

Grading guide SGO 3200, spring 2021

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The assignment consists of three tasks and students shall answer one, and only one of the tasks. All tasks expect students to present and discuss concepts and literature and use them to analyse examples related to changing society in a more sustainable direction. The level of maturity of these discussions is important when it comes to grading. Below central elements in each of the tasks are listed.

Task 1 - max 4500 words

- Specify the main components of the Multi-Level-Perspective. What are strengths and weaknesses of the MLP perspective?
- How can the MLP perspective be used to analyze a transition towards more sustainable energy production?

This task relates directly to literature which have been presented in the lectures. Geels (2019) is important here and students are expected to write on landscape-regimes/systems-niches as the point of departure to specify the main components of the MLP. Geels (2019) responds to much of the critique which has been raised towards the MLP over the last 10-15 years, based on recent research. This gives students many possibilities to present and discuss. At the same the paper presents weaknesses and limitations with the MLP perspective. Questions concerning social inequality and physical science-based knowledge on global environmental change are not included.

Question 2 can be answered in different ways, one possibility is to discuss solar energy in the Global South, based on the papers and lectures by Kirsten Ulsrud. Another possibility is to present the debate on wind energy and the production of clean energy based on Clausen et al 2020, with examples from Denmark and Scotland. Norway, the oil industry and wind energy is another relevant example. The paper on energy transition away from coal in the UK and Germany is very relevant (Geels et al 2016).

Task 2 - max 4500 words

- How can innovation be defined?
- How can innovations contribute to speed up sustainable transitions?
- What possible roles can government policies have in such transitions?

This is a broad assignment, and it is expected that students find their way to discuss the questions. Many of the readings on the reading list can be mobilized here. Fagerberg (2005) present Schumpeter and introduces the literature on innovation. Fagerberg (2018) directly relates to the role of innovations in sustainability transitions. Asheim and Gertler (2005) and Coenen et al (2012) both discusses the geography of innovation. Sustainable innovation systemes are discussed by Altenburg & Pegels 2012. These references mostly discuss market-based innovations.

In the lectures we have been talking about social innovations based on Murray et al (2010) and Jessop et al (2013). Social innovation as part of neo-liberalism or, the alternatively critical perspectives on social innovation has been underlined in the lectures. Geels (2019) makes a similar distinction when he talks about grassroot innovations.

Task 3 - max 4500 words

The food system (including agriculture, the food industry, distribution and consumption), is a major contributor to environmental problems.

- How can ecological food consumption be defined?
- What influences what consumers eat?
- What are the major barriers towards a more sustainable food system? Use examples.

The first question can be answered by using the paper by Niva et al (2014). The research group defined ecological food consumption as following one or several of the following practices:

- Buy regional or local food
- Avoid products with excessive packaging
- Buy organic food
- Eat only seasonal fruit and vegetables
- Eat meat at most twice a week or little at a time
- Avoid food products imported by airplane

What influences what consumers purchase and consume has also been investigated by Niva et al. Their findings are summed up below.

Food decisions

- **Buying, preparing and eating food involve a whole range of considerations**
- **There is often not an explicit order of priorities**
- **Everyday food practices are complex**
- **Often implicit compromises between different values and wishes**
- **Endeavors for sustainable food consumption are indeed intermingled with other food related practices**

Concerning the third question, several approaches are possible, but no final answer is given in readings on the reading list. Micro level barriers towards innovation in organic agriculture based on Noe et al (2015) is one starting point. The role of the food industry, retailers and consumers are other entry points to raise a discussion.