

5. PhD Progress Report – September 2020

Official PhD topic: The place of ecology in undergraduate economics education; the case in three European countries (La place de l'écologie dans l'enseignement de premier cycle en Science Economique: le cas de trois pays européens) - Ecole Doctorale, Università di Corsica

In my own words:

- (a) What is the place of ecology (i.e. ecological literacy) in the mainstream theory of economics?
- (b) What is the place of ecology in the undergraduate level education in economics, in three European countries? (UK, Germany and Switzerland)

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See: [Extensive information about my PhD](#) including reviews of some academicians like Richard Norgaard, Peter Söderbaum and Julien-François Gerber.

Downloadable documents (pdf files):

1. [Description of PhD Project \(in French\)](#)
2. [Description of PhD Project \(English translation\)](#)
3. [Poster Presentation \(June 2019 in Corte\)](#)
4. [2nd Progress Report \(May 2019\)](#)
5. [3rd Progress Report \(August 2019\)](#)
6. [4th Progress Report \(February 2020\)](#)

Overview: What happened since February 2020?

1. From the middle of March to the middle of June 2020, I was blocked alone in the holiday house of my family in Kuşadası-Aydın (Turkey) due to covid-19 (corona) virus. I couldn't do much in this period except for reading some important books like *The Death of Nature* (Carolyn Merchant), *The Culture of Narcissism* (Christopher Lasch), *Merchants of Doubt* (Oreskes & Conway) and *Oneness vs the 1%* (Vandana Shiva). Otherwise, I kept myself busy with organic gardening.
2. I would have another presentation of my PhD work (with a discussion session) at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara in March, but it was cancelled due to corona (covid-19) virus.
3. Research *ecological literacy*: What is ecological literacy, and how is it obtained? What is shallow vs deep ecology? What is the "systems view of life"? (machine vs organic world paradigms, complexity, chaos theory etc.)
4. I've read lots of articles and reports for the part (b) of my PhD. Particularly important is the book [The Econocracy: the perils of leaving economics to the experts](#) written by three members of the Post-Crash Economic Society at the University of Manchester. Another important report is [Economics Education at the University of Manchester](#), again published by The Post-Crash Economics Society.
5. I found (almost) all the central repositories of articles and reports for economics education in UK, Germany and Switzerland (there are also reports for France). I've read all the reports for UK (some of them include interesting surveys) but I haven't yet read all the reports for Germany and Switzerland. I will do this in the following weeks.
6. Content analysis: Web pages of the economics departments of some leading Swiss universities (Zürich, Basel and Bern); department pages, lecture plans, mission statements, lecture contents. Sent a list of questions by email to the lecture coordinator of the Economics Department in

Zürich University. He wrote me back that he would try to answer these questions within several weeks.

7. Found the list of most popular economics textbooks in Europe (principles, micro, macro) and downloaded these books for keyword and content analysis.
8. I formulated the structure of my PhD thesis (see below), all critics, comments and suggestions are welcome. I plan to submit the first draft of my PhD thesis until the end of November 2020. Actually, I had planned to submit it until the end of August 2020, but there is a delay due to covid-19 virus.

- (a) What is the place of ecology (i.e. ecological literacy) in the mainstream theory of economics?
 (b) What is the place of ecology in the undergraduate level education in economics, in three European countries? (UK, Germany and Switzerland)

As explained previously in my [PhD poster](#) (June 2019), (a) is the more philosophical part of my PhD that primarily investigates the mental (ideological), institutional and economic **barriers** to ecological literacy. This is a broadband qualitative analysis that tries to identify all the potential barriers without going too much into the details of each barrier.

So far, I analysed **fundamental issues** like deep ecology, systems view of life, Western ideology of continuous and limitless progress, growthism, industrial paradigm versus ecological paradigm, industrial paradigm (i.e. human-centred, mechanistic and reductionist worldview) in agriculture and healthcare. These fundamental issues –as background information-- are required to understand the potential barriers to ecological literacy.

Here, I don't claim to have final answers and theories for potential barriers; this PhD thesis will be just a list of (hopefully) well explained formulations of hypotheses and questions for further analysis.

Content structure of the first draft of my PhD thesis

(1) Executive Summary

Description and purpose of my PhD, key findings

(2) Introduction

Description, nature and purpose of my PhD, summary of methods, key findings, key conclusions, suggestions for further research

(3) Information Sources and Research Methods

(4) Fundamental Issues

Background information required for the analysis of barriers to ecological literacy

- What is ecological literacy, how is it obtained? (shallow vs deep ecology, systems view of life, organic vs machine world views, need for extended evolutionary anthropology etc.)
- Why is ecological literacy needed for economic policies aiming sustainable well-being?
- Western ideology of continuous and limitless progress
- Industrial Paradigm (human-centred, mechanistic and reductionist worldview in science and economy)
- Externalities: Long-term and wide-reaching consequences of externalities, creating social and ecological rifts in the name of economic progress
- Environmental Economics vs Ecological Economics
- Growthism: the neoclassical/neoliberal obsession with GDP and GDP growth
- Industrial paradigm in agriculture and healthcare

- Influence of vested business interests and neoliberal think-tanks on the theory and education of economics
- Primary features and ideological pillars of mainstream (neoclassical/neoliberal) economics

(5) Mental, institutional and economic barriers to ecological literacy

(a) Mental (ideological) barriers: Industrial paradigm, Newton/physics envy and premature mathematisation, lack of historicity (short-termism into the past and future), lack of pluralism in economics theory, narrow focus on business realm (money households, firms, consumers, state), reduction of use value to exchange value, ignoring the role and complexity of society (individualism), ignoring organic intelligence of society and nature, ignoring the nonmonetary reproduction (production + recycling) of society and nature (monetary reductionism), ignoring power relations, ignoring imperialism and exploitation, ignoring the long-term consequences of externalities, undervaluation of society and nature, technological optimism, the religion of economism (econocracy) that obliterate democratic discussion, neoclassical indoctrination and cognitive inertia, curing symptoms instead of diseases, economics as business ideology, confusing means with ends ...

(b) Institutional barriers: High-ranked academic journals, dominance of neoclassical paradigm in academy, university/department ranking issues and research funds, competition for academic jobs and titles, competition for jobs in government and business bureaucracy, historical evolution of state as the tax collector (seeing like a state), mass media and education, urban/industrial/imperial lifestyle, advertisement industry and consumerism, the globalisation of economics education and textbooks, creating artificial and real scarcities, economics as “scientific” justification for imperialism and exploitation, desire to hide or downplay social costs of profitable investments ...

(c) Economic barriers: Vested interests of pro-corporate state and business, research funding, business models of universities and departments ...

Most of these barriers are already handled in my 3rd and 4th progress reports. The analysis of part (b) –the case in three European countries, UK, Germany and Switzerland—may provide new information. Content of the categories above (a, b, c) may be changed.

(6) The place of ecological literacy in the undergraduate theory and education of economics

- (a) International issues
- (b) Case in UK
- (c) Case in Germany
- (d) Case in Switzerland

The analysis will include student/academic movements for redefining economics, like Rethinking Economics (RE), Post-Crash Economics Society (PCES), [Open Letter](#) by 65+ student associations (ISIPE, International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics), Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik, Post-Autistic Economics, OIKOS, PEPS-Economie, CORE economics, The Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism and so on.

My analysis of these cases will try to answer following questions:

1. What are the global, national and university-specific institutions that shape (or constrain) the education of economics?

2. What is the dominant paradigm of teaching economics in a given country? How did this paradigm become dominant?
3. Are there universities and departments known for their own traditions and schools for the teaching of economics? How does the general landscape of economics education in a given country look like?
4. Which economy departments are perceived as the most prestigious ones? Why?
5. How does a typical lecture plan (undergraduate economics) look like? Are there significant deviations within the country?
6. Are there lectures and other activities in the lecture plans that foster ecological literacy, or at least holistic view and qualitative analysis in general?
7. What are the most popular economics textbooks? (micro and macro) What is the place of ecology in these textbooks?
8. With respect to ecological literacy, pluralism and qualitative analysis: How is the development of economics education compared to the education 10 or 20 years ago? What are the most recent developments (positive or negative)?
9. Which educational values and priorities are promoted in the brochures and web pages of economics departments?
10. Did the student and academic movements for “rethinking economics” since 2000 cause significant changes at some universities?

My research methods for part (b) of my PhD include: Reading existing reports about economics education, content analysis of most popular economics textbooks (micro & macro), content analysis of department web pages (mission statements, lecture plants, other department information), unstructured and semi-structured interviews with some academicians to obtain more information about a particular country or university

Most important repositories of reports about economics education (international, UK, Germany, France, Switzerland):

International, including UK and Germany:

[Econocracy: The perils of leaving economics to the experts](#)

A comprehensive critic of economics education in UK, with suggestions for improvements.

[OIKOS: Mapping Pluralist Research Reports](#)

An overview report of the current situation, with links to many research reports about economics education in Europe, including cases from UK, Germany and France

Academic paper: [Integrating sustainable development into economics curriculum, Peter Bradley](#)

Germany:

[Studie EconPLUS](#) (in German)

Summary Report in English: [Pluralism in the economics curriculum in Germany](#) (EconPLUS)

[Forschungsergebnisse des Themenbereichs Neues ökonomisches Denken](#)

Switzerland:

WWF reports in German: [Nachhaltige Hochschullandschaft Schweiz](#)

Summary Report in English: [Sustainable Development in Economic Sciences](#)

[WWF übt Kritik an Schweizer Hochschulen: Mangelhaftes Engagement für die Nachhaltige Entwicklung \(2019\)](#)

(In English: WWF criticizes Swiss universities: Inadequate commitment to sustainable development)

(7) How to overcome the barriers to ecological literacy in the theory and education of mainstream economics? Some suggestions ...

(8) Conclusions

(9) Bibliography and Other Information Sources

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All critiques, comments, new ideas and new suggestions are welcome.

This progress report is written by: **Tunç Ali Kütükçüoğlu**

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