



FINAL ASSIGNMENT

ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

< If there is a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility >
– Robert Musil (1880 - 1942)

Assignment Overview

Imagine you are living in a future society, have just finished The Global Economy course, and are contacted by *The Solutions Journal*, an academic journal covering “issues of political economy in the context of sustainable development”. The editor of the journal asks you to write an article that identifies a problem or challenge **in the global economy of 2018**, which relates to sustainability in some way. You will write this article from a **future perspective** using a method called backcasting. In essence, [backcasting](#) is to imagine a future scenario and then from that point, look back in time to see how you have arrived at that future scenario.

Before writing the article, you will reflect upon your case-study research earlier in the course. You are not expected to choose this same problem or challenge. Instead, you will reflect upon how the process of researching a case study has highlighted some of the structural challenges (power structures, norms and values, inertia of current system etc.) and how this has informed your choice of a problem or challenge to address in the global economy of 2018. This component of the submission will not be graded.

Subsequently, in the article itself, you will focus on an implemented solution (from a future perspective, looking back retrospectively), in the form of an economic policy or market tool/instrument at a specific location (at any scale: country, city or community). This economic innovation can be a completely new invention or can be based in the principles of an existing economic theory or paradigm that we have studied within the course. The article should then critically assess and discuss the manner in which this solution was implemented and the solution itself. Feel free to imagine possible opposition to this problem and obstacles that it had to overcome (or not) to address this issue.

Submissions for the journal should capture a sense of place by providing detailed and vivid description of the location. Provide background and history where necessary to clearly outline both the problems and the solutions intended to address them.

To ensure the quality of the contributions, the editor facilitates a peer-review process among the authors of the articles. The process of submissions has three steps: first a draft of the article is written, two other authors then review it and give feedback, and finally the author has the opportunity to revise the article using the comments of

the peer-review before submitting a final version. Be sure to fully read the overall formal requirements at the end of this document.

Reflection

In order to get you thinking about current problems and challenges in the global economy of 2018, we will return to your case-study research in module 2. Consider what this research revealed to you in terms of the structures that cause these problems and challenges to manifest. You may consider current power structures, norms and values, the inertia of the current system, current information and resource flows, the division of and access to current resources or any other factors that have caught your attention. You are not expected to use this same problem or challenge in the subsequent section of the report. However, make sure to include how this process of research and the subsequent highlighting of current economic structures and process helped inform your choice of a problem or challenge in the article-writing process. Can you see any similarities in the structures and processes that have caused both these problems and challenges? Do they face similar difficulties or opportunities? Write your response in the form of a reflection (ungraded) to be submitted with the article on the final due date.

Writing the Article

The Solutions Journal is an academic journal, but is read by a surprisingly large audience. The editors attribute this popularity to three unique requirements the journal explicitly places on authors. First, articles are written with the reader's experience in mind; the journal demands academic language and writing standards, but reminds authors that those who read the journal prefer engaging writing over dry academic text. Second, authors dedicate one third of their whole article to their chosen problem, and two thirds to proposing or describing possibilities to solve, deal with, influence, and change that problem. This emphasis on possibilities keeps the journal at the centre of debate and innovation within political economy without being limited by the frames of ongoing policy discussion – a starting point for possible economic futures. And third, the journal prefers possibilities that are creative, concrete and assessed critically; a rare mix. They can be novel, perhaps even surprising, but should also be well thought out and credible.

The Article and its Structure

When writing the article remember that the journal requires around 1/3 of your article focuses on describing the problem, while the remaining 2/3 should be dedicated to outlining a possibility that addresses the problem as well as discussing it critically.

1. Choose a problem

First, consider what you see as a significant issue of political economy within the context of sustainable development today. Describe the problem in detail but do not devote more than one third of the article to its description. Keep in mind that a concise description focuses on problems discussed in the later sections of the article.

2. Outline your suggested possibility that can address this problem

You may mention several possibilities, but remember you have limited space to outline your proposal in the rest of the text, so in order to reach enough depth in your argumentation we recommend focussing on one solution. The solution may have been mentioned in readings or lectures (examples include carbon trading,

taxation schemes, complementary currency, and community banking initiatives, collaborative consumption schemes, institutional reforms in the WTO or the IMF, not-for-profit organizations, social entrepreneurship and alternative business structures etc.) but could also be your own – as long as you argue for them in a balanced way.

3. Evaluate your suggested possibility

Once you have proposed your possibility, it is crucial to evaluate it. Recall that even renowned economists such as Milton Friedman, Elinor Ostrom or Joseph Stiglitz have – in their books and throughout their careers – proposed many solutions which they knew were far from perfect. Part of their work as economists is to discuss their own approaches critically, just as you also must. Examples of questions to consider when evaluating your suggested possibilities may be: How much potential does it have? How fast can it be implemented? Is it feasible and realistic? Is it accessible for both the rich and poor? What problem(s) does the solution solve? Who controls it? Does the implementation depend on a supranational institution, on a national government, a business or can it be implemented by a group of individuals? Who gains from this solution – directly or indirectly? What are the costs and who is paying for them?

The Peer Review Process

Economic Possibilities in the Anthropocene also facilitates a peer-review process among the submitting authors. Each author is assigned an article she or he needs to peer-review in a certain time period. The review is expected to take at least one hour, and is a mandatory part of the article writing process. When the peer-review process is finished, send the reviewed version of the paper to its author, and submit it in on Studentportalen.

The purpose of the peer-review is to give feedback that helps the author to improve the paper before the final submission. Keep in mind that giving good feedback is a time consuming process, as it includes reading the paper more than only one time and reflecting on several questions as outlined beneath. However, good feedback does not only help the author, but also yourself, as you will need to critically reflect on good academic writing.

The review should focus on the success of the author to stay within description of the type of the article she/he has chosen to write, the structure prescribed by the journal as outlined above, and finally the overall academic quality of the article. These questions can help you with that task:

- **Completeness.** Has the author followed the instructions and fulfilled the objectives as laid out by the assignment?¹ Are any of the central and relevant views/perspectives/standpoints in the literature left out of the article? Is there a lack of relevant and credible references to the literature in the article?
- **Clarity / Precision.** Is the article comprehensible, well structured, easy to follow and written at a sufficiently high academic level?
- **Argumentation.** Is there a clear line of argumentation? Are the arguments relevant and presented in a concise and coherent way?
- **Academic.** Are arguments and proposals anchored in scientific and analytical sources?
- **References.** Are references used properly and consistently throughout the article?

A note on giving feedback: a very unfortunate tendency when giving feedback is to only focus on the aspects of a article that can be improved. Remember that commenting on the strengths of a article is equally useful to the writer (perhaps even more) in understanding which elements to keep and which to continue working on.

¹ This also includes the formal requirements, such as sufficient references, paper length, spacing, etc.

You need to express your opinions about things you consider good, would improve, keep, but also take away. Keep in mind, feedback should never be directed to the person writing it (ad hominem) but directed to the text. Furthermore, the author should not take feedback as a personal offence but see it as an opportunity to improve his or her skills!

Submitting Final Version

Once the peer review process is complete, finally you have the opportunity to revise your article based on peer-reviewed feedback and your own insights. Take this process seriously, since it gives you the opportunity to radically improve your article. When this is done, and you've double-checked that you are meeting all the article and reference requirements, submit a final version to Studentportalen.

Instructions

Formal Requirements

- The assignment should follow the rules and meet standards of **academic writing**
- The reflection should be between **450 – 550 words** (not including references)
- The article should be between **2000 – 2500 words²** (not including references)
- Font Size: 12. Spacing: 1.5. Font: Times New Roman. Margins: 25mm
- Write your name on top of every page (in the header)
- The submission must be in WORD or PDF format.
- Name the file in the following way: `firstname.lastname.draft/feedback/final` (example: `guy.finkill.feedback.pdf`)
- Upload all 3 required files: draft article, peer review feedback on article, final assignment (article and reflection)) on Studentportalen

References to course literature and other literature

1. You will have to refer to course literature when writing your article, even if you focus on problems and challenges not mentioned in the course. **Make at least 6 references to different works in the course readers or the course books.** You may of course reference the same book or article several times, but this will only count as one reference. Beyond this you are free to refer to lectures and other literature. Don't forget to include a bibliography.
2. Support your claims with reasons and evidence. Make sure to make it clear to the reader when you express your own ideas and opinions, and reference your sources when you write about other people's opinions or ideas. Be aware to use only credible sources. The [Harvard College Writing Program](#) provides a useful overview on how to evaluate your sources.

Deadlines

² As you will discover when submitting your first paper to a proper journal, the word limit is **non-negotiable**. Both papers under 2000 words or above 2500 words will be automatically rejected.

Friday December 14th, 16:59pm *Phase 1:* Send your **draft article** to your peer-reviewers (and upload it on Studentportalen (“Final Assignment: Draft for Peer Review”) – see attached list for who to review

Friday December 21st 16:59pm *Phase 2:* Send your **feedback (on the article)** to your fellow students, and upload a copy each on student portal (“Final Assignment: Peer Review”)

Sunday January 20th, 23.59pm *Phase 3:* Upload the final copy of your assignment (**reflection and article**) on Studentportalen (“Final Assignment: Final Version”)

Assessment Criteria

The following grading criteria will be used for assessment (alongside the critical thinking criteria). Note that the article is graded and will determine your grade for the course. The reflection is not graded. For attaining a higher grade than 3, the criteria should be met to a high degree or a very high degree. For attaining a pass/3 the criteria should be sufficiently met. When assignments are graded U-345, the ability of the student to meet the assignment deadline is part of the assessment.

- **Analysis and discussion:** Coherent argumentation, with relevant arguments that are supported by the literature and/or other relevant sources. Relevant different perspectives and interpretations are analysed and discussed. The student shows capacity of independent analysis and critical reflection on referenced material.
- **Connection to theory and literature:** Sufficient connection to core/central theoretical frameworks. There are relevant references to the literature and/or lectures or other relevant sources. Key perspectives and viewpoints are discussed.
- **Originality and creativity:** Expression of original connections between (and/or development of) different (scientific) perspectives and experiences. The student argues well for his/her opinions and choices.
- **Completeness, clarity and precision:** The language is clear and comprehensible. References and other formal aspects of the text are satisfactory and in accordance with the requirements of the assignment. The course goals that the assignment relates to are met. The student answers the question(s) fully.

Related course goals:

- critically analyse corporations' role and societal responsibility from a global perspective;
- analyse the global economic system and its institutions, actors and trends from a transdisciplinary perspective;
- from a multidisciplinary perspective compare and critically analyse the basic assumptions, explanatory models and proposed solutions of different economical theories in relation to the present sustainability challenge.