



Universität
Basel

Research Project

In Search of Decoupling: (How) Can We Combine Climate Sustainability with Economic Growth, Good Jobs, and Public Preferences?

Third-party funded project

Project title In Search of Decoupling: (How) Can We Combine Climate Sustainability with Economic Growth, Good Jobs, and Public Preferences?

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Organisation / Research unit

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Status Active

Whether economic growth inevitably increases greenhouse gas emissions may be the most contentious issue within the climate research and environmental communities. Some are optimistic about opportunities for “green growth” and new jobs in less polluting industries; others reject that emissions can be sustainably “decoupled” from growth. This open question is one important reason for policymakers’ slow decision-making about how to address the challenge of climate change. Given this debate, and the urgent need for politically feasible policies that are both effective and economical, we propose a three-part program to better illuminate the relationship between growth and emissions. First, we will investigate prior changes in countries’ emissions, and the political and socioeconomic factors behind them. Using statistical models, we will compare emissions from different sources, and focus in particular on the impacts of public attitudes and the relative sizes of different industries. Second, we will qualitatively examine in-depth the cases of countries that have most decoupled economic growth from various sources of emissions. Under what conditions have these achievements, including key policy decisions, been possible? Third, we will investigate what people believe to be key policies’ impacts on growth and employment. How do those beliefs shape preferences with respect to climate policies, and how closely do they match the actual track records of existing policies?

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