

Further reading:

- Chertkovskaya, E., A. Paulsson, G. Kallis, S. Barca and G. D'Alisa (2017) 'The vocabulary of degrowth: A roundtable debate', *ephemera*, 17(1): 189-208. [available online]
- Chertkovskaya, E. and A. Paulsson (2016) 'The growthocene: Let's be clear about the kinds of growth that need challenging', *Uneven Earth*, 3 March. [available online]
- Chertkovskaya, E. and A. Paulsson (2016) 'Nerväxt är ett alternativ', *Sydsvenskan* and *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, 29 September. [available online]
- D'Alisa, G., F. Demaria and G. Kallis (2015) *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. London: Routledge. [info about the book, some chapters and the audio book are available here: vocabulary.degrowth.org]
- Kallis, G. (2017) *In defense of degrowth: Opinions and minifestos*. Edited by A. Vansintjan. [available online]

Key resources on degrowth: degrowth.info (especially the [Media Library](#)), degrowth.org

Institutet för nerväxtstudier (the Institute for Degrowth Studies) is a non-profit organization working to stimulate discussion around the concept of degrowth and to promote degrowth in practice, through activities such as seminars, workshops and study visits which are open to everyone, as well as collaboration with organizations working on related issues. We are based in the Malmö/Lund area and our work builds on the successful organization of the 6th International Degrowth Conference for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity, which was held in Malmö in 2018. Please see our website for more information, and if you are interested in getting involved, you are welcome to send us an email or join one of our general meetings held every month in Lund or Malmö.

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INTRODUCING DEGROWTH

Question: What is degrowth and what kind of alternative does it offer?



Institute for Degrowth Studies
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Introducing degrowth: What it is and what kind of alternative it offers

Ekaterina Chertkovskaya

Keypoint 1: Degrowth – an umbrella term for socio-ecological transformation

Degrowth may be broadly understood as an umbrella term that critiques the centrality of economic growth in contemporary societies and embraces various alternatives for ecological sustainability, social justice and human flourishing that are not tied to it. It was coined as *décroissance* by André Gorz in 1972, around the time when the famous ‘Limits to growth’ report came out. 2008, the start of international degrowth conferences, marks internationalisation of degrowth debates. The latest conference took place in Malmö (2018), organised by us.

Keypoint 2: It is NOT about economic decline

Degrowth does not question all growth that has ever happened or will happen, but growth-centricity and the large unsustainable economies operating in the world. These are also unjust – the more privileged overconsume and waste, while the less privileged produce what they cannot consume, work precariously and suffer more from economic and ecological crises. Huge inequalities exist and are growing between the global North and South, but also within societies. The current system promotes accelerated, consumerist and workerist lifestyles, while others are marginalised or even harmed. Importantly, it is extremely hard to be yourself.

Keypoint 3: Degrowth calls for reducing material throughput and organising societies differently

While degrowth is not a call for negative economic growth or a decrease in GDP, material throughput has to be reduced, and such an intense level of market activity is not needed for good life. Thus, economies will eventually become smaller whilst ensuring that everyone has enough. Capitalism is geared towards growth, so it is not compatible with degrowth. Care, decommodification, mutual aid, solidarity, conviviality and democratic decision-making are some of the key principles of a degrowth worldview. Cooperatives, commons and community organising are organisational forms that are most compatible with it. Whether and how certain types of social enterprises or non-growing companies, as well as the state, can possibly be part of the degrowth transformation, is an open discussion.

Keypoint 4: Many practice degrowth already, while policies should be pushed towards fostering these further

There are already many examples of degrowth-related practices surrounding our everyday lives, especially at the grassroots level – such as urban gardens, consumer cooperatives, bike kitchens, community currencies, digital commons, alternative trade networks and civil disobedience. This is not the case in policy-making. For socio-ecological transformation, it is important to take part in such initiatives whilst pushing for policies that would help them flourish and restrict expansive corporate activities. Carbon tax, shorter working hours, basic and maximum income are some policies that are often discussed in this context.