

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ITS ENEMIES?

Understanding economic performance in a changing world

Two-day hybrid conference
1-2 JUNE 2023, Helsinki

We are happy to announce that a hybrid conference on economic growth will take place on June 1-2, 2023, at the University of Helsinki. The conference is part of a Horizon 2020 project Individual Behaviour and Economic Performance (IBEP) led by Tallinn University of Technology. The 2-day event aims to bring together economists from different schools of thought, philosophers of economics, and other social scientists studying economic growth and methodology of economics. The conference will provide an opportunity for attendees to bridge the gaps between different methodological approaches and develop a more integrated multidisciplinary perspective on economic growth and economic performance. Selected papers from the conference will be considered for publication in a journal special issue.

The event is organised by Michiru Nagatsu, N. Emrah Aydinonat, and Milutin Stojanovic and hosted by the Centre for Philosophy of Social Science (TINT) and Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science (HELSUS), University of Helsinki.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- **1 April:** Abstract (max. 400 words) submission deadline
- **15 April:** Decision on abstracts and the conference program
- **1-2 June:** Conference in Helsinki

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- **Jeroen van den Bergh** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona & Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
- **Tiina Heikkinen** (University of Helsinki)

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS:

Economic growth is generally seen as most important indicator of economic performance in economics. The recent post-growth movement has challenged this mainstream focus on growth, drawing on ecological, complexity, evolutionary and other perspectives on the relation between the economy and the environment. Much like the debates on strong vs. weak sustainability and valuation of ecosystem services, the debate concerning economic growth has not (yet) brought about a synthesis. Dialogue between the two camps, on theoretical, methodological and empirical issues, is virtually nonexistent. However, rhetorical accusations, such as the argument that other camp lacks empiricism and realism or commits elementary arithmetic or logical errors, are abundant. How should we interpret the current state of affairs? Is a Kuhnian revolution is imminent, or did we actually get stuck with little hope of progress?

This two-day conference aims at contributing to ‘the economy vs. the environment’ debates by asking the following questions. (a) What explains the divergence or disengagement among scientific positions on economic growth? (b) How should they be reconciled or otherwise managed to provide actionable policy recommendations for sustainability?

The conference provides a venue for scholars from different schools of economics, mainstream or otherwise, to present their methodological approaches and reflect on them with scholars from different traditions. This cross disciplinary discussion should serve as a steppingstone towards a more inclusive and integrated theory of economic growth or its alternatives. The aim is to produce a clearer picture of the current research landscape around the topic, and to instigate the process of identifying and, ultimately, bridging the gaps between the different methodological schools and approaches.

We also welcome research from methodologists and philosophers reflecting on the issue of growth, as well as research on management of pluralistic and divergent thought collectives, the proper role of values in economic research, and on enhancing integration between approaches and schools. Questions we are interested in include but are not limited to:

- METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS FROM PRACTITIONERS
 - What exactly are research goals and questions guiding different approaches to economic growth?
 - Why do researchers disagree about the empirical evidence on the limits to growth (e.g. planetary boundaries, data on decoupling)?
 - What are the theoretical, empirical, and methodological disagreements, underlying the debate?
- METHODOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS
 - Do differences in methods correlate with differences in conclusions (e.g. systems dynamics models to derive degrowth, equilibrium analysis to promote growth)?
 - Are the disagreements genuine or do researchers simply talk past each other (e.g. addressing different research questions)?
 - How do facts and values enter into the debates on economic growth?
- SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL/INSTITUTIONAL/POLICY-ORIENTED ANALYSIS
 - How should a divergent and pluralistic science be managed?
 - What are growth-related value assumptions underlying the institutions of scientific research (e.g. competitive grants, innovation policy)?
 - How individual behaviour, decision making, or freedom in interactions with institutions matter for the (de)growth ambitions.
 - How should the divergent scientific positions form and inform actionable sustainability policy?

In addition to papers addressing specific questions, papers that give a comparative historical and methodological overview of the approaches to growth and de-growth are also welcome.

We kindly invite you to submit an abstract (max. 400 words) of your presentation by 1. April 2023. to milutin.stojanovic@helsinki.fi



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 952574.