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Rethinking growth in the light of Contraction and Convergence

The CONVERGE project is predicated on the concept of 'Contraction and Convergence' (C&C) that informed the Kyoto process. It will explore how this simple concept might be extended to other areas of human activity - particularly consumption of materials and services.

C&C links the key social concept of equal rights to emissions with the key ecological need to reduce emissions. CONVERGE aims to rethink globalization by developing our understanding of convergence beyond greenhouse gas emissions to the wider social, economic and ecological dimensions of sustainability.

In the paper, we first review the C&C literature.

Following this, we introduce the project and its theoretical background. The research methodologies originate in systems sciences, designed to integrate social, scientific and economic disciplines. CONVERGE aims to explore convergent sustainability relationships across different scales from local, national, global-regional to global. Key to the success is an interdisciplinary approach and working with stakeholders from civil society, government and business.

To provide an example of C&C, the community of Chew Magna (UK) is introduced which decided to account for the impact of its consumption, and address the problems created by it at the individual, community and global level. This resulted in the formation of a charity called The Converging World that is an example of C&C in action.

The paper also provides an overview of the communities to be studied from the C&C perspective in Hungary, the UK, Iceland, and India.

We close by presenting some preliminary conclusions for community development and policy making.