Life after growth: Discussing degrowth in the Nordic context

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What is degrowth?

- An umbrella term that critiques the centrality of economic growth in contemporary societies and embraces various alternatives for ecological sustainability and social justice (Chertkovskaya and Paulsson, 2016; see also Kallis et al., 2015).

- Common misconceptions: that it strives for negative economic growth, is equal to austerity, calls for pre-modern living conditions (see Demaria et al., 2013) or questions any growth.
What kind of growth is challenged?

- Growth of CO2 emissions (always coupled with economic growth)
- Capital accumulation and productivism
- GDP growth / quantitative expansion of national economies as an aim in itself
Why to critique growth?

- **Economic** – perpetual growth is not possible, GDP is an inadequate measure of well-being

- **Ecological** – growth leads to ecological degradation; growth-centric economies are reliant on non-renewable resources

- **Socio-cultural** – injustices are inherent to the economic system; productivism/consumerism/workerism/economism; marginalisation of other ways of living
Better terms?

- Green Growth
- Sustainable Development
- Circular Economy
- Doughnut Economics
- Prosperity Without Growth

Images of cityscapes and eco-friendly logos.
Degrowth alternatives

- put ecological sustainability, social justice and human flourishing at the core of societies
- emphasise values like care, solidarity, conviviality, democratic decision-making
- endorse cooperative and community organisational forms
- Implemented on different levels (local, municipal, state, regional, global)
Degrowth action

Cooperatives

Urban gardening

New economy

Debt audit

Unions

Public money

Work-sharing

Basic & maximum income

Community currencies

Eco-communities

Indignados (Occupy)

Disobedience

Post-normal science

Job guarantee

Back-to-the landers

Nowtopians

Digital commons

Job guarantee

Urban gardening

New economy

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Job guarantee
Degrowth & the Nordic context: Enriching the debate

- State & welfare – one debated area in the degrowth community, which is of special interest in the Nordic contexts
- Individual & collective in a degrowth society
- Basic income (e.g. the Finland experiment)
- Shorter working week
- (Alternative) money (Ole Bjerg, Alf Hornborg, Positive money)
Degrowth (with)in the Nordic context: A discussion on the rise

- Longer history of degrowth debates in Southern Europe / France, but rising discussion in the Nordic context too
- Degrowth theme at Pufendorf Institute in 2015-16 (Lund)
- Beyond GDP growth / Bortom BNP-tillväxt research group (KTH-led)
- Stream on degrowth in the Nordic context at the 5th International Conference on Degrowth in Budapest (2016)
6th International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity

- 21-25 Aug 2018, Malmö (organised by Institutet for nerväxtstudier)

Subtheme: *Dialogues in turbulent times*

- across the globe (with a special focus on the Nordic context & the Middle East)

- with anarchism, feminism, Marxism, post-colonial theory & climate/environmental/peace movements

Some of the themes:

degrowth & … (welfare) state, migrations, technology, public services (transport, healthcare, education), key material production, ageing, values/ideals/satisfactions; growth & violence
Human flourishing
Film festival (e.g. every evening after the conference)
Music programme
Exhibitions
Theatre events

Convivial lagom
Food festival (Local/organic food with different cuisines)

Knowledge for the pluriverse
6th International Degrowth Conference (with presence of scholars, activists, artists; with plenaries, scientific and participatory sessions, walks etc)

Degrowth in practice
E.g. Swaps, making/repair workshops, agricultural initiatives, reuse, waste reduction, technology commons, publishing

Think globally, act in all directions!
Space for social movements, NGOs and other degrowth-related organisations; Demo in the city of Malmö; Conference broadcasting

Mutual aid
Run-up events in the Nordic context
Some suggested readings


- Chertkovskaya, E. and A. Paulsson (2016) ‘The growthocene: Thinking through what degrowth is criticising’, *ENTITLE (European political ecology network) blog*, 19 February. [available at: https://entitleblog.org/2016/02/19/the-growthocene-thinking-through-what-degrowth-is-criticising/]


