

ECONOMIC DEGROWTH TODAY

Call for the Second International Conference on Degrowth

ICTA, Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, and Research & Degrowth

Barcelona , 25-28 March 2010

This is a call for a second conference on socially sustainable economic degrowth, linking economic, environmental and social perspectives, with emphasis on practical policies & concrete proposals.

Thirty years ago, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen published a book in French (edited by Jacques Grinevald and Ivo Rens) with the title “Demain la Décroissance” (Degrowth Tomorrow) (1979). We say, “Aujourd’hui la Décroissance” (Degrowth today).

The economic crisis of 2008-09 has actually implied unplanned economic degrowth in Europe, United States, Japan, Latin America. A positive side effect has been a small decrease in CO₂ emissions, breaking the totally unsustainable trend until 2007. Material flows mobilized by the economy have also decreased in 2008-09. This brings a new perspective. Economic degrowth can be good for the environment but it must be socially sustainable.

The 2nd international conference on economic degrowth for ecological sustainability and social equity follows the first international conference (Paris, April 2008, <http://events.it-sudparis.eu/degrowthconference/en/>), that took place with the support of the European Society for Ecological Economics, Club of Rome (Brussels/Europe), Telecom Sud-Paris and SERI (Sustainable Europe Research Institute) and was attended by 150 participants, involving presentations by some 90 scientists.

The first conference was a breakthrough and opened the way to a change of paradigm (see the declaration of the conference). The second international conference on degrowth will focus on the new conditions posed by the economic crisis and work to develop clear policy proposals and strategies for action on degrowth and define the key open questions and research agenda. The conference will foster interaction between participants and put emphasis on the development of cooperative research.

This second conference builds on the success of the first conference and the momentum of a community of scholars and scholar-activists developing research on degrowth. The proceedings of the first conference was downloaded by thousands of people and a special issue is under preparation for the Journal of Cleaner Production. The need for research on degrowth is even higher than two years ago. Managed well, the current slowing down of the economy may be a good opportunity to avert climate and environmental catastrophe and at the same time improve human well-being and social equity, if the right actions are undertaken.

Local organizing committee: Joan Martinez-Alier, François Schneider, Mario Giampietro, Giorgos Kallis.

Provisional International Scientific Committee: Mauro Bonaiuti, Richard Douthwaite, Fabrice Flipo, Valerie Fournier, Mario Giampietro, John Gowdy, Fritz Hinterberger, Gjalp Huppel, Giorgos Kallis, Sylvia Lorek, Joan Martinez-Alier, Wendy Proctor, Inge Ropke, Christer Sanne, Wolfgang Sachs, François Schneider. The NGO committee is being set-up with Leida Rijnhout of ANPED (Northern Alliance for Sustainability).

This conference will follow a novel format. The conference will include selected keynote speeches and roundtables by distinguished degrowth scholars. But the conference will mainly be based on *paper presentations with posters and participatory workshops*.

Call for abstracts (and papers)

We call for scientific articles on latest research relevant to degrowth. They will be presented during the conference in poster sessions and poster tours and will be included in the printed conference proceedings. The international scientific committee will select the best of these papers for publication in a special journal issue on degrowth.

Degrowth should be explicitly dealt within the paper. It should not be limited to an analysis of the current situation but study and link necessary actions and transformations. The paper should acknowledge social equity and ecological sustainability as key objectives within democratic and human rights frameworks.

An abstract of 400 words should be sent to the email [barcelona2010\(at\)degrowth.net](mailto:barcelona2010(at)degrowth.net) by 30 November 2009. Decision concerning your abstract will be communicated on the 31 January 2010 on the latest.

Participatory workshops

In addition we are organizing a number of participatory meetings on “policy and action” and “research priorities”. Discussions will be based on on-line material and background papers that the organizers will pre-commission to selected degrowth researchers or activists. The papers will be discussed in participatory workshops and in assembly meetings. The goal is to come up with concrete proposals for policy and action and a research agenda for degrowth.

If you think you can take the lead and draft a background paper for one of the policy and action or research priority workshops, please let us know, with a brief explanation of your relevant expertise and recent work. Below, a tentative list of themes is presented.

Policy and Action participatory workshops

1- Money and currencies

Proposals for new monetary systems favouring exchanges on local level, regulation of financial systems, how to stop “debt-fuelled growth”.

2- The definition of “work”

Domestic and voluntary work. Wage work. Work sharing. Three days working week.

3- Moratoria on new infrastructures.

Degrowth of infrastructure capacity (case on road capacity, airports, shipping). Excessive air, land and sea transport. Production and consumption infrastructures in general.

4- How to deal with advertising?

Adverts-free medias, support to citizen-led information. What is the limit between info and adverts? How to make people choose their own lifestyle disregarding the advertising and other pressure to consume?

5- Resource sanctuaries

Exploration of different options like material certificates, biological and mineral sanctuaries, reduction of extractive tools and sites, north/south deals to leave resources in the ground (the Yasuni ITT proposal).

6- Zero-waste

How to avoid waste production and exports. Alternatives to incineration. Zero-waste policies. Planned durability instead of planned obsolescence.

7- Degrowth in water consumption

Reducing water use, dewatering the economy. Stopping water use expansion, including dealing with the risks of desalination.

8- Reusing empty houses and co-housing

New housing opportunities in a degrowth framework. In general: reuse and mutualization of goods.

9- Basic income

Citizen’s unconditional income, social security for all.

10- Maximum income

Tax policy, capital & revenue upper limits.

11- New technologies.

Challenging military, nuclear, GMO, nano-technologies research. How to develop cooperative research? Innovation in socio-technologies for frugality.

More discussion topics may be proposed in the preparation phase.

Research Priorities workshops

1- Social metabolism.

Degrowth and the “socio-ecological transition”.

2- Cities and degrowth

How will cities look after degrowth? How can cities adapt to degrowth? Can we plan for degrowth and how (multifunctional urbanism, etc)? City lifestyles or spatial organization in the countryside.

3- Agro-ecology, food sovereignty and degrowth

Most food is produced locally. Can we feed the world with locally produced, organic food? Transition from the present food production and distribution system to an agro-ecological one.

3- Trade degrowth

Material flows. Unequal exchange. Should we limit global trade for degrowth and if yes, how (institutions, international organizations, etc)? How would we distinguish “good” from “bad” trade?

4- Participative/direct democracy

Which form of democracy for a society making the transition to degrowth? Are there tensions between some of the proposals for degrowth and democracy and how can they be resolved?

5 – Political strategies

How do we see the idea of degrowth and the policy proposals spreading and becoming accepted/dominant in society? Role of political parties (which – how), social movements, unions, groups practicing degrowth living, academics-intellectuals.

6- Demography and degrowth

Population trends and scenarios. Peak human population is approaching. What can the impacts of degrowth be on population in different world regions? Reproductive rights, support of women rights.

7- Degrowth of military-industrial complex

Issues around reduction of arm trade & production.

8- Energy degrowth and the transition to renewable energies

What sort of renewable energies (REs) for degrowth? Is degrowth in energy consumption a better strategy for transition to renewables than “burning our way fast” to renewables? EROI of renewables – how much of energy will go to reproduction of the energy system in a world with only renewable sources? What levels of material affluence can a world relying on REs support?

9- Environmental justice, the environmentalism of the poor and degrowth.

Degrowth and the south. How can degrowth “translate” to non-western contexts and who would be its allies? Global North and Global South. The claim for an “ecological debt” from the South. Resource extraction conflicts and waste disposal in the South.

10- Human behaviour and degrowth

What do we know from evolutionary biology and anthropology about consumption, greed restraint or voluntary simplicity? What policies or conditions could help make consumption reduction acceptable?

11- New (macro)economic models for degrowth

Can we model and simulate non- or de-growth economic pathways? And if yes how?

Participation and Fees

A fee of 150 Euros is foreseen for all participants in order to cover part of the organizational and publication costs of the conference. This is set at a level much lower than those of most international conferences in order to encourage broad participation. Students or activists without scholarships or other sources of income are exempted from the fee. If you have good reasons for not paying the fee please let us know and we will decide accordingly.

Registration will take place during the month of February 2010 and the 27 February is foreseen as the deadline for registration and fee payment.

Email contact: [Barcelona2010\(at\)degrowth.net](mailto:Barcelona2010(at)degrowth.net)