

Sustainable Europe Research Institute
Garnisongasse 7/27
A-1090 Vienna, Austria
T +43-1-9690728-14, F +43-1-9690728-17
sylvia.lorek@seri.de, www.seri.at
friedrich.hinterberger@seri.at



SERI Visions: Happiness, Consumption and Work

In recent years, debates on sustainability have led decision makers in the economy to acknowledge the limitations of nature as a fait accompli. However, this acknowledgement will not be reflected in practice as long as economic growth and an increase in consumption remain the number one priority.

Thesis: This obsession with economic growth is just as fatal as it is redundant.

The fatality lies in the fact that the limitations of nature are unavoidable and will dominate our economy and our lives in the long term. Focusing on a more efficient way of dealing with resources is therefore a necessary first step. However, this will not be enough, especially because of economic growth that negates the effects of better resource management.

In addition, the obsession with economic growth is redundant because well-being, happiness and contentment of both individuals and societies depend little on economic growth, at least for the European (and world wide) consumer class.

Suggestion: Let us, in a consistent manner, think through and calculate this “worst case” (from the perspective of an economist) or “necessary case” (for ecology)!

Within the national context:

- In which sectors must consumption be reduced?
- Where does it (only) need to change?
- Where can consumption continue as before?
- Which economic sectors/businesses will be affected?
- Which population groups will be affected?
- Which accompanying political (or societal) measures will be required?

Within the international context:

- Which consequences would limitation or reduction of consumption have?
- Which effects would it have on the world economy and thus on an important aspect of sustainability, namely politics of development?

SERI will increase its attention to these questions in the future. We are therefore open to suggestions, criticism, and partnerships.