

Creating a Converging World – Equity within Limits

POLICY BRIEF AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

CONVERGE PROJECT, WP6

CONVERGE DELIVERABLE 34

The logo for the CONVERGE project, featuring the word "CONVERGE" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a small, stylized globe icon.

The logo for the grIndependent Institute, with "gr" in a light green font and "Independent Institute" in a dark blue font.

The logo for the Seventh Framework Programme, featuring a stylized blue graphic of a bridge or arch above the text "SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME" in a small, dark blue font.

Summary

GreenDependent’s work in the CONVERGE project focused on finding ways of behaving, working and relating that **reduce consumption of materials** while at the same time **increase the equity of sustainable livelihoods** across populations and nations. We explored convergent relationships across different scales from local, national, global-regional to global and have researched current examples of Convergence in communities, as well as policies, business and indicators which may help in the transition to sustainability.

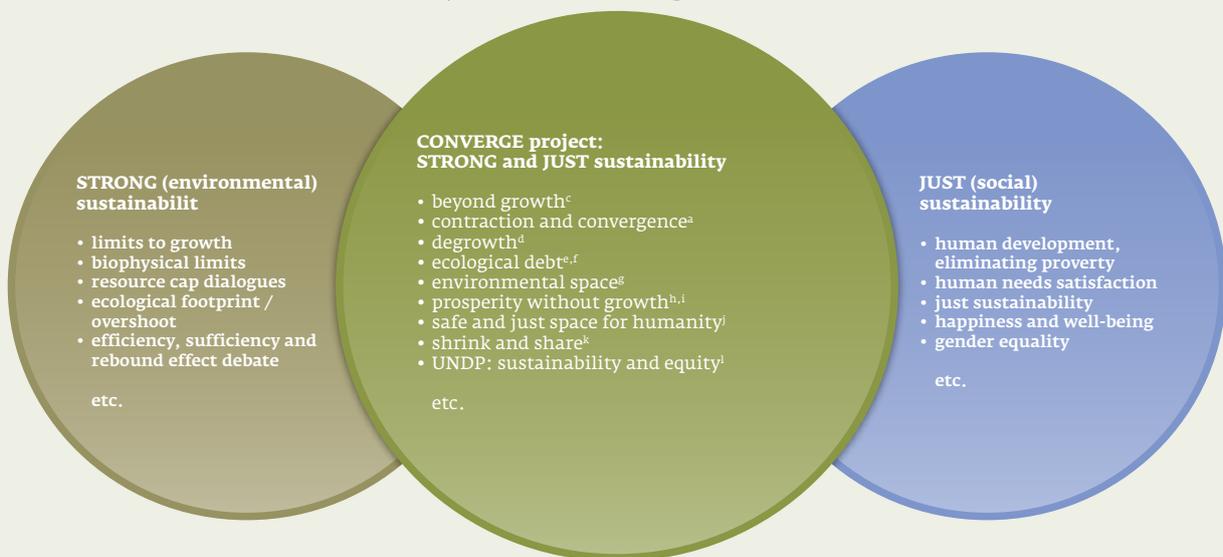
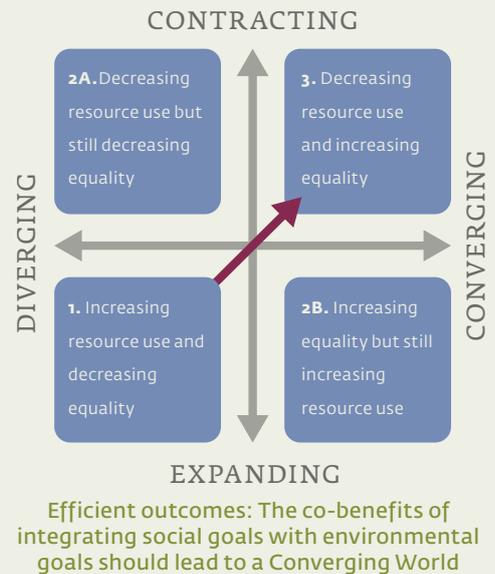
Project Summary

The CONVERGE project:

- An interdisciplinary research project
- Funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union
- 9 partners in 5 countries (including partners from Sweden, the UK, Iceland, Hungary and India)

Work Undertaken

The project consortium examined the concepts of **resource depletion, planetary boundaries and socio-ecological justice**. CONVERGE was inspired by the concept of Contraction and Convergence™,^a and is based on the belief that every global citizen should have the right to a **fair share** of the Earth’s biocapacity and equal access to human rights. CONVERGE project research supports the notion that wealth, well-being and consumption should **converge across and within nations to a level that the biosphere can support**. This requires the enshrining of intra-generational equity (equal rights and responsibilities for the current generation) into the sustainability discourse at regional, national and local levels^b.



CONVERGE Project and **Convergence** Thinking: Bridging Policy and Research Silos in order to encourage transformative Eco-social Policy and Practice.

Findings¹

1. There is growing recognition and quantification of the concept of resource limits and planetary boundaries. High resource throughput is not generating equivalent increases in well-being above certain threshold levels.

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Many planetary boundaries have already been transgressed. A reduction in consumption of resources is required at the global scale, as well as reductions in pollution. Relatively few organisations and initiatives have defined contraction targets using indicators based on best available science.

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A growing body of research indicates that it is possible to reduce resource consumption but still increase human well-being. The use of resource indicators at all scales could help, especially if paired with a collaborative consumption approach and an emphasis on maximising well-being.

2. ‘Sustainability’ research and policy has until now mainly focused on dealing with environmental issues and has tended to neglect the social dimension of development.

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There has been relatively little work done on leveraging the co-benefits of implementing ‘eco-social’ programmes and policies.

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Creating and implementing policies and programmes which serve the combined aims of promoting social and environmental goals is likely to be an effective way to create transformative change at all levels.

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Analysis of 28 multi-level case studies from more than 9 countries across the globe shows that good examples of the type of coupling described above do exist. These socially-just sustainability activities are being carried out by individuals and organisations at various scales and in various fields.

¹ Please see details in references m and n.

Examples of CONVERGE Case Studies

Different ways of connecting Environmental ('Limits') and Social ('Equity') Sustainability in different fields¹

THE CONVERGING WORLD

Non-Profit, UK/Tamil Nadu

The small UK-based Converging World charity funnels money from UK-based donors into funding verified **renewable energy** projects in **industrialising countries**. Profits made from these investments are channelled into further initiatives that fund clean, sustainable and low carbon economic development.

CLIMATE TICKET

Local government, Hungary

The Hungarian Climate Ticket initiative offers a system for helping people and organizations to offset their emissions at the local level through green investments. Businesses and individuals assess the size of their **carbon footprints** and make donations. The money goes to investing in projects which benefit the **local community**.

THE HUNGARIAN OMBUDSMAN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

National government/Hungary

The Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations is a parliamentary body that is independent from the Government (with no administrative power but with full access to any administrative information). It handles constitutional complaints which relate to the constitutional **rights** of all Hungarians to environmental protection and a healthy environment. They advocate for public concerns, conceive and conduct research and investigate matters of **intergenerational** interest. They explicitly **recognise environmental limits** and moderate their own everyday working practices to take them into account.

VAUBAN

NGO/City Government, Germany

Vauban is an **environmentally friendly settlement** of approximately 5,000 inhabitants located 4 km south of the university town of Freiburg in Germany. Integrating sustainability concerns into housing, energy, transportation and leisure infrastructure ('smart planning') were and still are primary development principles and have resulted in significant **savings of a range of resources** since it was built. Residents are engaged in a **collaborative** and **participatory** approach to urban and community development and mobility and **social inclusion** are maximised.

ZERI (ZERO EMISSIONS RESEARCH AND INITIATIVES)

Research and Practice Network, International

ZERI was set up by Gunter Pauli and a network of other researchers, scientists and practitioners in 1994 in collaboration with the UNDP. It takes a holistic perspective to promoting sustainability. ZERI members view wastes as resources and seek **synergistic solutions** from designing waste out of industrial systems that provide **multiple socio-economic benefits** (such as providing jobs and incomes from extending the life cycle of resources).

¹ Please note that the status of the Ombudsman for Future Generations changed as of 1st January 2012 as a result of the 2011.CXI. Act on the commissioner for fundamental rights. More information can be found at: <http://www.jno.hu/en/> and in Vadovics and Milton 2012.

Implications

One important conclusion that emerges from studying both the literature and a diverse selection of initiatives is that humanity needs to both **contract and converge across scales**. Inequality has to be overcome at all levels and in all fields, just as planetary and resource boundaries need to be respected at local, regional and global levels. Thus, promoting limits/contraction and equity/convergence is necessary on multiple levels - the personal level, households, neighbourhoods and communities, towns and cities, regions, countries and between groups of countries. These **processes of meeting limits/contracting and encouraging equity/convergence need to happen in parallel at the different levels and scales**.

For this to happen, ‘Limits’ as well as ‘Equity’ focused thinking and related criteria need to be integrated into policies, strategies, funding schemes, programmes and projects at European, national and local levels.

Recommendations

1. **Wide-scale awareness raising and education**
2. **Appraisal and evaluation**
3. **Promotion of best practice**

1. **Wide-scale awareness raising and education** is necessary to help people working at all levels of policy making and programme planning as well as project implementation understand that addressing environmental and social issues, or in other words, living more equitably within ecological limits, are complementary goals and thus complex solutions need to be found that exhibit an awareness of this interconnectedness. A **lack of awareness and knowledge** about this fact was indicated in our 28 example initiatives as the **most important barrier to sustainable development**.

HOW CAN THE RESULTS OF CONVERGE PROJECT RESEARCH¹ HELP WITH THIS TASK?

- The 28 case studies introduced in our e-book¹ include inspiring practice-based examples of how working towards meeting Limits and fostering Equity can be practically combined.
- The Convergence Mapping System² can assist with education and awareness raising through illustrating how limits/contraction and fostering equity/convergence can be connected.³

¹ As presented in Vadovics and Milton 2012 (CONVERGE Deliverable 33).

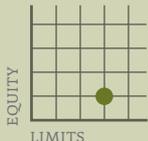
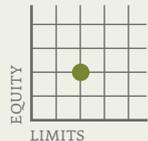
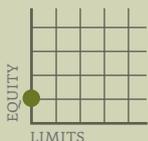
² Please see details in Annex.

³ For this purpose the Convergence Framework, also developed in the CONVERGE project, could also be used. Please see details in Deliverables 35 and 37 of the CONVERGE project. Available from <http://www.convergeproject.org>.

2. **Appraisal and evaluation** systems should be developed to ensure that both Limits and Equity related aims and objectives are integrated appropriately into policies, strategies, programmes, projects and funding schemes.
 - Convergence Mapping could be part of the periodic sustainability evaluation and reporting of all types of organizations, with the result of the Mapping shown in sustainability reports.
 - Similarly, prior to receiving funding, all research project proposals could be evaluated using Convergence Mapping criteria specifically tailored for this purpose to ensure that all research projects consider both equity and planetary boundaries in their work. Minimum achievable scores for funding could be established, requiring at least an explicit recognition of both principles.
 - Assistance and ideas about how to continuously develop and further integrate these aims also need to be provided as implementing the principles of limits/contraction while simultaneously promoting equity/convergence is not without challenges.

HOW CAN THE RESULTS OF CONVERGE PROJECT RESEARCH HELP WITH THIS TASK?

The Convergence Mapping System, developed and tested in the CONVERGE project, can serve as an example of how to develop an evaluation system as well as act as a tool which can be used to indicate where further improvement is needed. Examples of how this can be done are shown in the Table below:

Initiative name	Action required to strengthen limits/contraction elements	Action required to more strongly promote equity/convergence elements
 <p>Cödöllő Climate Club Small Hungarian grassroots carbon-reduction group initiated in 2009 by an NGO.</p>	Attempt where possible to use best available science for formulating targets and indicators.	Incorporate explicit references to the need for inter and intra-generational equity into initiative documents and activities.
 <p>The 30 Project American non-profit organization (a 'think and do tank') designed to initiate change in global food systems.</p>	Formulate or incorporate relevant resource-related targets and indicators to the initiative – where possible selected based on best available science.	Refer to the need to promote “justice” and “equity” across scales explicitly in core initiative documents.
 <p>Pilis LETS Hungarian Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) with informal community membership.</p>	As a first step, consider how planetary and resource limits are relevant to the initiative, then recognize them explicitly, and finally, define relevant targets and indicators (e.g. at an individual/local level).	Refer to “justice” and “equity” explicitly in core initiative documents. Consider how to incorporate a stronger ethical component into the initiative (e.g. offer free services/discounts for disadvantaged members).
 <p>Covenant of Mayors cities Mainstream European CO₂ reduction movement started by the European Commission with local and regional authority members.</p>	Consider how to make the pre-existing ‘contraction’ elements more relevant and effective at an individual/local level (e.g. by defining carbon targets for local government employees’ offices, districts or vehicle fleets).	As a first step, analyse the equity/convergence related challenges these initiatives face. Identify how to leverage contraction efforts for maximum gains in equity. Incorporate and publicise explicit references to the need for inter and intra-generational equity in initiative documents.

3. **Promotion of best practice is required** to raise awareness and provide guidelines about how to improve policies, programmes and projects, as well as motivate the creation of new initiatives that are designed to combine Limits with Equity. Further best practice examples need to be found and disseminated widely.

HOW CAN THE RESULTS OF CONVERGE PROJECT RESEARCH HELP WITH THIS TASK?

The Convergence Mapping System can be applied to identify initiatives - from diverse fields, both top-down and bottom-up - that already exhibit a high level of synthesis of both Limits and Equity issues, and have been able to successfully integrate the two elements.



Equity within Limits:
The Converging World's charitably-funded wind turbines
in Tamil Nadu generate locally-owned green energy which
helps beneficiaries to meet their own needs

References and Further Reading

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- m Vadovics E, Milton S. and the CONVERGE Project Team. 2013. *Case Studies ('initiatives') Illustrating Contraction and Convergence. Equity within Limits in Theory and Practice*. Background Paper to complement CONVERGE Deliverable 33. GreenDependent Institute, Hungary. 31 p. Available from: <http://www.convergeproject.org/equityandlimitsebook> and <http://intezet.greendependent.org/en/node/162>
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Annex : The Convergence Mapping System

The objective of the Convergence Mapping System - developed and tested in the CONVERGE research project - is to show how various types of initiatives and organizations are managing to address the imperatives of both living within the limits of the planet and sharing its resources equitably.

Scales Used in the Convergence Mapping System

Limits/Contraction

- 1 **Mention of** resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material **BUT no obvious mechanism for, or attempts to**, reduce consumption of resources or reduce pollution. Initiative activities may even contribute to increases in resource consumption/pollution.
- 0 **No mention** of resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material. The initiative's main goals are not related to reducing consumption of resources or of reducing pollution in any obvious way.
- 1 **Implicit.** No explicit mention of resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries in mission statement. May have limited mentions of limits and resource issues in associated prominent, contemporary textual, policy or programmatic material. However, despite the lack of formal references to limits, the initiative is involved in activities to reduce resource consumption and/or decrease pollution.
- 2 **Explicit.** Resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries are mentioned in core mission statement or/and in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material and the initiative is clearly engaged in attempts to reduce consumption and/or reduce pollution. Specific quantitative reduction targets or goals may or may not be defined.
- 3 **Explicit + Targets/Indicators.** Core mission statement/prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material relates to resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries and reducing consumption. Specific limits are identified and/or specific contraction targets are detailed. There are transparent and accountable methods for contracting resource use and tracking results (e.g. use of indicators).
- 4 **Explicit + Targets that are defined based on available (scientific) information** about resource, ecosystem or planetary limits or boundaries. Clear efforts are being made to connect limits-related science with practice. Transparent and accountable methods for contracting resource use and tracking the results (e.g. use of indicators) are in place.

Equity/Convergence

- 1 **Mention of ‘equity’ or ‘justice’** in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material **BUT no indication of activities** relating to promoting equity or justice. Initiative activities may even contribute to increasing inequality/hindering justice.
- 0 **No mention of ‘equity’ or ‘justice’** in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material. No evidence of an equity/justice/re-distributional focus to the initiative’s activities.
- 1 **Implicit.** No explicit mention of ‘equity’ or ‘justice’ in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material. The initiative’s activities involve attempts to address the issue of justice/equity.
- 2 No mention of ‘equity’ or ‘justice’ in core mission statement. **Limited mention** (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material. The initiative’s activities involve attempts to address the issue of justice/equity.
- 3 **Equity’ or ‘justice’ mentioned and reference given to either intergenerational or intragenerational equity** in core mission statement. Limited mention (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material. The initiative’s activities have a focus on addressing the issue of justice/equity.
- 4 **Core mission statement relates to both intra- and intergenerational equity and justice** and/or ‘justice’ and ‘equity’ occur in same sentence in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material. The initiative’s activities have a focus on the issue of justice/equity.

The authors of this document would be interested to hear about any attempts to implement the mapping system described in this paper for any purposes or to help in further developing the mapping tool for practical application.

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