

Philosophy of Degrowth

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The concept of ‘degrowth’ and a degrowth economy are increasingly being proposed as a solution to a range of challenges facing contemporary political communities: such as deepening environmental crises, growing wealth and income inequalities, and pervasive corporate power. Given the lackluster response to these crises in recent years, the call to move beyond growth and GDP is part of a wider set of movements aiming to rethink and challenge the central assumptions that make up modern capitalist systems. Yet so far debates about degrowth have been dominated by ecological economists, political scientists, and policymakers, with political theorists and philosophers only beginning to examine the host of normative and ethical questions raised and touched upon by degrowth proposals (Rose, 2020; Rose et al. 2022; Parr 2024; Plunkett 2024).

Proponents of degrowth argue that it is fundamentally misguided to use growth-based measures like GDP as indicators of human and economic development (Durand, 2024; Gomez-Baggethun, 2022; Schmelzer, Vetter and Vansintjan, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Hickel, 2020). Instead a degrowth economy would, as one leading proponent puts it, be a “planned reduction of energy and resource use designed to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being,” with a particular focus on targeting the economies of the Global North (Hickel 2021). To achieve such an aim, degrowthers argue for the implementation of a range of policies and initiatives: including descaling ‘excess production’, work-time reduction policies and the abolishing of some forms of work (Bärnthaler & Gough, 2023), the promotion of new ways of living (Gough, 2023; Soper, 2020), the redistribution of income and wealth at a global scale, the implementation of an unconditional basic income (Cosme et. al., 2017), promoting non-profits and cooperative enterprises, the localization of financial institutions, and monetary reform (Dittmer, 2013).

The aim of this panel is to contribute to the growing philosophical literature on degrowth by exploring normative questions about degrowth’s aims, the institutions required to realize it, and its political implementation.

We invite contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- The normative values achieved by growth and their contingency.
- The relationship between a degrowth economy and democracy (including economic democracy).
- Degrowth and distributive justice.
- The relationship between degrowth and calls for a post-work society.
- Ethics of planning production and economic descaling.
- Degrowth and environmental ethics.
- Degrowth and global and/or intergenerational justice.
- Degrowth and corporate governance.
- The political justification and feasibility of degrowth proposals

Wednesday 3rd September	
11:00-12:30	Registration
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:00	Welcome Speech
14:00-16:00	<p>Session 1 - Degrowth and Wellbeing</p> <p><i>Luc van Vliet</i> - Traversing the Fantasy of Growth: Libidinal Economy and the Strategic Impasse of Degrowth</p> <p><i>Gideon Frey</i> - Is more stuff always better? Post-growth as public value-satiability</p>
16:00-16:30	Tea and Coffee Break (optional)
16.30-17.30	<p>Session 1 – Degrowth and Wellbeing (continued)</p> <p><i>Stuart White</i> - Alternative hedonism and civic virtue: can degrowth be a feasible, legitimate and desirable liberal republican politics?</p>
17:45-19:00	Wine Reception
19:30	Conference Dinner
Thursday 4th September	
11:00- 13:00	<p>Session 2 - Degrowth and Economic Democracy</p> <p><i>Susan Erck</i> - The Arbitrary Rule of Financial Kings: Degrowth and the Democratization of Finance</p> <p><i>Caleb Althorpe</i> - Degrowth and the Values of Democracy</p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-16:00	<p>Session 3 - Degrowth and Policy</p> <p><i>Jamie Draper</i> - Green Industrial Policy and (De)growth</p> <p><i>Sine Bağatur</i> - Relational Productive Justice: Rethinking Trade and Work in a Degrowth Framework</p>

16:00-16:30	Tea and Coffee Break (optional)
16:30-17:30	Session 4 - Degrowth and Economic Policy (Continued) <i>Catarina Neves</i> – Three Challenges for Degrowth
Friday 5th September	
11:00-13:00	Session 4 - Growth and Justice I <i>Lukas Fuchs</i> - Justice and the Governance of Techno-economic Growth <i>Jeff Caroll</i> - Growth, Wealth and Moral Problem-Solving
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	Session 5 - Growth and Justice II <i>Peter Dietsch and Thomas Rixen</i> - The normative political economy of zero growth
16:00-16:30	Tea and Coffee Break (optional)
17:30	End of Conference