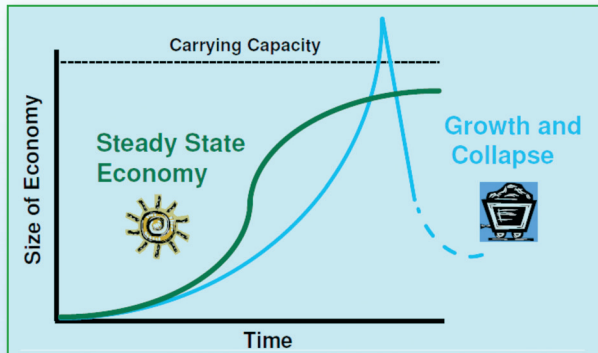


Towards a sustainable and equitable society

An important step for strong sustainable consumption governance is to recognise the need for planned contraction of the economies in richer nations to ensure wellbeing within environmental limits, and most of all to give 'space' for the countries that have to grow to meet their basic needs and minimum level of well being. A model of contraction and convergence of the use of natural resources is needed.



Many northern economies are already contracting (-0,8% global GDP in 2009, IMF, World Economic Outlook Update). So to avoid social and environmental crises we need to develop a guided 'degrowth' path for our economies in the industrialised world. This must be a transition from a prime focus on growth and GDP to a more social, sustainable and fair well-being. This will involve a shift in culture, thinking, values and education, and will lead to new patterns of consumption and production.

Social aspects of well-being can and should increase, and can deliver increased happiness and a better quality of life world-wide.

"Prosperity consists in our ability to flourish as human beings. The challenge for our society is to create the conditions under which this is possible. This is the most urgent task of our times" (Prof. Tim Jackson - 'Prosperity without Growth - Economics for a finite Planet'; 2009)

ANPED

The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) links NGOs working to empower civil society in creating and protecting sustainable communities worldwide.

ANPED's main focus is on sustainable consumption and production. ANPED believes that continued economic growth on a finite planet with an already overtaxed ecosystem accelerates environmental breakdown, intensifies the competition for resources between rich and poor, and deprives future generations of the necessary means to meet their basic needs.

ANPED builds capacity among Northern civil society organizations through information, knowledge and skill-sharing, and enable their participation in local, national, regional and international decision-making processes on sustainable development. Within the UNECE region, ANPED is one of the main actors promoting the development of a 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns as dealt with through the Marrakesh Process.

ANPED sees sustainable consumption and production as an interconnecting theme to various global problems such as inequity, climate change and loss of biodiversity as well as to various policy processes, such as the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD), the 'Environment for Europe' process and the Carpathian Convention, as well as international structures such as the OECD, UNEP and the European Union.

ANPED has Special Consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We are among the organizing partners responsible for providing the NGO Major Group input into the official meetings of UNEP and the UN CSD as recognized under Agenda 21.

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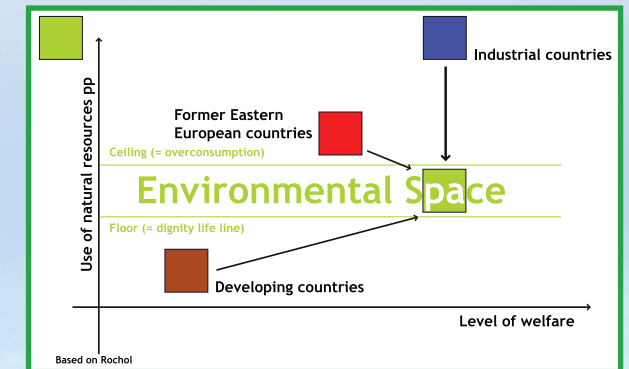
In collaboration with Mama 86 - Ukraine and Green Liberty Latvia



The major cause of the continued deterioration of the **global environment** is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, ...

... which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating **poverty and imbalances**.

(Agenda 21 Chapter 4, own emphasis)



The well-being of people and planet matters!

Sustainability for all!

Living beyond our limits

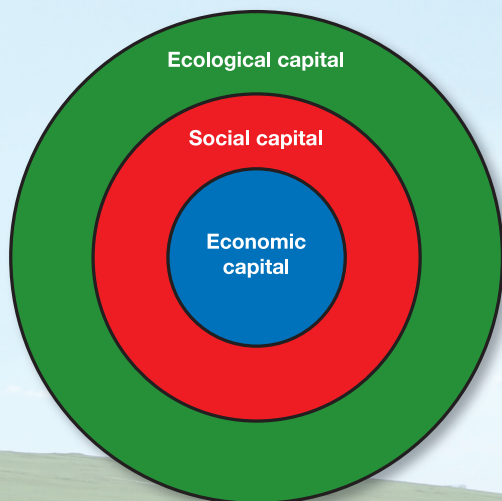
Economic growth in developed countries over the last 100 years has met our basic needs and improved many aspects of our life: life expectancy has increased, child mortality has decreased, high levels of education and social security are guaranteed.

But at what cost? Our development has been based on a huge input of natural resources and cheap labour while causing waste and emissions that our planet has to absorb. Much of those natural resources and cheap labour have come from Southern nations. Wastes and CO2 emissions affect all of us and especially the most vulnerable.

Development within limits

We have to stop this active process of enrichment and impoverishment! The challenge is to change our patterns of consumption and production, limit our material obsession, focus on redistribution of wealth and access of natural resources, and ultimately transform our economy. Only then we will make real progress on poverty eradication and environmental protection.

Our economy is part of a bigger system. And this system has limits. All our economic activities depend on our environmental and social capital, and we have to stay within the limits of those capitals to avoid degeneration of both.



Our current economic system has failed to tackle poverty and inequity adequately. It concentrates too far on material welfare, instead of quality of life and well-being. The ecological side effects are also very clear: resource depletion, pollution, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The constant drive for economic growth is worsening the problems it seeks to cure.

Green Economy - ignoring the core problems

For many politicians the new solution is 'green growth'. It is claimed that the green economy proposed by UNEP and world leaders is the way out of the ongoing economic, climate, energy, water and food crises, by restructuring our economies to encourage and sustain green energy, green growth, and green jobs.

A green economy can be a big step forward. But there are many problems beyond the reach of a green economy: such moves will not on their own solve problems of inequity in incomes, access to resources and quality of life, nor tackle pollution from existing industry and environmental degradation.

Towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP)

The need to transform patterns of consumption and production has been recognised since the 1992 Rio Summit. But most political discussions on SCP such as the 'Marrakesh Process' focus largely on eco-efficiency and low energy use. They rely on the Sustainable Consumer Procurement seeking technical solutions via greener products and services. This is a good starting point but has not proven so far that it can lead to a reduction in absolute amounts of the use of resources. Often the so-called 'rebound effect' minimises efficiency gains. This is a weak approach to sustainable consumption; it fails to meet the scale and the urgency of the problems.

The precautionary principle means that we should consider the consequences when the technological optimism of weak sustainable consumption fails. The result for most may be living in misery on an over-exploited planet.

To achieve a balanced living for most people on Earth ANPED stresses the need to jointly address:

- overall levels of consumption and
- the need for more social equality.

We need ultimately to reduce in absolute amounts our use of natural resources. This should happen alongside a long-term reallocation of resources to tackle poverty and inequity and thus improve the overall well-being of our society without continued and unsustainable growth.

To reach these goals we need strong governance to support sustainable consumption. Alongside eco-innovation and greening the markets we need effective policy instruments including regulation, economic incentives and public participation.

| | | Living situation for global population | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | Technology can solve the problems | Technology can't solve the problems |
| Policy approach | Weak Sustainable Consumption Policy | High material standard of living for some. Less poverty for others? | Living in misery for most |
| | Strong Sustainable Consumption Policy | High human well-being for most | Balanced living for most |

Strong governance should also support social innovations to increase quality of life. This innovation should help society become less dependent on market activities and economic growth and stresses a radical and fair redistribution of wealth.

Meaningful strategies for strong sustainable consumption will affect everyone's lives and need the full engagement of civil society. However delivering and implementing such strategies is the task of governments. They must ensure that the actions needed from each sector of society to reach agreed targets are indeed carried out. As long as governments limit their roles to providing opportunities for the exchange of opinions and relying on uncontrolled voluntary commitments, then there is little chance of any significant moves towards real sustainable development.