

## AGFO-601

# Perceptions on green economy by young researchers

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D'Amato, D., Droste, N., Chan, S., Hofer, A. 2017. The Green Economy: Pragmatism or Revolution? Perceptions of Young Researchers on Social Ecological Transformation. *Environmental Values* 26:413-435.



# BACKGROUND and MOTIVATION

[2014 Thor Heyerdahl Summer School on Environmental Governance](#)

(Norwegian University of Life Sciences - NMBU)

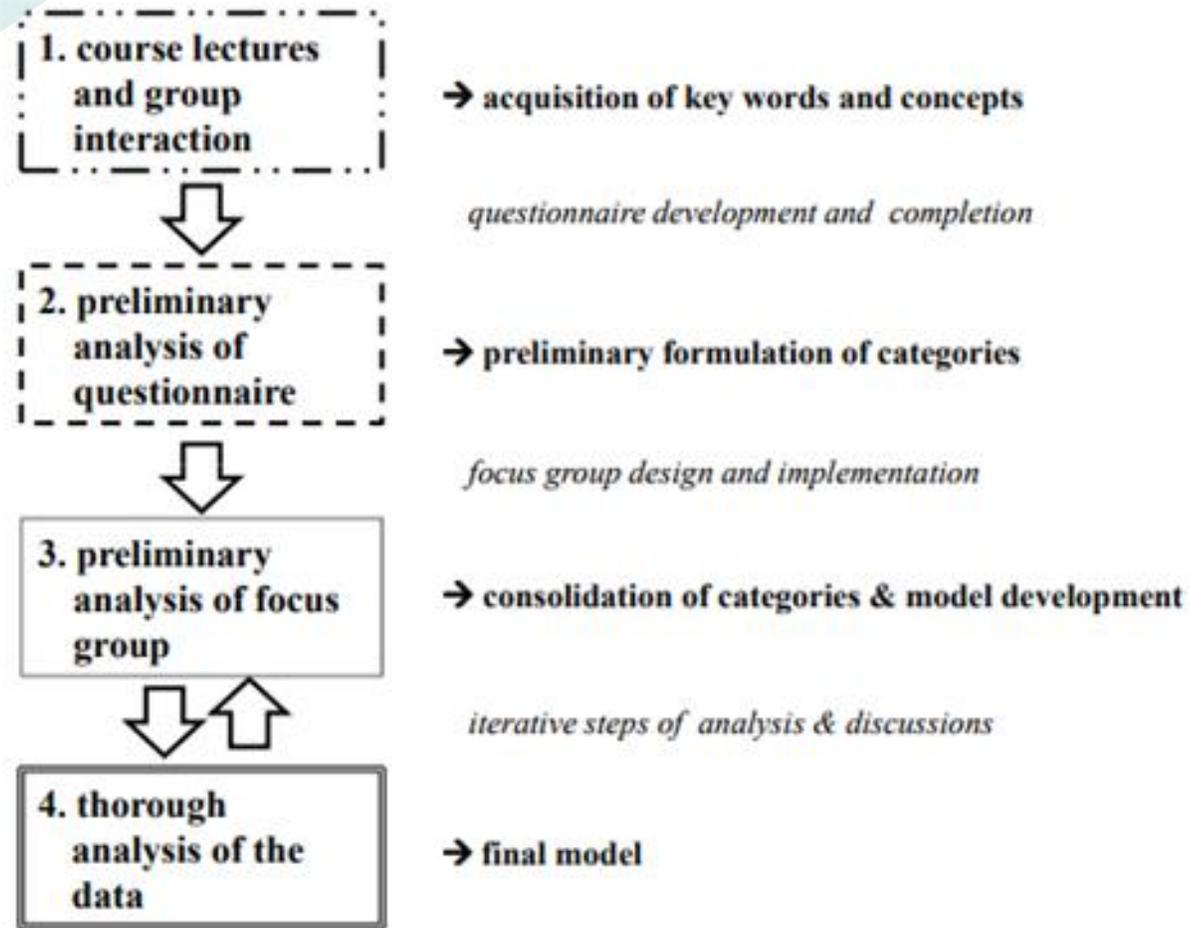
The aim of the course was to engage early career and graduate researchers in discussing the **multiple meanings of Green Economy** (GE) and the role of scientists in and beyond science.

Multiple perspectives and opinions emerged on GE.

# RESEARCH QUESTION

How do young scholars perceive the GE concept, the need for societal change, the potential of the GE for realising such a change, and the role of research in promoting this change?

# METHOD



Questionnaires + focus group  
Content analysis

Figure 1. Different phases in the development and consolidation of the categories and model. The arrows indicate outputs, the numbers mean coarse steps in analysis, and processes are highlighted in italics.

# FINDINGS

		Needed societal change	
		Evolution	Revolution
Role of research	Radicalism	<p><b>Radical evolutionist</b> Social and ecological problems to be solved through more growth: technological innovations, market-based solutions, free market.</p>	<p><b>Radical revolutionary</b> A non-negotiable set of values that seeks to fundamentally and drastically change the current system: critical voices, strong imaginative power.</p>
	Pragmatism	<p><b>Pragmatic evolutionist</b> Mitigating the failures of the current system by workable solutions: internalisation of externalities, policy mixes and economic instruments, technological innovation and social creativity.</p>	<p><b>Pragmatic revolutionary</b> Existing instruments are not sufficient to deal with the inherent and deeply rooted problems: fundamental critique of the current system with deliberations of possible alternatives, also beyond academia.</p>

*'Radical conservatives actually exist'*

*'Revolution and a new system will not come timely enough. Let us try to pursue change within the current system, until something new arises'*

*'I totally don't want to extend this past to the possible future that we have'*

*'Pragmatism and evolution will bring us to the boundaries of pragmatism, entering radicalism'*

# FINDINGS

The GE is mainly perceived as an approach within the current system (evolution) and an action-oriented style of research (pragmatism).

Respondents tended towards revolutionary and pragmatic positions.

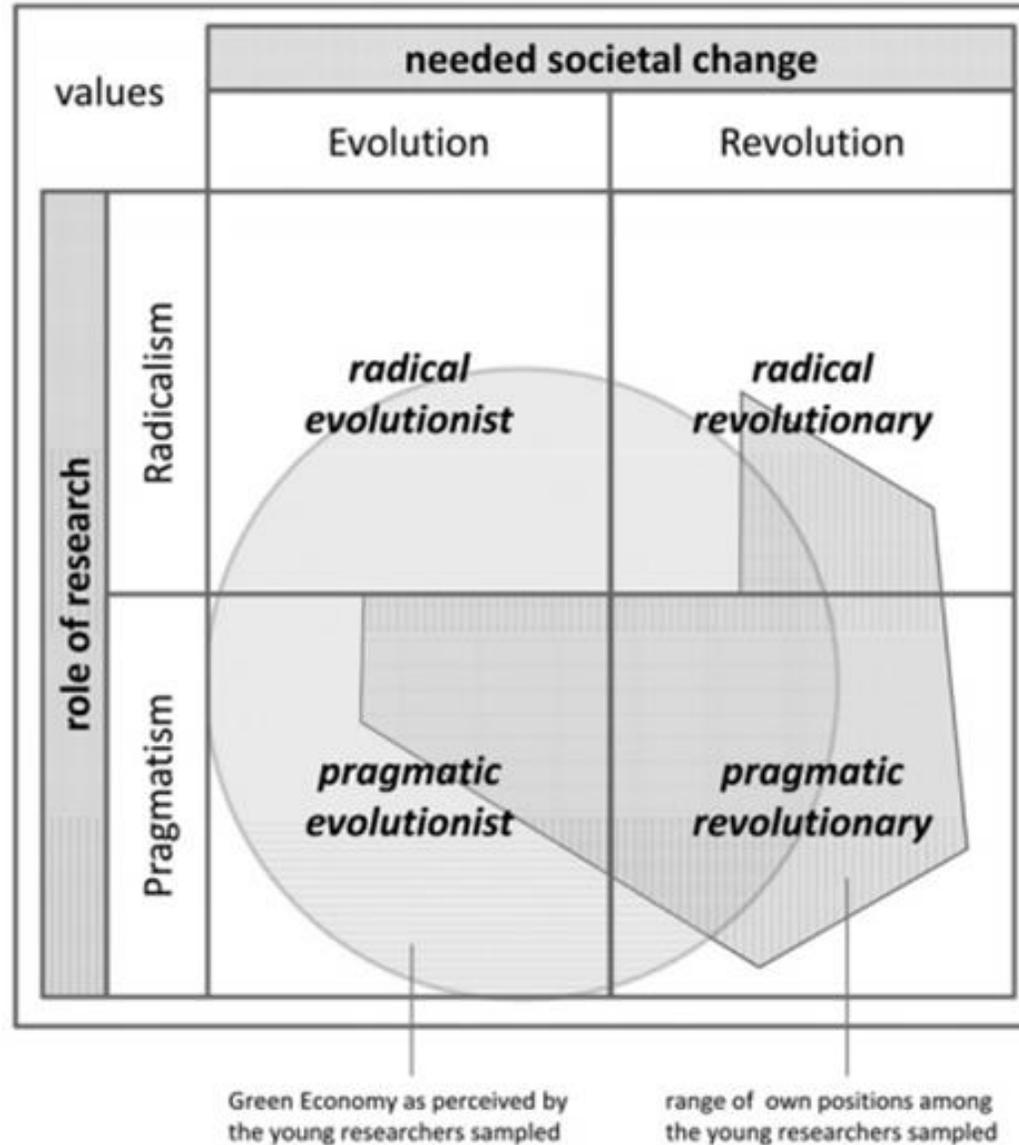


Figure 2. Perceptions of young researchers (N=20) concerning the GE concept, the need for societal change, and the role of research in promoting this change.

# DISCUSSION

GE is subject of multiple understandings and perceptions (Borel-Saladin and Turok, 2013).

GE is not perceived as a particularly revolutionary concept, rather as incremental improvement.

Several scholars and practitioners have voiced critical views (e.g. Spash, 2012).

For example, a study by Sandbrook et al., (2013) suggested that regarding market-like instruments for nature conservation, professionals and academics are more sceptical than the organisations they work for.

# REFERENCES

Borel-Saladin J.M. and Turok, I.N. 2013. 'The Green Economy: Incremental change or transformation?' *Environmental Policy and Governance* 23 (4): 209–220.

Sandbrook, C.G., J.A. Fisher and B. Vira. 2013. 'What do conservationists think about markets'? *Geoforum* 50: 232–240

Spash, C.L. 2012. 'Green economy, red herring'. *Environmental Values* 21 (2): 95–99.