

# Eawag Seminar Invitation

## Ignoring the limits to growth - some explanations, current discussions and research

Speaker	<b>Prof. Irmi Seidl</b> Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL, Birmensdorf, Switzerland
When	<b>February 23, 2023, 16.00 – 17.00, CET</b>
Where	<b>Eawag Dübendorf, room FC C20 and online via Zoom, please contact <a href="mailto:seminars@eawag.ch">seminars@eawag.ch</a> for access details.</b>
Abstract	<p>In 1972, the Report commissioned by the Club of Rome, “The Limits to Growth”, was published. It has since been discussed widely and controversially. Though few may think that endless economic growth is possible, there has hardly been any reflection on models of our societies and economies without permanent economic growth. Meanwhile, humanity has surpassed five of nine planetary boundaries and we are well on track on the business-as-usual scenario of the Report of 1972 which hints at collapses in food supply, industrial production, population and global pollution up to the middle and end of this century. At the same time, we are obtaining solid evidence that there is no absolute decoupling possible between economic growth and resource depletion/ environmental harm.</p> <p>This lecture will provide some explanations on (a) how dependency on economic growth is woven into our societal and economic fabric, (b) why there is hardly any effort to develop strategies and concepts to guide our societies and economies towards well-being without permanent growth and (c) what current discussions and research focus on decreasing growth dependence.</p> <p>I will for instance argue, (a) that growth dependency is a recent phenomenon starting after World War II and that fossil energy and Fordist consumer culture are major foundations and triggers for growth. I will also argue that after WW II, the idea of permanent growth was built into newly developed institutions, such as social security. Further, (b) I will discuss how economic growth is linked to questions of social justice which makes it a topic of redistribution, and how the goal of full (time) employment results – together with a constant increase in productivity and the present tax system - in a productivity and hence growth trap. Finally, (c) I will look at recent research and observe that IPCC-climate modelling starts to depart from growth assumptions, report on small businesses who do not need (or want) to grow, and point out a research task, namely, to design an environmental framework for Swiss development scenarios.</p> <p>If you want to get familiar with the topic beforehand so watch: 41 – Die Antwort auf fast alles: Brauchen wir Wirtschaftswachstum? (ARTE)</p>