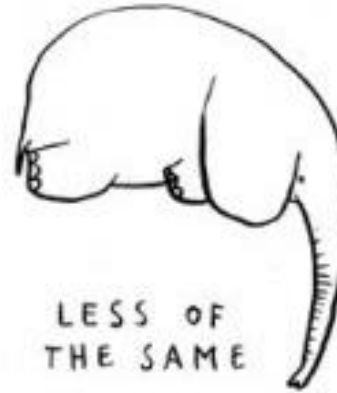


MORE OF
THE SAME



SAME OF
THE SAME



LESS OF
THE SAME

DEGROWTH,
SIMPLY
DIFFERENT



Degrowth

La Décroissance, Decrescita, Decrecimiento, Decreixement, Ontgroei, Postwachstum, Nemnövekedes, etc.

Natalia S. G. Jancewicz



What is Degrowth?

- Degrowth is the literal translation of 'décroissance', a French word meaning **reduction** and that refers to a **river going back to its normal flow** after a disastrous flood.
- *Décroissance* became an activist slogan in France in 2001, Italy in 2004 (as *Decrescita*) and Catalonia and Spain in 2006 (as *Decreixement* and *Decrecimiento*).
- It started as a project of voluntary societal shrinking of production and consumption aimed at **social and ecological sustainability**.
- It became a provocative word that stimulates **public debate** calling for the abolishment of economic growth as a social objective.
- It soon developed into a **social movement** where numerous streams of critical ideas and political actions converge.

Why this word?

- The English word "degrowth" became prominent after the **first international degrowth conference in Paris in 2008**, which also marked the birth of degrowth as an international research area.

Degrowth is not to be turned into a blueprint or an end in itself, but to remain a means for fostering a spirit of critique, for questioning the priority accorded to economic values and principles. According to Aries (2005), this critical intent is well served by the term "degrowth". Although the term may have a negative connotation, it presents the advantage of not being easily recuperated by capitalism and the logic of ever more upon which it is based. Indeed, as Monbiot (2007) aptly put it in a critical commentary on supermarkets' chains attempts to cut down carbon emission, supermarkets may try to sell us "green" or "ethical", but one thing that supermarkets or capitalism more generally cannot sell us is "less".

Escaping from the economy: the politics of degrowth. Valerie Fournier. University of Leicester School of Management, Leicester, UK





- On the environmental front, the publication in 1972 of The Limits to Growth remains a global milestone. It was not an isolated critique. The problem of economic growth was being put forward by a variety of heterodox economists.
- Yet all this highly promising critique became side-lined after the neoliberal turn of the 1980s and, paradoxically, after the popularisation of 'sustainable development'.
- Fortunately, the idea of the 'limits to growth' has regained momentum with the notion of 'planetary boundaries'.



Diagnosis

- GDP: faulty measure of prosperity.
- Some put population growth forward as the core of the problem, but this merely distracts us from the more uncomfortable necessity of examining our economic system.
- Our current economic model is based on the notion of **endless growth** through industrial production and limitless consumption, but we live in a **bounded, finite world** with physical limits.

Continued economic growth brings:

1. Unsustainability
2. Injustice



We currently use
resources beyond
regeneration capacity:
planetary boundaries

1. Ecological unsustainability

- The Earth's sinks are overflowing:
 - air
 - water
 - land.
- Depletion of basic natural resources:
 - Our **energy** (around 90% of it comes from fossil fuels-coal, oil and natural gas). According to the International Energy Agency, conventional crude oil production peaked in 2006.
 - Other **basic raw materials** are reaching the end of their availability.



2. Injustice, inequality.

- Impact of our overconsumption on **poor countries** and over **future generations**.
- If the whole world consumed like we do in the UK, we'd need more than **3 planets** to:
 - Meet our resource demands
 - Absorb our waste streams
- Billions of people around the world remain in **destitution** and are also **facing the consequences** of the ecological crisis.

"Green growth" or "Green wash"?

- It challenges the ideas of "green growth", "green economy" or "sustainable development" .
- These programmes of reform tend to offer an optimistic view based on the use of eco-efficient technologies. However, to date, there is hardly any country that can claim an absolute reduction in material use or carbon emissions while growing.
 - **Rebound effect**
 - **Myth of renewable energy**
- It considers "sustainable development" an oxymoron that has to be removed from the social imaginary.





Degrowth strategies and actors

- Acting on different scales: local, national, global.
- Oppositional activism. Ie. Extinction Rebellion.
- Redistribution: basic and maximum income.
- Commons or extension of the sphere of free usage.
- Examples of policies for degrowth:
 - Controls on commercial advertisement
 - Reduction of working hours/ work-sharing
- **Open relocation.**
- **Promotion of small scale alternatives.**



- Local non-speculative currencies. I.e. Bristol Pounds.
- Local exchange trading systems (good and services).
- Re-localized production and consumption of food: Food Sovereignty.
- Relocalisation of energy, housing and transportation.

Open relocalisation



Clean Slate, 113 Autumn 2019:

- Investment is currently focused on building more houses (often into the countryside) together with more roads and other infrastructure.
- As we transition away from an economy based on fossil fuels towards zero carbon there is the potential for the creation of **hundreds of thousands of new green jobs**. These jobs should be distributed all over the UK, bringing vitality back to our rural economies and small towns rather than being concentrated in large cities. Achieving this will require a transition strategy that prioritises **local jobs**:
 - small scale renewable energy, not just off-shore wind farms.
 - reestablishing local food economies that connect urban areas with the rural ones.
 - good local public transport and live-work communities rather than commuting on high speed long distance trains.

A close-up photograph of a pair of weathered, brown hands cupped together, holding a large quantity of white beans. The background is blurred, showing more of the hands and the beans. The text is overlaid on this image.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

RECLAIMING THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM

AN EVENING OF SPEAKERS, PRODUCERS & GOOD FOOD
MON 30TH SEPTEMBER, 7.00-9.30PM, UNICORN GROCERY, M21 0BN

from peasant farmer movements worldwide,
approach to the food system has
merged that puts power in the hands of
producers & consumers instead of banks,
traders & corporations.

stands in marked contrast to the
establishment's free-market 'food
security' response to global hunger.

rejects inappropriate, corporate-controlled
solutions such as GM technology and cash
crop monocultures, and advocates the rights
of the many to define and control their own
sustainable food systems.

Come to hear local & global
perspectives from War
on Want, the El Salvador
Permaculture Institute & the
Kindling Trust. Learn why this
movement is so important, &
how you can be part of it.

Plus chat to some of
Unicorn's progressive,
small-scale suppliers & food
activists from around the city,
and eat some good food.

Tickets are £3 each and
available (in advance
only) from the shop or at
feedingmanchester.org

IT IS CALLED FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
AND ITS TIME HAS COME



Open relocation

- Why open?
 - For freedom and fruitful and rich cultural exchanges.
 - Because of democratic reasons: we need wider links, institutions.
 - Even with a local sustainable autonomy, there is still need of solidarity.
- Why relocation?
 - To leave the illusion of individualism and see the consequences of our actions.
 - For environmental reasons.
 - Relocalising and abandoning the global economy in the Global South would allow people of the South to become more self-sufficient and would end the exploitation of Southern resources and work labor by the North.
 - For cultural and social reasons: to a convivial and desirable way of life.



Promotion of small scale alternatives

- **Practice of Voluntary Simplicity**
- Cycling
- Repair, Reuse, Reduce, Recycle
- Vegetarianism or veganism
- Agroecology and Permaculture
- Community gardens and Incredible Edible
- Transition Towns and eco-villages
- Natural building
- Fair Trade
- Consumer cooperatives
- Alternative ethical banks or credit cooperatives
- Decentralised renewable energy cooperatives

Degrowth is complementing and reinforcing these topic areas, functioning as a connecting thread.



Voluntary simplicity

- Disconnection between income increase and life satisfaction: Easterlin Paradox.
- Living better with less, slowing down life's pace.
- Much attention is given to how conscious critical consumption can promote transformation at both the individual and the social level.
- If less time is spent on formal work and consumption, more time can be dedicated to other activities which are fundamental to one's well-being: social relations, political participation, physical exercise, art, spirituality, nature, culture, contemplation...
- Such a shift will potentially be less environmentally harmful.



Voluntary simplicity

- "The implementation of policies for degrowth must occur in a unique and asymmetric manner, depending on the social and environmental conditions of each place on the planet. But nevertheless, a vision of life based on happiness from frugality would be common", Latouche (2010).
- Change of values:
 - From material goods to relational goods, such as: care, knowledge, participation, new spaces of freedom and spirituality, etc.
 - from the current predatory economic logic towards a solidarity economic logic, where people and nature are placed at the center of economic activities, exceeding the exclusively monetary valuation of products and services.
- It is about reconquering values such as altruism, cooperation, hedonism versus obsession with work, proximity, self-containment and autonomy.

Definition of degrowth according to [degrowth & research](#), the academic association dedicated to degrowth:

"Sustainable degrowth is a downscaling of production and consumption that **increases human well-being** and **enhances ecological conditions** and **equity** on the planet. It calls for a future where societies live within their ecological means, with **open, localized economies** and **resources more equally distributed** through **new forms of democratic institutions** [...] The primacy of efficiency will be substituted by a focus on **sufficiency**, and innovation will no longer focus on technology for technology's sake but will concentrate on new social and technical arrangements that will enable us to live **convivially** and **frugally**. Degrowth does not only challenge the centrality of GDP as an overarching policy objective but proposes a framework for transformation to a lower and sustainable level of production and consumption, a shrinking of the economic system to leave more space for human cooperation and ecosystems".



Further information...

- An email list for people working on or promoting degrowth in the UK.
Location: Manchester
Website: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/degrowthuk>
Email: degrowthuk@lists.riseup.net
- DegrowthUK on Twitter
- <https://degrowth.org> or Research & Degrowth on Facebook
- <https://www.degrowth.info/en/>



The first ever joint conference between the International Degrowth Research Network and the International Society for Ecological Economics will take place **1-5 September 2020** in **Manchester!**

7th International Degrowth
and
16th ISEE Joint Conference

*Building Alternative Livelihoods
in Times of Ecological and
Political Crisis*

1-5 SEPTEMBER 2020
MANCHESTER, UK

Frequently asked questions (<https://ontgroeidegrowth.net/about-degrowth/>)

1) Is degrowth equivalent to negative GDP?

No, degrowth is not just about reversing GDP growth rates. This phenomenon has already a name and it is called a recession. The point of degrowth is not to have 'less of the same', but to organize appropriation, extraction, production, distribution, consumption and waste differently.

2) Is degrowth like general austerity?

No, degrowth is not about indiscriminately shrinking 'everything' and impose 'austerity' everywhere. Some items, like local products, will surely be consumed and produced much more in a degrowth society, and many productive activities will increase in such a society – like urban garden, commons, community work, the care economy, craft, etc.

3) Is degrowth against modern technology?

No, degrowth is not anti-technology. After almost two centuries of extraordinary technological progress (and also disruptions), degrowthers simply advocate for the right to choose what to take and what to leave behind.

4) Is degrowth about local autarky?

No, degrowth is not just about generalizing 'localism' at any cost. Small can be beautiful, but not always. Some activities have to be organized at higher levels.

5) Is degrowth anti-capitalist?

There are different currents within post-growth (e.g. steady state economics, agrowth, etc.) and not all of them are anti-capitalist. But among them, degrowth is clearly post-capitalist.

6) Can degrowth apply to the global South?

First of all, the critique of growth has also been developed in the global South. J.C. Kumarappa, for example, was a famous Indian economist who criticized industrial growth and inspired the forefathers of degrowth from the global North, like Ivan Illich or Ernst Schumacher. There are many philosophies from the global South that articulate what constitutes a 'good life' – like the Andean Buen vivir – and their vision of the 'good life' is rarely closely associated with GDP growth. The Bhutanese Gross National Happiness index, for example, seeks to replace GDP in guiding the country's policies and to measure other things, not just market exchanges as GDP does. Some activities will increase in a hypothetical post-growth society of the global South (like health facilities) while other will decrease (like the current focus on export monocultures and extractivism). But if degrowth is so needed in the global North, it is also in order to prevent industrialized countries from trying to dominate the world economy according to their own interests. Degrowth in the global North implies that economically and ecologically unequal exchange is stopped, as well as the ecological debt that industrialized nations owe to the rest of the world.