuels, the concept provides no real alternative. Furthermore, "neo-extractivism", a model mostly for countries of the Global South, allows the countries of the Global North to maintain their non-sustainable lifestyle.

The effects are actually much worse. "With the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) companies are allowed to finance projects in the Global South to reduce greenhouse gas emissions thereby offsetting their own emissions. Instead of avoiding CO_2 emissions in the polluting countries, reductions take place in countries in which reduction costs are low. Unfavourable reduction measures are transferred from North to South thereby reproducing and establishing neo-colonial structures."[87]

Thirdly, in the past and present, resource extraction leads to brutal conflicts. Resources such as Coltan for mobile phones and laptops for example are extracted illegally in the Republic of Congo, and the profits go into financing bloody wars. A Green Economy, too, will continue to depend on such resources, which means that struggles surrounding their exploitation will also continue.[88]

Fourthly, frequently only the narrow middle and upper classes in many of the resource-extracting countries (Latin America is to a certain extent an exception) profit. Whilst the local population usually hardly gains from extraction, it does have to bear the ecological consequences. The result is that in spite of the

86 Brand, Ulrich/Dietz, Kristina: Dialektik der Ausbeutung. Der neue Rohstoffboom in Lateinamerika, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 11/2013, p. 75–84; Brand, Ulrich: Lateinamerika in der Rohstoff-Falle, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 2/2015, pp. 33–36. **87** BUKO: Still not loving COPs. Thesenpapier des Arbeitskreises Gesellschaftliche Naturverhältnisse, Hamburg 2015, p. 4. **88** Blume et al.: Oben hui, unten pfui?

successes of emerging economies in areas such as health and education, globally, social inequality is on the rise.[89] Growing social inequality in turn promotes environmentally detrimental practices.

Representatives from the Global South warn that Green Economy-based development strategies are less ambitious than those proposed in Rio 1992, which aimed for a concept of development that combines economic, social and ecological factors. The Green Economy could leave questions surrounding distribution unanswered. Moreover, countries from the Global North could use environmental standards to justify trade sanctions against countries of the Global South and force them to open their markets for "clean technologies".

Freeing the weaker regions and countries from dependency and strengthening alternative modes of production – these are central aspects not considered by the Green Economy. The Global North maintains its technological edge and secures its competitiveness. The concept, however, suggests that true sustainability, which strikes a balance between ecological and social concerns, is achievable simply by providing a "green" economic focus. This would depend on a greater democratisation of the world market and global politics, corresponding clearing mechanisms and a renunciation of the imperative for growth and competition.

89 See: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Human Development Report 2011, New York 2011, p. 28. Web: hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/271/hdr_2011_en_complete.pdf

13

"THE GREEN ECONOMY REDUCES POVERTY"

Official UN statements generally place the Green Economy in the "context of sustainable development and the struggle against poverty". "Environmental degradation and poverty can be simultaneously addressed by applying green agricultural practices."[90] Sustainable forms of forestry and green agriculture, therefore, are particularly significant for subsistence farming, on which the livelihoods of 1.3 billon people depend.[91] Ending poverty is also central to the sustainable development goals adopted by the UN in September 2015. This is to be achieved by means of "sustained and inclusive economic growth".[92]

What are the facts?

Here, too, there is much reason to be sceptical. A Green Economy does not simply make the reasons for poverty disappear: unequal access to education and healthcare, income opportunities and access to loans. There is a lack of investment into agriculture, which could increase productivity and thereby feed small farmers and ensure them a good price for their products. All of this is the result of the political and economic relations of power within many countries and at the international level.[93]

Not all experiences with "sustainable development" have been positive. Not only does the process of climate change, species extinction, deforestation and desertification continue. The dominant relations of power meant many well-intentioned initiatives ended up only increasing the levels of poverty. There are for example many cases in which indigenous people were expelled from their land on the grounds that their lifestyle was not sustainable (instead of creating sustainable systems). This happens for example when nature reserves are created, which prevents any further interference in natural processes. In other cases, companies displace people to gain access to natural resources.

90 UNEP: Towards a Green Economy, p. 36. **91** Ibd. **92** See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/. **93** See: Lander, Edgardo: El lobo se viste con piel de cordero, in: América Latina en movimiento. Accessed on 11.10.2011. Web: www.alainet.org/es/active/50100; Moreno, Camila: Las ropas verdes del rey. La economía verde: una nueva fuente de acumulación primitive, in: Lang, Miriam et al. (eds.): Alternativas al Capitalismo/Colonialismo del Siglo XXI, Quito 2013, pp. 63–97.

Notwithstanding some notable exceptions, the question of social equality is not a Green Economy priority.[94] Redistributing wealth in particular is a taboo – growth is to solve everything and nobody is interested in asking whom such growth benefits. The structural basis for inequality remains untouched.

Whether "green" or not – the key will be whether we tackle the underlying causes of poverty and inequality and adapt the economic and political structures accordingly. Current developments emphasise a concentration of power in the hands of agricultural and food corporations. Under the label of green technology, companies introduce genetically modified seeds. People are expropriated and robbed of opportunities. Small farmers lose their land and are forced to work as day-labourers on biofuel plantations.[95]

Successfully fighting poverty is therefore a question of who holds the political and economic power. However, the most powerful political and economic actors do not seem to take the struggle against poverty that seriously. In its resource strategy, the German government claims that it wishes to offer the resource-extracting countries a fair chance to develop. The dominant motive of the strategy nonetheless is to secure a resource basis for the German and European economy, as evidenced by the cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan. During German chancellor Merkel's visit to the country in February 2012, 50 agreements worth 4.5 billion euros were signed. "Kazakhstan is an ideal partner to supply resources to Germany. Nearly all the metals relevant to industry can be found there," Ralf Heß wrote in the online magazine *Telepolis* in spring 2011.[96] For the country's authoritarian regime, however, fighting poverty and ensuring human rights are at the very bottom of their list of priorities.

94 Herman: Green new deal. **95** See: International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD): Global Report, Washington D.C. 2009. **96** Heß, Ralf: Rohstoffpartner Kasachstan, accessed on 3.4.2011. Web: www.heise. de/tp/artikel/34/34457/1.html

CONCLUSION

IN LIGHT OF THE FALSE PROMISES ASSOCIATED WITH THE GREEN ECONOMY, A SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION IS NECESSARY (AND POSSIBLE)!

Harmony is the foremost goal of the Green Economy. The concept aims to reconcile the economy with ecology, protect nature, reduce poverty and provide robust economic growth. The promise is that this will also provide good jobs. Yet, progressive environmental degradation, as well as increasing conflicts and social injustice, show that this goal is not that easy to achieve.

This is mainly the case because the capitalist imperative for growth and the dominance of the profit principle, as well as the related powerful interests, constantly thwart the lofty goals. The Green Economy promises to modernise capitalism through "greening". The capitalist logic of competition, or the relations of power that benefit business, are left untouched.[97] Consumers are called on to act with greater ecological awareness, yet the anti-ecological principles inherent to the capitalist mode of production are supposed to remain.

The Green Economy – in its currently promoted form – does not reconcile capitalist companies and the climate, or the rich and the poor classes in society, neither locally nor globally. Such a one-sided project cannot work, it's more like trying to have your cake and eat it too.

Generally, the development of the concept of the Green Economy can only be understood in the context of the obvious shortcomings of global environmental policy and the recent economic and financial crisis. After the end of the Cold War, global leaders achieved a historic compromise at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The term "sustainable development" aimed to reconcile the positions of the Global North and South.

97 See: Wichterich: Kapitalismus mit Wärmedämmung.

The goal was to treat ecological, social and economic concerns as equal. Future generations and their life opportunities were a central motive of "sustainable development".[98] In spite of the many problematic assumptions of the sustainability concept, it at least proposed a connection between the three spheres. The Green Economy no longer does this. It generally bypasses social questions and subordinates environmental concerns to economic reasoning.

Inter-generational questions, i.e. those concerning a good future, do not play a role at all. Fundamentally, the proponents of the Green Economy want to show that we can implement measures to protect the environment and make a profit. Through large-scale investments, they intend to develop green technologies and corresponding markets. By assigning a value to nature and putting a price on ecosystem services, they hope to protect the environment. Thereby, however, they subordinate the protection of the environment to the logic of profitability. Moreover, the term has gained such importance thanks to the overaccumulation of capital, which the crisis revealed. This capital is desperately searching for new opportunities for investment and valuation. The danger is not only investments and financial flows "becoming greener": the Green Economy could lead to an expansion of capitalist principles *onto* nature.[99]

The Green Economy is therefore not a game in which everybody wins; it harbours great potential for conflict. The concept already excludes many people and is based on the relations of power and domination of the ruling economic paradigm. A closer look at the concrete forms of the Green Economy and underlying forces and interests reveals that the dominant interest today is the expansion of capitalist market structures. The central aim is more capitalist-driven growth.

Capitalism does react to problems such as environmental degradation. However, such action is always under the control of

98 Pichler, Melanie: Nachhaltigkeit, in: Bauriedl, Sybille (eds.): Wörterbuch Klimadebatte, Bielefeld 2015, forthcoming. **99** Attac France: La nature n'a pas de prix, Paris 2012, p. 14; Kill, Jutta: Ökonomische Bewertung der Natur. Der Preis für Naturschutz? Brussels 2015. Web: www.rosalux.de/publication/41695/oekonomische-bewertung-von-natur-der-preis-fuer-naturschutz.html

and according to the interests of corporations and the rich. A fundamentally different basis for energy production, distribution and consumption and a greater efficiency of production and products is in principle possible. Investors will appear, for as long as they can make a profit. Still, it is highly unlikely that this mechanism will actually lead to fundamental changes.[100]

The attempt to establish the Green Economy as the new global model for development at the Rio+20 conference failed – the summit did not provide important results. The same is true for the 21st world climate conference in Paris 2015. Nonetheless, the idea of increasing the acceptance of capitalism in society and stabilising the system through "greening" persists. Numerous governments, corporations, think tanks and individuals are working to establish elements of the Green Economy. The Green Economy Coalition[101], an association of various international organisations, proposes that a coalition of countries such as South Korea, Japan, Denmark and Germany, in collaboration with pioneering companies and with the support of the UN and other international organisations, take the lead and drive the establishment of a Green Economy or global green growth. Away from media attention and international summits, the organisation develops strategies and founds international institutes such as the Global Green Growth Institute.[102] Instead of providing impulses for a true transition, these initiatives threaten to eternalise non-sustainable economic structures, a fact recognised even by leading German politicians. Together with representatives from environmental and development associations, they launched an appeal in the run-up to the Rio+20 conference. Instead of developing green capitalism, they demanded a new concept of growth and wealth creation which is not based on resource consumption. Worldwide, the majority of progressive civil society also either views the different aspects of the Green Economy critically or rejects it outright.

100 See: Kaufmann, Stephan/Müller, Tadzio: Grüner Kapitalismus. Krise, Klimawandel und kein Ende des Wachstums, Berlin 2011; Brand, Ulrich/Wissen, Markus: Strategien einer Green Economy, Konturen eines grünen Kapitalismus, in: Atzmüller, Roland et al. (eds.): Fit für die Krise? Perspektiven der Regulationstheorie, Münster 2013, pp. 132–148. **101** The Green Economy Coalition unites several renowned inter-governmental organisations and NGOs. Among these are the UNEP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). **102** See: www.gggi.org.

We should not reduce the Green Economy to a question of CO_2 concentrations, solar energy subsidies and large-scale technology projects. The question is bigger than that. The Green Economy is about shaping the relationship between people, society and nature. Currently, this still often takes a form that is directed against people, does not allow for solidarity and destroys nature. Significant changes to this model can only be expected if the social context changes and a solidarity-based and truly sustainable mode of production and living can develop.[103] These are the fundamental question. What does a sustainable city look like? Based on which criteria do we produce and distribute food? How do we want to live?[104]

A solidarity-based mode of production and living will only become possible if socially valuable products are produced in socially secure employment – and if salaried work is no longer the only sense in life ("living to work"). Salaried work should not only provide an income, it should also be meaningful. This requires making the large amount of non-paid work visible and changing it where this makes sense, such as in the case of the care work done overwhelmingly for free by women.

Interesting in this respect are current discussions surrounding "the good life" in Latin America.[105] In Germany, too, proposals for a post-growth economy or economy for the common good and a socio-ecological transition are increasingly being developed. In September 2014 the 4th International Degrowth Conference took place in Leipzig with over 3,000 participants.[106] Numerous publications discuss alternatives.[107] Numerous associations position themselves clearly against further growth[108], and the University of Jena hosts the DFG-funded post-growth society research group. Not least, the discussions surrounding

103 Such approaches are described for example by Brand, Ulrich et al. (eds.): ABC der Alternativen 2.0, Hamburg 2012. **104** See: Grunwald, Armin: Ende einer Illusion, München 2012. **105** See: Fatheuer, Thomas: Buen Vivir – Eine kurze Einführung in Lateinamerikas neue Konzepte zum guten Leben und zu den Rechten der Natur, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin 2011, and Gudynas, Eduardo/Lang, Miriam/Pedersen, Birte: Buen Vivir – Das gute Leben jenseits von Wachstum und Entwicklung, edited by Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Reihe Analysen, Berlin 2012. Web: www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Analysen/Analyse_buenvivir.pdf **106** See: www.degrowth.de/ **107** See for example: blog-wachstum.de; Schmelzer, Matthias/Passadakis, Alexis: Postwachstum: Krise, ökologische Grenzen und soziale Rechte, Hamburg 2011; Seidl, Irmi/Zahrnt, Angelika (eds.): Postwachstumsgesellschaft. Konzepte für die Zukunft, Marburg 2010. **108** For example the association Verein für Ökologische Ökonomie (voeoe.de) and its network for young researchers Wachstumswende (wachstumswende.org).

the importance of growth for wellbeing and quality of life by a fact finding commission in the German parliament led to a broad reception of growth critical positions and the related debate on alternatives.[109]

Alongside criticism of current politics and social developments, it is important to analyse and support the numerous positive approaches (initiatives and movements, progressive companies and bold and farsighted policies, critical research and journalism). This will require broad coalitions. Groups that have so far hindered this process, such as the unions, need to be convinced that fundamental socio-ecological transformations are very much in their interest and are compatible with their values. "A good life for all instead of Dolce Vita for a few," writes one of the leading Latin American intellectuals Alberto Acosta.[110] It will also require strong concepts such as climate justice, food sovereignty or just a good life for all. We also need positive narratives, ideas and utopias for a better life that are worth fighting for.[111] Importantly, we need a "future perspective that promises a better quality of life". [112]

However, these can only be the initial steps. There is so much to do. Only if the capitalist imperative for growth and the principle of profit lose their dominance, if relations of power such as those between the genders and between different ethnic groups are changed, then a world will become possible in which people can organise their lives and their relationship with nature based on democracy, solidarity and truly sustainable principles.

109 See: http://webarchiv.bundestag.de/archive/2013/1212/bundestag/gremien/enquete/wachstum/index.html. **110** Acosta. Alberto: Buen vivir: Vom Recht auf ein gutes Leben, Munich 2014, p. 19. **111** BUKO: Still not loving COPs; Welzer, Harald/Sommer, Bernd: Transformationsdesign. Wege in eine zukunftsfähige Moderne, Munich 2014. **112** Descamps, Philippe: Mehr Intelligenz, in: Le Monde Diplomatique, 7/2015, p. 19.

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