

Bioeconomy and Justice (BioEcoJust)



At the Aalto University School of Business, we have studied the meaning of justice in the context of bioeconomy, which we have interpreted politically as an attempt to move away from fossil economy with its detrimental impact on climate and the natural environment. At the University of Turku's Finland Futures Research Centre, we have completed futures scenarios based on expert panel input. We have collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's (MAF) Bioeconomy Team and influenced both the bioeconomy strategy work done during Finland's EU presidency in 2019 and the ensuing implementation of the Finnish and EU bioeconomy strategy.

With the bulk of our theoretical work done, we now concentrate on practical applications. We are helping the MAF to formulate new bioeconomy strategies which would take seriously equality and climate concerns. Our analyses have shown an interesting tendency into which we try to draw attention. Policy documents name sustainability as the primary aim of bioeconomy. In the introductions of these documents, sustainability is defined as a combination of economic, social, and environmental factors. When the documents proceed to matters of substance, however, the only dimensions of sustainability left are technological and business solutions. The possibility of sharing more equally what we have, the search for alternatives to material growth, and respect for planetary boundaries as an intrinsic value fade into the background.

We steer decision makers into taking note of the social and environmental dimensions by showing, in background papers, scientific publications, and public appearances, the discrepancies of the existing strategies and policy plans, by exposing questionable presumptions – like the supposed inexhaustibility of biomass – and by outlining a management model that could be used in a just shift towards genuinely sustainable government actions.

More information:

- Professor Matti Häyry, Aalto University, matti.hayry@aalto.fi
- Professor Markku Wilenius, University of Turku, markku.wilenius@utu.fi