

Green Growth and Beyond

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**Anders Hayden
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Productivist (Pro-Growth) Perspectives

- ▶ Business-as-Usual
 - Endless economic expansion while downplaying or denying severity of environmental problems.
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 - Endless economic expansion while downplaying or denying severity of environmental problems.
 - Conflict between environmental measures & GDP growth – and growth must prevail.
- ▶ Ecological modernization (EM), or “green growth”
 - No inherent environment–economy conflict.
 - Goal to “decouple GDP from environmental impacts
 - Greater eco–efficiency / greener technology key
 - “Win–win” discourse
 - Opportunities to link economic & environmental strategy

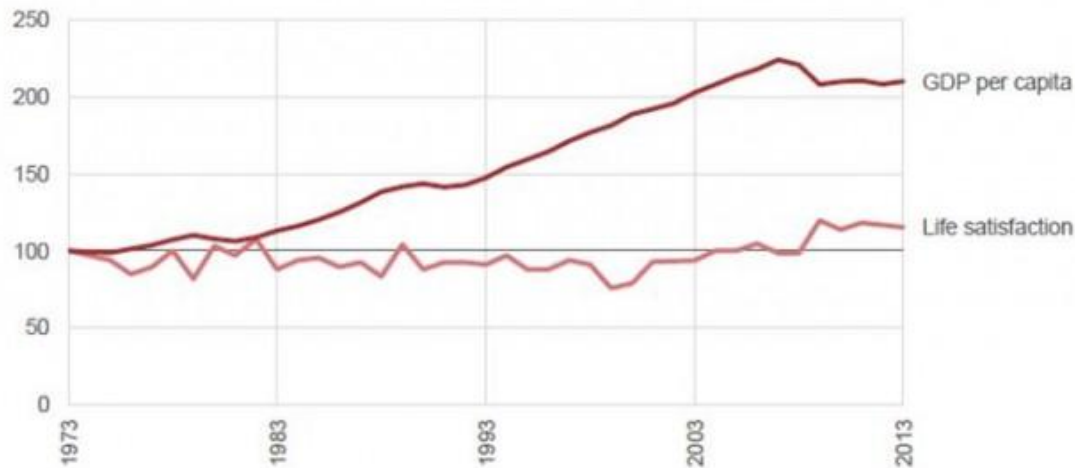
Sufficiency

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 - Asks “how much is enough?”
 - Highlights “myth of decoupling” growth from environmental impacts (Jackson 2009).

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 - Emphasizes that GDP growth \neq greater well-being in rich nations.

GDP per capita and life satisfaction, 1973-2013, indexed 1973=100



Source: Office of National Statistics, UK (2014)

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 - Macro-economic level:
 - Critique of GDP growth as dominant societal goal
 - Call for steady-state or de-growth economy
 - Micro-level:
 - Limit on specific products, practices, or sectors that are “excessive.”
 - e.g. energy consumption, long-distance transport of food, oil-sands expansion, etc.

Sufficiency & the “Growth Imperative”

- ▶ “Green growth” has key political advantage over sufficiency: promise of linking environmental action to the contemporary political imperative of economic growth.
 - Sense of crisis when growth is absent / fear of low growth in future (e.g. Ivany report)

Sufficiency & the “Growth Imperative”

- ▶ “Green growth” has key political advantage over sufficiency: promise of linking environmental action to the contemporary political imperative of economic growth.
 - Sense of crisis when growth is absent / fear of low growth in future (e.g. Ivany report)
- ▶ Dilemma of growth: “growth may be unsustainable, but ‘de-growth’ appears to be unstable” (Jackson 2009).
- ▶ Need to figure out how to move beyond the growth imperative (some answers exist, but not complete).
- ▶ Until then, ideas of sufficiency may find some common ground with “green growth” that helps them advance.

Local Food/ Reducing “Food Miles”

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- ▶ Reducing/limiting food miles a form of sufficiency.
- ▶ Reducing food miles can also be seen as a form of eco-efficiency with potential for “green growth.”
- ▶ Local food entrepreneurship / activism has benefitted from (varying) provincial government support.
 - Local food promotion policies not as strong as they could be – room for improvement, but still noteworthy.

Local Food/ Reducing “Food Miles”

- ▶ Why government support?
 - Government interest in more sales, more revenue.
 - Support from farmers.
 - Connects with the interests of agro–food industry.
 - Convergence between sufficiency–based emphasis on living within local limits and interests of government, farmers, and food industry in expanding local production.
 - Case where (ironically) ideas of sufficiency can be linked to economic growth imperative.

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- ▶ California drought: food costs likely to rise, opportunities to push for stronger local–food promotion.

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- ▶ A less radical demand than a direct to call to stop pursuing growth.
- ▶ Some green growth supporters in business and politics beginning to see need to look beyond GDP.
 - e.g. French President Sarkozy commissioned two Nobel laureate economists (Stiglitz, Sen) to examine GDP alternatives.
 - British Conservative leader David Cameron: need to look beyond GDP to GWB (general wellbeing).
 - 2010: new well-being measure, call for “debate about what really matters.”

Alternative Economic Indicators

- ▶ Growing global interest in alternatives / complements to GDP as a measure.
 - OECD, European Union, US states of Vermont & Oregon, etc.
- ▶ Ground-breaking work in Nova Scotia / Canada:
 - GPI Atlantic (Genuine Progress Indicator)
 - Canadian Index of Wellbeing
 - But provinces and federal government have yet to adopt new wellbeing measures.

Alternative Economic Indicators

- ▶ New “beyond GDP” measures do not guarantee any downplaying of the pursuit of GDP growth.
- ▶ But would bring a broader perspective to guide economic development efforts at all levels.
- ▶ A potential step forward for a sufficiency perspective.
 - Reflect the idea that “life is about more than quarterly growth figures.”
 - A resource for those who want to challenge the focus on growth above all else.
 - Step toward “dethroning” growth as top priority.

Conclusions

- ▶ “Green growth” important in moving beyond business-as-usual, even if it is not enough.
- ▶ Moving beyond a growth-based economy appears necessary, but currently faces huge political obstacles.
- ▶ Sufficiency in more limited forms faces better prospects – often when common ground possible with “green growth.”
- ▶ Combination of a degree of “green growth” & sufficiency has much to offer:
 - “power up, power down”