



## Post-Rio to Post-2015 Think Piece Surveying the 'green economy' and 'green growth' landscape

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### Overview

This paper takes a swift journey across the green economy landscape in the post Rio+20 context. Rather than using the outcomes of Rio+20 as its starting point, it uses a wider lens to show the political and economic setting in which a green economy is emerging. It draws on collective intelligence from Green Economy Coalition (GEC) members and our expanding global network. Intended for GEC members, it aims to provide a balanced snapshot of the current terrain, highlighting the emerging trends and developments as well as the more stubborn features shaping the green economy landscape.

### New contours

#### i. international institutions

While the wrangling of the Rio+20 negotiations has occupied the sustainable development community over the last year some important developments have been underway far beyond the walls of the UN.

The South Korea based Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), founded in 2010 and supported by Australia, UAE, Japan, UK, Denmark, and Norway (who have all committed multi-year funding) became an intergovernmental organisation in June 2012. GGGI is dedicated to 'pioneering and diffusing a new economic model of economic growth' and designed to be an 'open, global laboratory to support experimentation and collective learning by countries seeking to leapfrog the resource-intensive and environmentally unsustainable model of industrial development pioneered by advanced economies in an earlier era'. The GGGI analytical framework for 'green growth' is founded on McKinsey's approach, featured prominently within the World Economic Forum circles, which hinges on the fluctuating prices of commodities as a result of environmental degradation and the productivity opportunities that could arise from greater resource efficiency in energy, agriculture/land, water and materials. The framework assumes that social dimensions such as welfare and poverty alleviation will be delivered through trickle-down economics. The GGGI is now working with developing countries on 'green growth planning' including **Ethiopia, Cambodia, Brazil, Guyana, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Philippines**. Headquartered in Seoul, it has offices in Copenhagen, Abu Dhabi and London which are now expanding.

The World Bank published their 'Inclusive Green Growth Report' (May 2012), which critiques the neo-classical theory of growth (i.e. that growth in output – GDP – comes from increases in physical capital, labour and productivity) because it fails to recognise that economic production depends directly on the stock of natural resources and the quality of the environment. Their analytical framework considers how environmental policies can increase conventionally measured GDP through four channels linked to input, efficiency, stimulus and innovation effects. They stress that the ultimate test of green growth is welfare, not output: 'welfare can be assessed by viewing utility as depending on the current level of consumption and the direct effect of the environment (through its health effects and amenity value)'. The World Bank's latest environment strategy (2012 – 2022) prioritises pathways that are 'green, inclusive, efficient and affordable' and stresses the role of the private sector in meeting those goals. More specifically, the World Bank have launched a global partnership for Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES), which is supporting national environmental accounts and developing internationally-agreed guidelines for ecosystem accounting. WAVES is already working with **Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Madagascar and Philippines**.

The multi-lateral development banks are following suit. A joint statement issued in June by the African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the



European Investment Bank, and the World Bank group announced: “We are committed to supporting this transition to green growth – growth that is attained with a smaller environmental footprint, is inclusive and achieves gains in opportunities and access to resources by all segments of the population to reduce income inequity”. We are waiting for more information on the collaboration.

The OECD has developed a Green Growth Strategy and is now ‘mainstreaming green growth in its national and multilateral policy surveillance exercises to provide policy advice that is targeted to the needs of individual countries’. For the OECD, the sources of growth will emerge from productivity, innovation, new markets, confidence and stability, and green growth can also reduce risks to growth from bottlenecks and imbalances. Their overarching goal for a framework of green growth is to ‘establish incentives or institutions that increase well-being by: 1. Improving resource management and boosting productivity; 2. Encouraging economic activity where it is of best advantage to society over the long term; 3. Leading to new ways of meeting the above two objectives, i.e. innovation’. Working with IIED, the OECD has also published one of the first reports examining policy frameworks for developing countries .

Building on their Green Economy Report, UNEP continues to expand their Green Economy Initiative particularly through their advisory services, which provide policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building to governments in support of national and regional initiatives. Amongst others, UNEP is working with Nepal, Jordan, Indonesia, South Africa, China, Mexico, Brazil, Barbados as part of this service. In collaboration with the Republic of Korea and ILO, UNEP are developing a framework for a Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) which is conceived as a response to the call for voluntary support to countries on green economy. PAGE is structured into four components: (i) applied research and policy making, (ii) policy dialogues for high-level government officials, (iii) capacity development and applied practical training as well as (iv) country-driven advisory services. PAGE will be officially launched at UNEP Governing Council in February 2013.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) is developing an extensive programme on Green Industry , a two pronged strategy to decouple resource use and pollution from industrial development and promote sustainable productive sectors and entrepreneurship in developing and transitioning countries. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has a Green Jobs programme, whose latest report suggests that 60 million jobs could be created by the transition . In a paper by the Poverty Environment Partnership , a network of bilateral aid agencies, development banks, UN agencies and INGOs, their members stressed that a green economy can help the world’s poorest only if it is supported by a series of five building blocks to prioritise the needs and capacities of disadvantaged groups.

In January 2012, the World Bank, UNEP, OECD and the GGGI signed an MOU to build a Global Green Growth Knowledge Platform , a ‘cutting edge global initiative that will identify and address major knowledge gaps in green growth theory and practice’.

## ii. government positioning

The ‘green growth’ agenda front-runners are South Korea, Denmark, UAE, Mexico and Germany. South Korea has enshrined green growth in its national development strategy and established a Presidential Committee on Green Growth . During the first financial crisis in 2008, the country dedicated 80% of its fiscal stimulus plan to green growth projects. In 2009, as part of its Five Year Plan, Korea committed 2% of its GDP through 2013 to implementing green growth including the first nationwide ‘smart grid’ system by 2030, increasing renewable energy to 11% of energy supplies by 2030 and building 1 million green homes by 2020. It has quadrupled its foreign assistance budget to US800 million, much of which is now centred on green energy development projects.



Meanwhile, along with their involvement in the GGGI, the Danes have committed domestic funds to green growth, e.g. in their agricultural sector (DKK 645 million). They have launched Global Green Growth Forum (3GF), supported by Mexico and South Korea, as well as major multinationals including Samsung, Siemens, Hyundai and Danfoss (all providers of renewable energy), which is focused on the role of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for delivering green growth. The Dane's commitment to the agenda has also extended to their development assistance policy, whereby green growth is one of DANIDA's four strategic priorities.

The EU 2020 strategy for 'smart, green and inclusive growth', which replaced the Lisbon strategy in 2010, aims at economic renewal to create jobs, encourage 'green economic growth and create an inclusive society'. The strategy includes 'employment rates, reducing poverty, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing renewable energy consumption and increasing GDP in research and development'. The latest EUROPEAID meeting focused on how to gear EU development funding for Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTS) through green growth.

A 'Nordic Prime-ministers' Task Force on green growth', launched in 2010, and made up of finance, industry, trade, employment and energy ministers from Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Greenland and Iceland released their report (October 2011) which identifies green growth as 'high priority for the coming years' for the region and have identified eight strategic priorities.

South Africa are now developing scenarios for long term planning and decision making in green economy focus areas. The Treasury are looking at economic policy instruments, particularly the carbon tax. They have also announced 1.1 billion over three years for green projects. Tanzania is working on specific initiatives such as the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), which has leveraged public-private sector and multi-donor catalytic investment of over \$2bn. It was initiated at the World Economic Forum Africa summit in 2010 and founding members include Unilever, USAID, Government of Tanzania, Tanzania Sugarcane Growers Association and Confederation of Tanzanian Industries. 'By addressing the entire agricultural value chain, the SAGCOT approach will go beyond raising agricultural productivity and ensure the necessary infrastructure, policy environment and access to knowledge to create an efficient, well-functioning agricultural value chain'.

China earmarked an estimated \$140 billion of its \$586 billion US dollar fiscal stimulus package for green investments. The 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) dedicates an entire section to green development. Already, Chinese firms dominate the list of top renewable energy manufacturers. China's ambitious renewable energy plans are the driving force behind the robust growth in the share of the renewables in total global energy generation that recorded a 15.5% rise in 2010.

Green growth plans and strategies are also under development in Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico as part of their work with the GGGI and UNEP.

On the other side of the equation, a number of governments have positioned themselves in fierce opposition to the concept of a green economy and green growth. In particular, Venezuela and Bolivia critique the green economy and green growth approach on the basis that it is another form of green capitalism and global imperialism. Building on Bolivia's Law of Mother Earth, one of the first laws granting all nature equal rights to humans which aims to protect the environment from 'mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities', Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador have partnered to promote an alternative model of development that guarantees the 'rights of nature'.



### iii. civil society

Civil society remains divided over the concept of a green economy. The key issues raised by Major Groups and other stakeholders cluster around the following themes. First, that the policy tools associated with a green economy such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) put economic values on our environment, thereby further cementing the capitalist model rather than reforming it. Grassroots campaigns such as ‘No to a green economy’ have formed to reject the commodification of nature. Indigenous and community groups stress that a green economy approach is already sanctioning land grabs and cite evidence from Bolivia and Uganda. Similarly, the ETC. group published *Who Will Control the Green Economy?* describing how the world’s largest companies are now preparing for a post-petrochemical future by securing access to biomass and any associated technologies, which is driving a new dawn of bioengineering and the exploitation of natural resources. The second area of contention is whether green growth can indeed be inclusive and there is mixed evidence that policy tools to drive resource efficiency, such as certification or public procurement, can help poor communities. Finally, and relatedly, civil society groups are concerned that developed nations will use the guise of green economy and green growth to evade their responsibility to curb their own consumption patterns or tackle growing global inequality.

GEC members and partners are tackling many of these questions in depth. IIED is working with the OECD on building policy frameworks for developing countries and will be hosting more national dialogues in the coming year; WWF is working closely with governments in Borneo Mozambique and Tanzania, on practical green economy strategies and implementation; GRI and partners such as Aviva are examining how corporate reporting could be mainstreamed into the SDGs; IUCN’s 2012 Congress has put green economy at the top of their agenda; and ITUC are continuing their research on green and decent jobs. Members are also continuing the exploration at the national level. In the Caribbean region CANARI has launched a multi-stakeholder action learning group on the green economy, while Vitae Civilis is working with Oxfam to build awareness around the ‘doughnut’ concept of social and environmental boundaries. The GEC has been approached by civil society organisations in the Philippines, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa who are all keen to host national dialogues on a green economy. In China, 3000 participants gathered at the Global Eco Forum to discuss the shape of a green transformation and inclusive growth.

Beyond the GEC, international NGOs are showing both ambivalence and enthusiasm. Friends of the Earth International (FoE) launched a report at Rio+20 accusing the UNEP of ‘green-washing the global economy’ so that it ‘neatly fits with the EU’s Global Europe strategy as making nature and biodiversity a tradable commodity will enhance access for European companies to these resources’. At the same time, FoE UK has launched a new campaign devoted to green economy. Other global NGOs are stepping into the green economy space in different ways. For example, Oxfam is using the ‘doughnut’ while Christian Aid has focused on the potential that renewables have for driving economic expansion in Africa.

### iv. business and industry

On the surface, business and industry appear to have embraced the green economy agenda. The World Economic Forum’s report ‘More with Less: Scaling Sustainable Consumption and Resource Efficiency’ formed the basis of the discussions at this year’s Davos; while the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) released a ‘Green Economy Roadmap’ in June 2012, which sets out ‘10 conditions needed to drive growth in a resource constrained world’ and puts a lot of emphasis on innovation.

Private sector investment in green research and development (R&D) continues to rise according to the Green Transition Scoreboard, which tracks investments in renewable energy, green construction, smart grid, energy efficiency, clean tech and R&D. The automotive industry is the largest investor in green R&D with Renault / Nissan announcing a Euros 4 billion towards zero-emission mobility in 2012 and Volkswagen’s commitment

to invest 76.4 billion Euros on R&D of efficient vehicles and greening their production by 2016. The semiconductor sector is the second largest investor. Solar panel manufacturers have recently reached the milestone of developing silicon modules at a cost of \$1 per watt of capacity. While large firms such as Samsung and Philips are investing billions in new LED lighting technology.

There are a vast number of more specific initiatives in the private sector that suggest that sustainability is permeating corporate strategies, operations and supply chains. Unilever's 'Sustainable Living Plan' aims to double the top-line while halving its environmental footprint and empowering 500,000 smallholder farmers in the process; SAB Miller, Diageo and other brewers are rethinking water and agriculture in their supply chains; Kingfisher is testing a leasing model. There are some encouraging examples in the apparel and footwear industry such as Nike with its 'Better World' initiative to reorient its end-to-value chain; Puma with its novel approach to valuing and reporting the economic consequences of its environmental impact; Patagonia's business strategy to encourage consumers to consume less of its products through its 'Common Threads' initiative; or Timberlands approach to thinking through cradle-to-cradle business models.

### **False summits**

While at the global level (e.g. through the WBCSD) business and industry appear interested in the green economy agenda, some evidence at the sector and organisation level shows otherwise. IIED's recent work with the mining industry demonstrated that companies were 'uncertain about the concept's relevance' and a rejection of any mandatory regulations beyond voluntary standards. Similarly, a study currently underway with the USA's largest carbon emitting companies, ranging from the construction sector to energy and transport industries, is showing that 'climate change is off the agenda' and representatives will only discuss 'energy security' at a stretch. According to new reports, the US delegation is planning to reject the commitment to keep global warming below 2C as part of the UNFCCC negotiations ahead of the elections later this year. Similarly, Australia's ground-breaking Clean Energy Act, which forces approximately 300 of the worst polluting firms to pay a levy of A\$23 (£15) for every tonne of greenhouse gases they produce has been met by fierce controversy.

### **Shifting geopolitical bedrock**

There are a number of major trends that are both supporting and threatening the case for a green economy. The first is the knock-on effect of the Eurozone crisis and prevailing uncertainty across the capital markets. The IMF has downgraded all growth forecasts and in the long term economists are divided as to whether the Eurozone can survive. The downturn is also impacting foreign assistance - the Netherlands have cut aid by 10 – 20%, while Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece will zero out or slash by at least 50% in the next year.

Second, the financial crisis and on-going furore in banking is driving demand for the reform of our financial systems (e.g. Vickers report, Kay review, Basle reforms, regulatory moves in the US and by Germany against tax havens). Social movements such as Occupy, World Social Forum, G20 demonstrations are still galvanising public opinion and making themselves felt in the World Economic Forum discussions.

Third, the impacts of climate change are increasingly making themselves felt across all economies. The US drought has destroyed 45% of corn and 35% of the soya bean crop in the worst harvest since 1988 and extreme flooding in Japan, Philippines and China is predicted to push food prices to all-time highs in the coming months.

Fourth, due to the massive expansion of hydraulic fracturing – fracking – shale gas is becoming commonplace and cheap. China is estimated to have the world's largest shale gas reserves. Last month, the IEA has warned unless governments take action, a 'golden age of gas' will stop renewable energy in its tracks.



In the longer term, predictions seem to suggest that the global financial crisis has accelerated the shift in global economic power to the emerging economies. Measured by GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP), the largest E7 emerging economies will be bigger than the G7 by 2020, and China will likely to have taken over the US by that date. India could also overtake the US by 2050 on this PPP basis.

## Conclusions

- The ‘green growth’ and ‘green economy’ agendas are changing quickly. Even some mainstream economists and finance industries are beginning to see green growth as a way out of economic stagnation and low growth rates. However, the analytical frameworks guiding these different agendas do vary considerably.
- Rio+20 provided the space for a much needed discussion about the understanding of ‘green economy’ – particularly on the equity and poverty dimensions of policies to promote green economy – as opposed to more narrow definition of ‘green growth’. In addition ‘The Future we Want’ made useful references to enhanced corporate reporting, the need to shift unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and the commitment for SDGs and beyond GDP.
- There are now two frontiers pushing forward the agendas; 1. Governments integrating green growth into their economic plans, which risk being exclusively focused on business development and technology; 2. Industry and private sector organisations pursuing market opportunities.
- The UN discussions on green economy provide a vital background to the international policy agenda, and the next important milestone will be the 2015 MDG review and climate negotiations. However, the forums available for inclusive global economic policy collaboration are in short supply.
- The need for multi-stakeholder collaboration has never been more acute. Given the speed at which the agenda is moving, it is critical **that all stakeholder groups work together to define and own the wider understanding of green economy – as one that overtly tackles poverty and inequity and one that protects our natural systems.**



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