

Bioeconomy and Justice (BioEcoJust)



Background

The idea behind this research endeavour is that bioeconomy, or biobased economy, is a core future alternative to the current fossil fuel economy. In a fossil fuel economy, substances like gasoline and fuel oil are converted, by traditional methods, into energy, materials, and chemical and other products. This is seen as problematic for many sustainability- and environment-related reasons. Biobased economy, in its turn, promises to convert synthetic gas, sugars, oil, fibres, and other materials into energy, biomaterials, and chemical and other products in a more sustainable manner, by the use of emerging biotechnologies, with little or no damage to our shared social and natural environments.

Decision makers, private and public, business and political, are in a key role when the future direction of global economies is set. By making certain choices, agents promote the rise of the new age of bioeconomy; by making others, they make a renewed and possibly detrimental commitment to the prevailing economic order.

Objectives

The aim of the BioEcoJust consortium is to find out how probable a bioeconomic future is, what decisions need to be made for reaching it, who the principal decision makers are, and how their responsibility in making the crucial choices can best be described and evaluated, especially in terms of here-and-now and intergenerational justice. An integral part of the consortium's work is to make private and public decision makers aware of the consequences and responsibilities related to bioeconomic choices.

Work plan

The objectives will be met by pursuing two intertwined research strands.

Professor Markku Wilenius and his team at the University of Turku Finland Futures Centre will estimate the stage of bioeconomic development in Finland, in Europe, and globally by 2025, 2075, and 2125 in different scenarios. They will gather data by thematic expert interviews and a two-round Delphi survey. The resulting expert views will form the basis of scenarios for assessment and elaboration in Futures Cliniques workshops. Expert scenarios will then be turned into action scenarios and visions for the future of bioeconomy and its alternatives.

Professor Matti Häyry and his team at the Aalto University School of Business will, based on the work of the futures studies team, identify the decisions and agents who are judged to be causally responsible for choices on bioeconomy. By using the core philosophical methods of explication and interpretation, they will list the conditions on which causal responsibility can be seen to imply moral responsibility, and present the implications that this has on the justice of the choices made. A comparison to pre-set (e.g. Finnish governmental) views will yield normative recommendations.

To disseminate the results, the consortium will organise academic meetings; general lectures; panels with the Parliamentary Committee for the Future, with members of the parliament; and a seminar with the Standing Committee for Foresight in the Prime Minister's Office.

For more information about the consortium's work, contact the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator at:

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