



Pathways towards a **green economy**

Explaining the differences

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The Research



Purpose: Accelerate progress towards
a **green economy**

The Research Questions

1. What are the **different perspectives** on how best to achieve a green economy?
2. **Why** do these different perspectives exist?
3. Which **indicators** do we need to measure progress towards a green economy?



Before we dive in...

**What is a
green
economy?**



What is a green economy?

The meaning of “green economy” is **contested**

According to UNEP:

*“[an economy] that results in **improved human well-being and social equity**, while significantly **reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities**”*



What is a green economy?



**Environmental
sustainability**

**Agreed
by all!**



**Human
wellbeing**

**Required by
some**



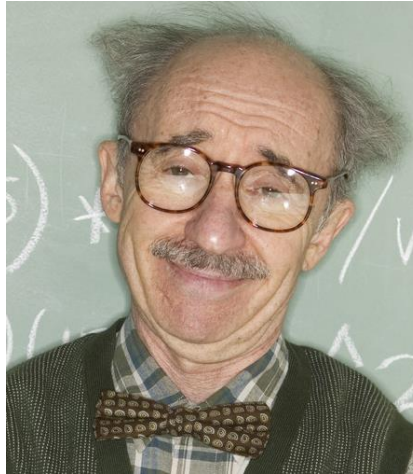
**Social
equity**

**Required by
some**

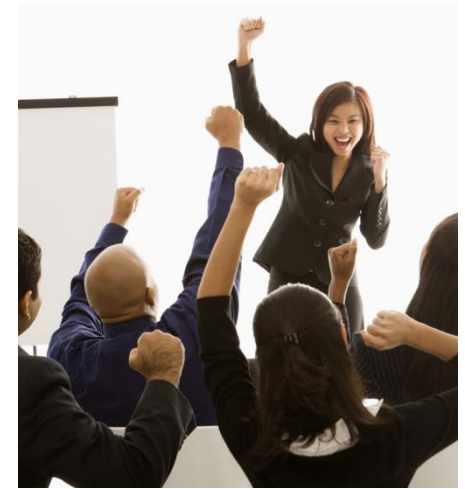
Methodology



Literature review
~100 texts



Interviews
55 experts



Seminar
35 experts

Summary findings

Identified **three areas of divergence** in views on how best to successfully transition to a green economy

1. The **strategic** approach needed
2. The **interventions** needed (e.g. policies/incentives) to operationalise the strategic approach
3. The **political approach** necessary to gain acceptance for those interventions

Relation to degrowth

Some of the views are **compatible** with the degrowth perspective



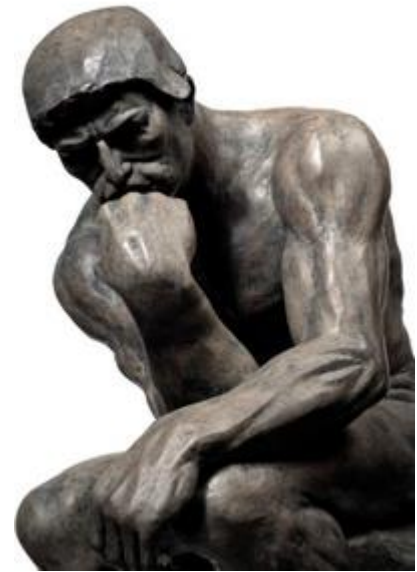
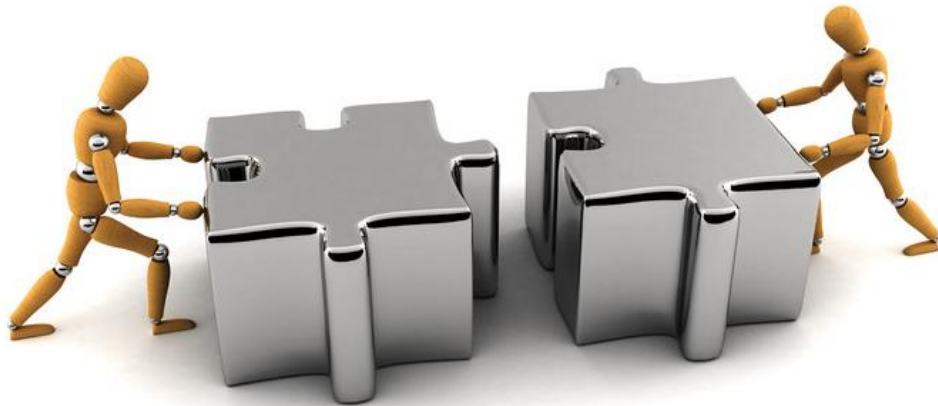
Relation to degrowth

Some are **less compatible** or **incompatible** with the degrowth perspective



Why is this interesting for a “degrowthist”?

Reflecting on **others’ perspectives** may:



Identify areas where **cooperation** is possible between degrowthists and others – potentially **accelerating progress**

Present an opportunity to **question** (and therefore **affirm or refine**) the degrowth perspective

The following slides...

- This is a **summary**
- Many **more nuanced** positions exist
- There is more **detailed discussion** in our paper

<http://netgreen-project.eu/content/report-definitions-green-economy-and-progress-towards-it>



The findings

The three areas of divergence



1. The **strategic** approach needed
2. The **interventions** needed
3. The **political approach** necessary

1. Strategic approach - Perspectives



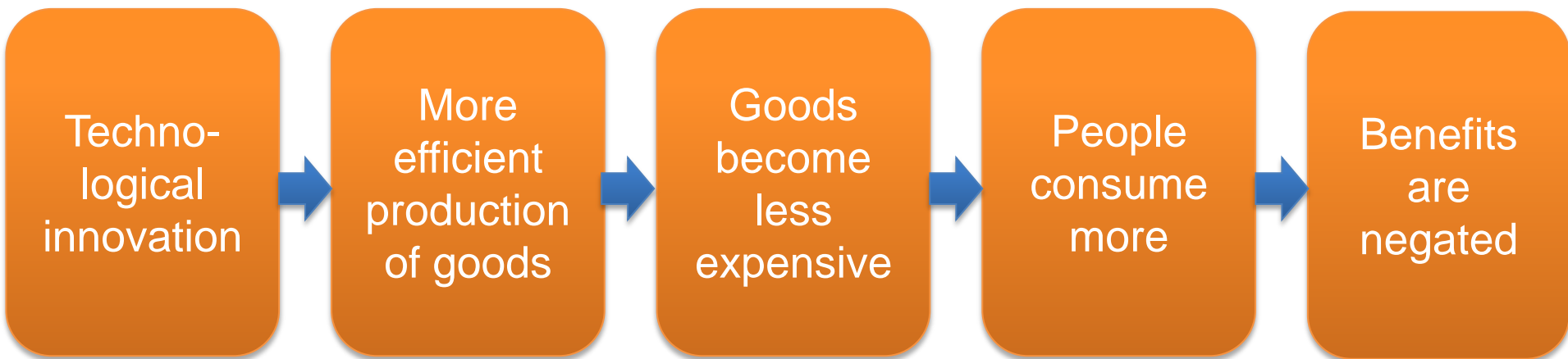
Perspective 1: Technological innovation will save the day

- Affordable, clean **technology** will be developed
- **Standards of living** in high income countries can be **maintained** (or increased)
- There will be **space** for increased emissions from **development** in low-income countries

1. Strategic approach

Caution! Confusion over the Rebound Effect

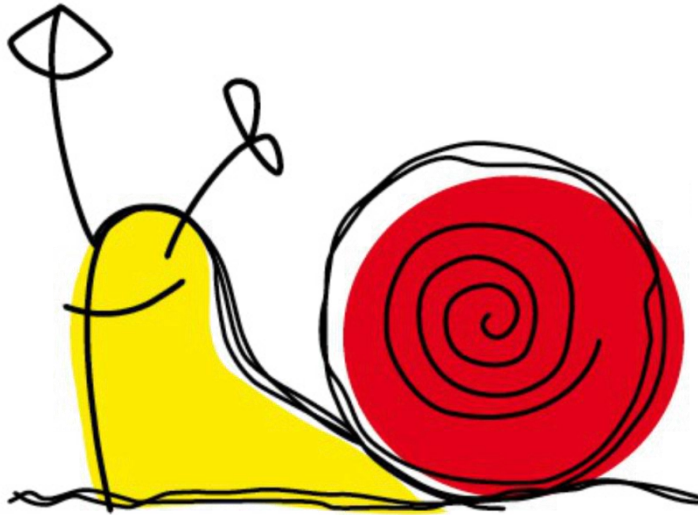
- A common **criticism** of this approach is that it cannot succeed because of the **Rebound Effect**



- This critique is relevant, but doesn't tell the **whole story**
- Much technological innovation is designed to **decarbonise** (e.g. renewable energy generation), not just produce efficiency gains

1. Strategic approach

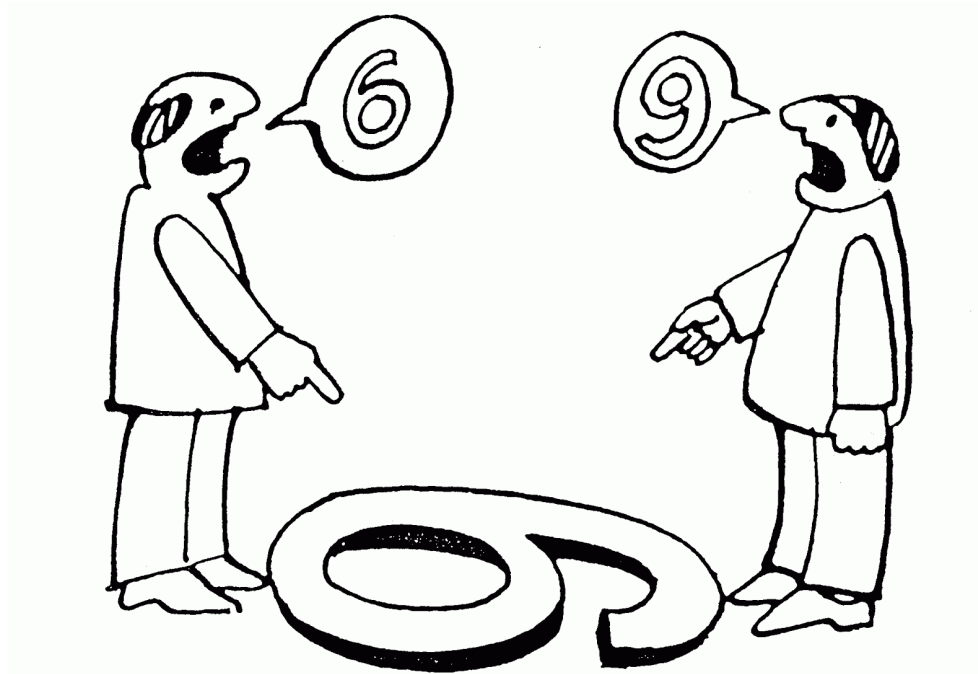
Perspective 2: Changes to lifestyles are at least as necessary as technological innovation



- **Technological** innovation alone won't be enough
- **Lifestyle changes** are also needed
- This **might** also lead to **better lives** for those currently 'overconsuming'
 - Reducing inequality
 - Reducing conspicuous consumption
 - Reducing lack of time

1. Strategic approach

How can these **conflicting perspectives** both exist?



1. Strategic approach

Technological innovation will save the day



It **could** happen! But we **don't** know for certain...

More likely to succeed than attempts to change lifestyles

Tend to be more **optimistic** about the feasibility of remaining within **environmental limits**



Changes to lifestyles are at least as necessary as technological innovation

Technological innovation alone is **unlikely** to produce **absolute decoupling**

More consumption (beyond a certain point) \neq **more wellbeing**, so resistance to lifestyle change isn't intrinsic to human nature

Tend to be **more concerned** about **environmental limits**

The findings

The **three areas of divergence**



1. The **strategic** approach needed
2. The **interventions** needed
3. The **political approach** necessary

2. Interventions



Perspective 1: Incentives and regulations can work

- A **well-designed array** of international incentives and regulations will green business operations and consumer choices
- Different mixes of ‘light’ **incentives** and ‘heavy’ **regulation** advocated
- Measures to stimulate **long-term investment** in the green economy can be used to create **positive lock-in**

2. Interventions

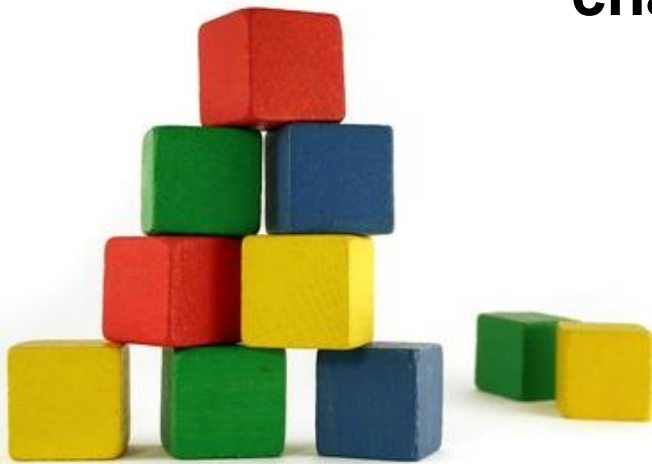
Perspective 2: Structural change is preferable

Government should invest to create **structural change**, and the conditions where:

- Sustainable businesses can thrive
- Lower consumption become acceptable
- Undermine the forces that block change

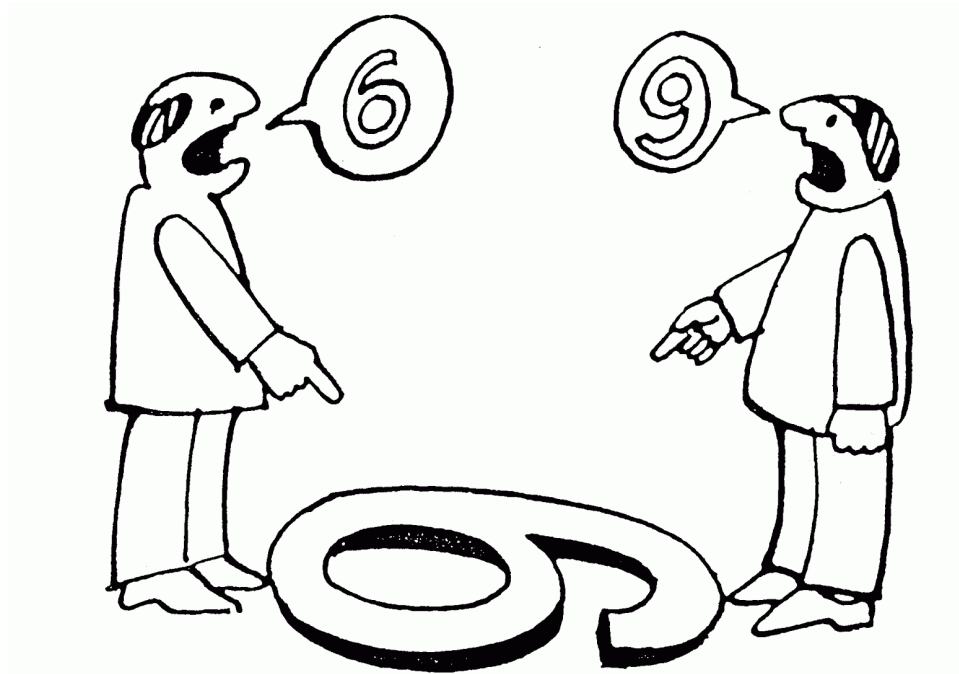
Tools include:

- Greater equality
- Encourage **fewer working hours**
- More **local markets** and **mutuals**
- **Fewer very large enterprises**



1. Strategic approach

Why do these **different perspectives** exist?



2. Interventions

Incentives and regulations can work



Enough support from **citizens**, who:

- Believe **benefits** will outweigh costs
- Want to protect **future generations**

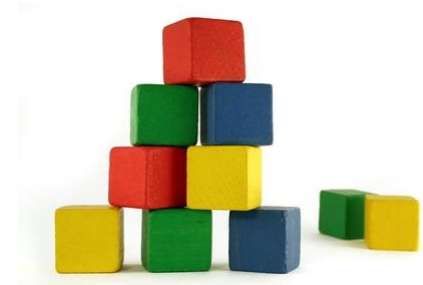
Enough support from **business**:

- Reduce **risks** (resource scarcity, more stringent future regulations)
- Gain **competitive** advantage

International agreement can be achieved

It is easier to make these assumptions if you think **less change** is needed

Structural change is preferable



Produces desirable benefits like greater **equality**

Incentives & regulations provoke **opposition**

...and may become too **extensive/complex**

Advocates for reform will arise

Forces that block change are **undermined**

Conditions in which **regulation is more acceptable** are created

Advocates tend to assume that **more change** is needed

The findings

The **three areas of divergence**



1. The **strategic** approach needed
2. The **interventions** needed
3. The **political approach** necessary

3. Political approach



Perspective 1: Transitioning to a green economy does not imply trade-offs

- The **benefits** of transitioning will **outweigh** any **costs**:
 - **Green jobs**
 - **New markets**
 - Greater **resilience** to shocks
 - **More satisfying lives**
- *Or*, it is **not helpful** to emphasise trade-offs, even if they do exist
- Any current blocks to progress are **not political**, but something else
 - E.g. the **technology** needed doesn't yet exist

3. Political approach

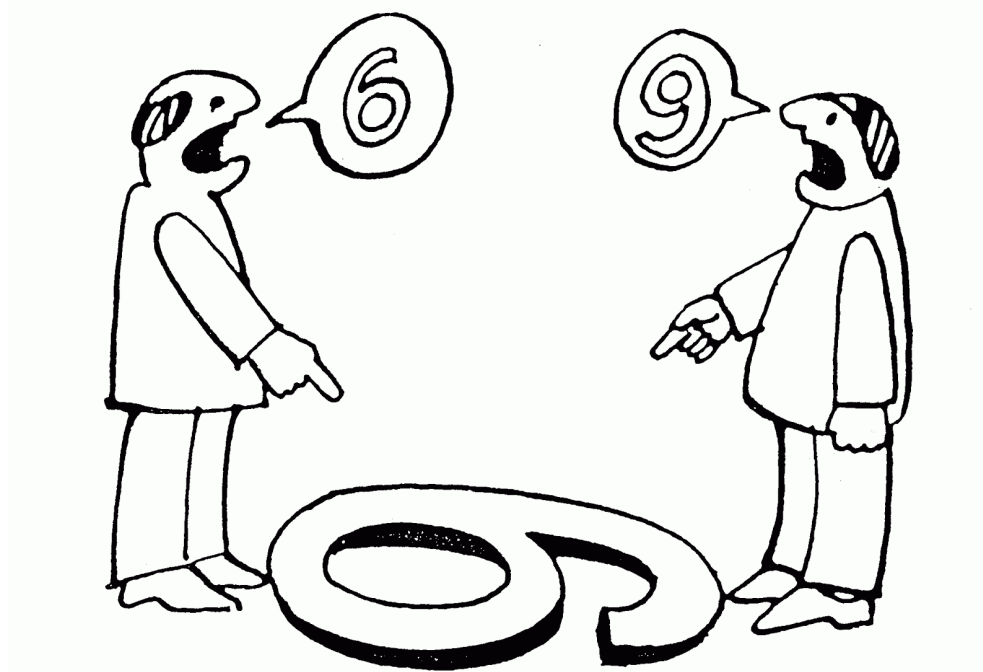
Perspective 2: Transitioning to a green economy implies trade-offs, which must be managed

- Benefits will **not outweigh costs**
- “Benefits” for some may **imply costs for others**
- The benefits could be created in much **more cost effective ways** (e.g. jobs)
- Structural change may produce a **change in aspirations** and thus the terms of the trade-off



1. Strategic approach

Why do these **different perspectives** exist?



3. Political approach

Transitioning to a green economy does not imply trade-offs



- The changes needed are **not so great** that large costs which cannot be compensated are implied
- It is believed that a politically attractive pay-off **can, or must, be demonstrated to win support** for action

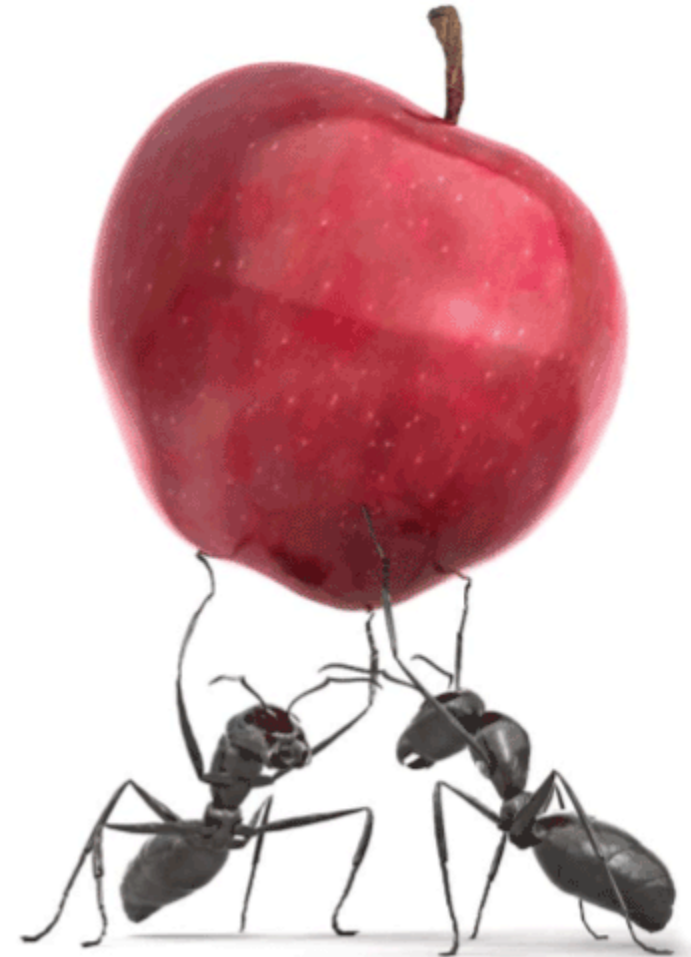
Transitioning to a green economy implies trade-offs, which must be managed



- **Much change is needed**, implying large costs, which cannot be compensated by benefits
- A politically attractive pay-off cannot be **convincingly** demonstrated
- **Support for action** can be gained in other ways

Conclusion

- **Competing**, but **valid** perspectives can co-exist
- **Avoid polarising** into degrowth versus green growth – more complex than that
- By listening to one another, may find opportunities to **work together** and **accelerate progress**



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