



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

# **Sustainable Welfare, Degrowth and Eco-social policies in Europe**

**Prof Dr Max Koch, Lund University**

**Social Policy in the EU: State of Play, Brussels December 2018**

## **Contents**

- 1. Climate change and EU policies: Green growth**
- 2. Degrowth and Sustainable welfare**
- 3. The role of social policy: Developing eco-social policies**

# Planetary limits and climate change (CC)

---

- ❑ Planetary boundaries (e.g. CC, biodiversity, nitrogen cycle) are being approached or crossed (Steffen et al 2015)
- ❑ CC: Greenhouse gas concentration in atmosphere will result in temperature rise of between 1.5 and 4.8°C by 2100 (IPCC 2014). Warming to continue thereafter
- ❑ 4°C: 70% of world population would be exposed to deadly heat stress; 3°C: crucial factor for extinction of 50% of species (Ramanathan et al 2017)
- ❑ IPCC (2018): 12 years at the most to *implement* substantial policy changes that would keep warming ‘well below 2°C’ (2015 Paris Agreement)

# The EU's climate targets and policy strategy

---

- ❑ *'Target and timetable'* approach: Carbon reductions of 20% by 2020, 40% by 2030 and 80-95% by 2050
- ❑ *Green growth*: achieve economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability at once
- ❑ Really equal footing? Environmental sustainability is not part of 'European Semester'
- ❑ Simultaneously reduce energy and material costs and the EU's reliance on the geopolitics of energy supply
- ❑ *Decoupling* (absolute and relative) of economic growth and carbon emissions through greening of economy: carbon markets (EU ETS) as main policy instrument

# Environmental sustainability, social inclusion and quality of life relative to GDP/capita (Fritz/Koch, Global Environmental Change 2016)

	Ecolog. Sustainability			Social Inclusion				Quality of Life		
Material standard of living (GDP per capita, constant \$ per year, purchasing power parity (ppp))	CO2 emissions in tons per capita	Ecological footprint of production in global ha per capita	Ecological footprint of consumption in global ha per capita	Gini Index for income inequality	Homicide rates per 100,000 persons	Democracy Index	Freedom House Index	Life Expectancy	Literacy Rates	Subjective Wellbeing
'Poor' (below 3200\$; n=32; e.g. Chad, Uganda)	0.2	1.2	1.3	41.1	8.3	4.0	2.5	58.9	58.3	4.2
'Developing' (3200-11000\$; n=33; e.g. Ghana, Nigeria, Bolivia, Ecuador)	1.7	1.8	1.8	41.6	13.2	5.1	3.1	68.6	84.8	5.1
'Emerging' (11000-21500\$; n=33; e.g. Argentina, China, Romania, Venezuela)	4.4	2.6	2.8	42.0	9.8	5.4	3.3	73.0	92.6	5.4
'Rich' (21500-50000\$; n=32; e.g. Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, Germany)	9.8	5.6	5.3	32.2	2.8	7.8	5.5	79.0	98.8	6.5
'Over-developed' (+ 50000 \$; n=8; e.g. Qatar, Kuwait, Norway, Switzerland)	18.2	6.7	7.1	37.2	1.4	5.5	3.2	78.8	95.5	7.0

# Green growth will not be enough

---

- ❑ While resource usage declined relative to GDP in some EU countries ('relative decoupling'), this has either not been the case in absolute terms at all or not to the required extent to meet Paris and own targets
- ❑ If current EU policies were applied globally, the temperature rise would be 3.2°C in 2100, while those of China, Russia and Canada would result in 5°C (du Pont/Meinshausen 2018)
- ❑ Meeting climate targets would instead necessitate 'major transformations in the EU's socio-technical systems such as energy, food, mobility and urban systems' (EEA 2017)

# Deprioritizing GDP growth in policy making

---

- ❑ *Degrowth*: Economy as biophysical process: Bringing matter and energy throughput in line with capacities of the Earth's ecosystems, while redistributing wealth to smoothen transition (D'Alisa et al 2014)
- ❑ *Sustainable welfare*: Making welfare theories, systems and policies compatible with principles of environmental sustainability (Koch and Mont 2016)
- ❑ CC as transnational and transgenerational phenomenon requires extending distributive principles underlying Western welfare systems to all people (*universalisability*) and future generations (*intertemporality*)

## The centrality of human needs (Gough 2017)

---

- ❑ Needs are non-negotiable, few and satiable: Failure to satisfy these produces ‘serious harm’; needs do not vary over time and space but according to how societies satisfy them
- ❑ Degree to which more than basic needs can be provided on a limited planet is an empirical question: ‘Critical thresholds’ for the satisfaction of human needs (and wants) are to be constantly (re-)defined
- ❑ ‘Dual strategy’: Democratic forums combine academic and experiential knowledge of citizens: a collective, local and deliberative way of defining maximum and minimum levels for consumption

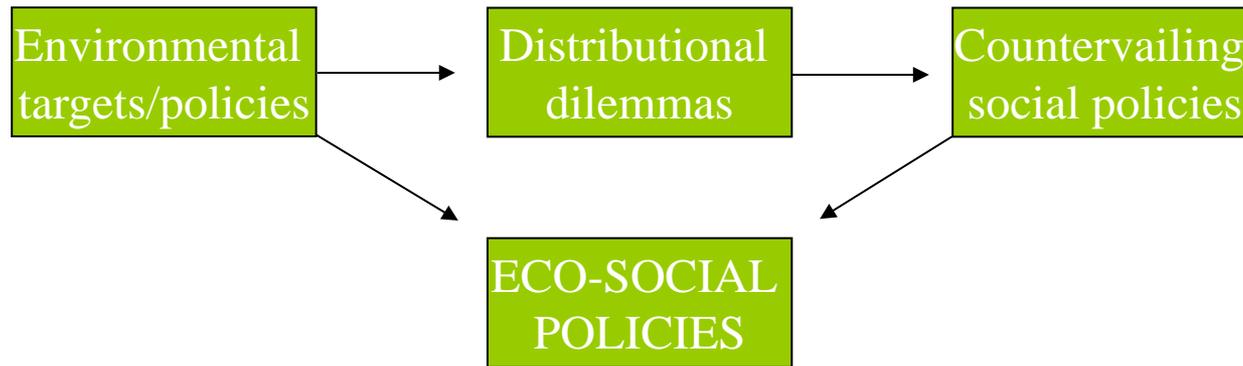
# The role of social policy: the ‘double injustice’ (Walker 2012)

---

- ❑ Ambitious climate targets have distributive consequences and implications for social justice: different societal groups have different responsibilities for CC and suffer different impacts that may work in opposite ways
- ❑ How do burdens of climate policies relate to household incomes? Are such burdens proportional to the impact on the environment of different lifestyles? How can CC and social policies be designed such that unjust distributional effects are avoided?

# Addressing the 'double injustice' and developing eco-social policies

---



*Countervailing social policies to be developed at local, national and European levels and in areas such as:*

- minimum *and* maximum income and wealth limits / taxation;
- working time policies;
- housing;
- transport and mobility;
- energy use;
- consumption

Letters

Sun 16 Sep 2018 16.26 BST



8,564

# The EU needs a stability and wellbeing pact, not more growth

238 academics call on the European Union and its member states to plan for a post-growth future in which human and ecological wellbeing is prioritised over GDP



▲ Kate Pickett, one of the 238 signatories of the letter. Photograph: Gary Calton for the Observer

This week, scientists, politicians, and policymakers are gathering in Brussels for a **landmark conference**. The aim of this event, organised by members of the European parliament from five different political groups, alongside trade unions and NGOs, is to explore possibilities for a “post-growth economy” in Europe.