

Online Master on Degrowth
Academic year: 2024-25

Module 6: Seminars

Coordinator: Borja Nogue
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6 ECTS – 50 hours
Mondays 14:30-16:00 CET (time changes marked in red)

Seminar 1 & 2: Housing for Degrowth

Instructor

François Schneider
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<https://degrowth.org/francois-schneider/>

Objectives

Housing is the most impactful sector, in terms of land use, or amounts of materials displaced or energy use. The monetary and financial flows associated with the housing sector are enormous, a source of GDP growth and also depressions. While empty dwellings abound and average floor-space per person rises, many suffer severe housing deprivation and experience social closure with gated-communities. Housing affects us all in our everyday life, conditioning our lifestyles, our dependence on capitalism with indebtedness etc.

So housing is a key area to put degrowth in practice. Housing for degrowth proposes reducing the total urban area; simplifying and redistributing access to housing; halting industrial urbanisation; deurbanising and renaturalising areas; renovating dwellings to improve living conditions; sharing dwellings more; and developing low-level, low-impact, ecological, small-scale, decentralised, compact settlements.

The book project housing for degrowth will serve as a base, it offered housing narratives for degrowth for public debate. *Housing for Degrowth* (Routledge, 2018). In 2018 with Anitra we travelled to dozens of cities by train across 11 European countries for one month of events (see [on book](#), [the tour](#) and [blog](#)).

Rather than theorizing further, you will learn about housing for degrowth by experiencing it. This will assist you to form your own housing for degrowth visions and pathways as you share your housing experiences and shape potential degrowth solutions and experience them in a collective project engaged on housing for degrowth.

Structure

2 classes of 2,5h.

Content

You will acquire the basics of housing for degrowth through the readings. The first class is about entering into housing for degrowth, immersing in housing for degrowth by taking on responsibilities within this new reality and developing cooperation between the actors. The second class will be about developing solutions and transforming housing for degrowth, and preparing for the assignment.

Seminar 1. Degrowth Housing Tour let us live it!

14:00 CET, 4 November 2024

This class is a 'get-to-know' housing for degrowth.

First I invite for a tour through the various works in *Housing for Degrowth* and beyond, explaining the importance of 'narrative' in developing housing for degrowth practices, and especially experiential narratives.

The next step will be about an introduction of the collective project on housing for degrowth, called "degrowthopia". Students will roleplay in this degrowth residential community involved in the transformation of the housing sector. The experiential approach is drawn from the living lab experience in Can Decreix using a sociocratic approach.

The last step is a meeting of cooperation which is key for the dynamics and the success of housing for degrowth. In this phase we experience the support of the whole group to resolve tensions experienced by individual members, in order to unblock action.

Preparation: Read the Description of roles within degrowthopia and the assignment proposal. Both will be sent in advance.

Seminar 2. Let's Organize Housing for Degrowth

14:00 CET, 11 November 2024

This class follows on the experience of the first class

The first part consists of what we call a group assembly process. This is a process developed within the degrowth movement where the forces of the groups and the force of the assembly are combined. We will divide into groups dedicated to the different topics and get feedback from the assembly oral and written, and further work within the group to design good housing for degrowth proposals.

The second part consists of the final adoption of proposals by dealing with the different objections with the different entities within the project in a sociocratic mode.

In the last part of the class I will attend any final questions on preparing the written assignments.

Preparation: Prepare proposals within housing for degrowth topics. First ideas on the assignment so that you can have a feedback.

Material

Main Handbook: *Housing for Degrowth* (Routledge, 2018)

Seminar 1:

- Chapter 2: Housing for degrowth narratives by François Schneider

Plus one article allocated (in one topic) within this list:

- Chapter 9 Refurbishment vs demolition? social housing campaigning for degrowth by Mara Ferreri (housing justice)
- Chapter 7 Housing and climate change resilience : Vanuatu by Wendy Christie, John Salong (Sufficiency)
- Chapter 14 The quality of small dwellings in a neighborhood by Harpa Stefandottir and Jin Xue (Housing satisfaction)
- Chapter 10 The Simpler Way: housing, living and settlements by Ted Trainer (Deurbanisation)
- Chapter 12: Low impact living by Jasmine Dale, Robin Marwege and Anja Humburg (ecological recuperation)
- Chapter 21 Nonmonetary eco-collaborative living for degrowth by Anitra Nelson (anti-speculation)

Seminar 2:

Two articles in this list including one allocated in the same topic than last week:

- Chapter 8 Christiania: a poster child for degrowth? by Natasha Verco (housing justice)
- Chapter 6: The radical potential of tiny house mobility by April Anson (housing sufficiency)
- Chapter 11 Degrowth: a perspective from Bengaluru, South India by Chitra vishwanath (housing satisfaction)
- Chapter 15 Housing for degrowth: space, planning and distribution by Jin Xue (Deurbanisation)
- Chapter 13 Neighbourhoods as the basic module of the global commons by Hans Widmer (ecological recuperation)
- Chapter 20 Mietshäuser Syndikat : collective ownership, the 'housing question' and degrowth by Lina Hurlin (anti-speculation)

Seminar 3: Urban Degrowth

14:00 CET, November 18th 2024

Instructor

Jin Xue

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

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Objectives

This overall objective of the course is to provide an overview of the debates within the field of degrowth, urban development and planning, as well as to explore and reflect on the implications of bringing degrowth to the urban and planning for urban degrowth. The learning outcomes are:

- Critically analyse the up-to-date debates on degrowth, urban development and planning
- Examine existing mainstream urban development and planning practice from the degrowth perspective
- Reflect on the potentials, challenges and dilemmas of urban planning in facilitating urban degrowth transformation
- Explore and debate possible future urban degrowth scenarios

Structure

2,5h seminar including lecturing, group work and discussion.

Content

The course will start with a lecture of 45 minutes which introduces the topic by mapping the existing debates and identifying the knowledge gaps and challenges. After that, students will be divided into groups and work on a predefined topic for about 30 minutes. The topic will be focused on a thought experiment by imagining urban degrowth scenarios. This will be followed by group presentation and discussion, through which we will cover the issues relating to the role of urban planning in urban development and societal transformation. The course will conclude with a short summary that points out the uncertainties, openness and controversies associated with urban degrowth and the dilemmas between democracy, planning and normativity in the agenda of urban degrowth.

Material

- Krähmer, K. (2021). Are green cities sustainable? A degrowth critique of sustainable urban development in Copenhagen. *European Planning Studies*, 29(7), 1272-1289.
- Savini, F. (2021). Towards an urban degrowth: Habitability, finity and polycentric autonomism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X20981391.
- Xue, J. (2021). Urban planning and degrowth: A missing dialogue. *Local Environment*, 1-19

Seminar 4: Human-nature bonds

14:00 CET, November 25th 2024

Instructor

Dr. Ksenija Hanaček

ICTA, UAB, Spain

Faculty of Social Sciences, Global Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland

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Objectives

This course will contribute to the understanding of environmental conflicts by looking at the loss and claims for human-nature relationships disrupted by extractive and industrial projects. The concept human-nature bonds will be framed in relation to environmental limits of global economic growth.

Structure

2,5h seminar

Content

The course provides knowledge and a global overview from political ecology approaches to understand power relations and inequalities in access to and distribution of environmental benefits. In particular, the course will show disruptions to human-nature relationships by studying environmental distribution conflicts (O'Connor and Martinez-Alier, 1998), the theory of access to natural resources (Ribot and Peluso, 2003) but within the understanding of impacts on cultures, knowledges, and practices (Hanaček et al., 2021; Hanaček et al., 2024). These claims and struggles also play a key role in promoting further integration of decolonial ontology and epistemology towards degrowth thinking.

Material

- Hanaček, K., Tran, D., Landau, A. et al. "We are protectors, not protestors": global impacts of extractivism on human–nature bonds. *Sustain Sci* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-024-01526-1>

Optional:

- What is Marae Moana? Available at: <https://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/about-marae-moana/what-is-marae-moana/>
- Sacred Land Film Project. Available at: <https://sacredland.org/>

Seminar 5: Radical alternatives from the Global South

14:00 CET, December 2nd, 2024

Instructor

Ashish Kothari

Kalpavriksh, Vikalp Sangam, and Global Tapestry of Alternatives

ashishkothari@riseup.net, <https://ashishkothari.in>

Objectives

This course will give a glimpse of radical alternatives that people and communities across the world are coming up with, in response to multiple global crises of environment, climate, inequality, and injustice.

Structure

2,5h seminar

Content

The COVID19 crisis has sharply exposed how ecological devastation for human use rebounds on us, and how a certain model of 'development' has left hundreds of millions of people without a secure economic and social base, and created the conditions for more disasters (climate, disease, conflicts). This and other ongoing global crises, built on the structures and relations of patriarchy, racism, capitalism, statism, and anthropocentrism, have prompted a search for alternatives. Are there systemic alternative practices and frameworks that can challenge these structures of injustice and unsustainability as also illuminate pathways to a sustainable and equitable future?

The presentation will focus on such frameworks of transformation, including Eco-swaraj (Radical Ecological Democracy), buen vivir, and degrowth. Many of these arise from grassroots initiatives at meeting needs in sustainable and egalitarian ways, across the world. This includes initiatives at meeting human needs and aspirations through direct or radical democracy, localized economies embedded in ecological and cultural landscapes, notions of human well-being that relate to actual needs of people and to qualitative values like satisfaction and social security, democratic knowledge and technology generation, and sustaining cultural diversity and exchange. It stresses that the locus of all such activity be neither in the state nor in corporations, but in local communities and collectives of various kinds. It proposes that a just and sustainable recovery, out of COVID, will be multi-coloured, a rainbow new deal with a diversity of solutions and approaches, which can also help avoid or build resilience against future such crises. It also shows how these approaches go well beyond what are either superficial and status quoist like 'green growth' or seriously inadequate like 'green new deal' and 'sustainable development'.

Material:

- <https://vikalpsangam.org/article/these-alternative-economies-are-inspirations-for-a-sustainable-world/>
- <https://vikalpsangam.org/article/the-search-for-radical-alternatives-key-elements-and-principles/>
- <https://www.dw.com/en/eco-swaraj-an-old-concept-for-a-new-green-world/av-55121060>

Seminar 6: Energy, justice and degrowth

15:00 CET, December 9th, 2024

Instructor

Sofia Avila, PhD

Institute of Social Studies, National Autonomous University of Mexico

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Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce students to the evolution and main conceptual developments of “Energy Justice”.
- Position Environmental Justice as field of research and activism helping to identify the main limitations of the “Energy Justice” literature.
- Bridge Critical Environmental Justice and Degrowth to develop a radical perspective for energy transitions and, more broadly, for socio-ecological transitions.

Structure

This class is divided into two segments. The first one (1hr) will introduce the theoretical and political trajectories of “energy justice” and “environmental justice” in the context of the global climate and energy crisis. Then it will discuss some of the existing and missing bridges between such notions and the degrowth theory/practice. During the second segment (1 hr) we will discuss a documentary film showing different cases of energy injustices and local initiatives for energy sovereignty/democracy in the global south. We will collectively discuss how the concepts revised in the lecture are applied to the cases shown in the documentary, and what are the political/conceptual/practical connections between these cases with the degrowth movement in the global north.

Content

“Energy Justice” has emerged as a conceptual tool within academic literature allowing to analyse and tackle injustices mainly from a liberal perspective: leading to policy management approaches of energy problems rather than political transformations for global sustainability. This course will introduce and critically discuss the evolution of “energy justice” literature under the light of environmental justice studies and movements, a field with larger and plural trajectories. In particular, the course will set key routes to build bridges between critical environmental justice and degrowth, to conceptually articulate alternative approaches to energy transitions and radical transformations towards sustainability from a Global perspective.

Material

To engage with the discussions and dynamics of this session, it is required to watch the documentary before the class (available in youtube/1hr duration). Students are also invited to read the suggested readings as specified below.

- Documentary. La energía de los pueblos. People's energy. La Sandía Digital.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXlA-2S_uAs

Optional:

- Pellow, D (2017). Introduction. In. What is critical environmental justice?. Wiley.
- Temper L; Avila S; Del Bene D; Gobby J; Kosoy N; Lebillon P; Martinez-Alier J; Perkins P; Roy, B; Scheidel A; Walter, M. (2020) Movements shaping climate futures: A systematic mapping of protests against fossil fuel and low-carbon energy projects. Environmental Research Letters. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abc197>
- Akbulut B, Demaria F, Gerber J-F, Martínez-Alier J (2019). Who promotes sustainability? Five theses on the relationships between the degrowth and the environmental justice movements. Ecological Economics, Elsevier, vol. 165(C), pages 1-1

Seminar 7: Energy communities and degrowth

14:00 CET, December 16th, 2024

Instructor

Dr. Marula Tsagkari
University of Barcelona, Spain
marou.tsagari@gmail.com

Objectives

This course will discuss the topic of energy cooperatives and communities and how/if they can be vehicles for a degrowth transition.

Structure

2,5h seminar

Content

We will start with a short presentation of the topic of energy communities and cooperatives and we will watch a short video on how these initiatives emerge, and what difficulties they face. We will then discuss some problematics around ECs and how they can be relevant for degrowth.

Material

- Conrad Kunze & Sören Becker (2015) Collective ownership in renewable energy and opportunities for sustainable degrowth. Sustainability Science volume 10, pages 425–437 (2015)
- <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/taking-energy-systems-from-profit-making-to-ensuring-wellbeing/>

Optional:

- M Tsagkari, J Roca, G Kallis (2021) From local island energy to degrowth? Exploring democracy, self-sufficiency, and renewable energy production in Greece and Spain Energy Research & Social Science 81, 102288
- Community renewable energy at a crossroads: A think piece on degrowth, technology, and the democratization of the German energy system
- Hanke et al (2022) Do renewable energy communities deliver energy justice? Exploring insights from 71 European cases

Seminars 8, 9 & 10: The Degrowth Doughnut Model

14:00 CET, 13th, 20th and 27th of January, 2025

Instructor

Mladen Domazet

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<http://ipe.hr/en/mladen-domazet/>

Claudio Cattaneo

Research and Degrowth

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Objectives

This course will introduce students to concepts of doughnut economics and degrowth-inspired modification of the doughnut visualisation tool. We will explore the local practices of doughnut-based planning and assessment, and national ‘degrowth doughnuts’ developed by IPE. They will eventually connect to strategic elements of degrowth transformation introduced in other courses of the programme.

Structure

3 x 2,5h seminar

Content

Seminar 8 - Claudio Cattaneo

This class will present the application of the donut model to municipal policies, focussing on the process for sustainability policies in Barcelona. It will present the tools created by the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) to put donut theory in practice at the city level, where the donut is “unrolled” into a matrix of 4 lenses in which the ecological and the social are each one combined with the local and the global. These tools have been used by the Ecology Department of the Barcelona City Council to promote the transition towards Donut Economics. The overall process, research methodology and key milestones of the project will be presented, together with its main results.

- Introduction and class check on basic knowledge of and involvement in Donut Economics
- The [tools developed](#) by DEAL to put the theory into practice.
- The Barcelona context: LA21, [citizen commitment to sustainability](#) and [climate emergency](#).
- The [Barcelona process](#): data and community portraits, conferences and debates, power to act workshop, challenges and projects workshops.
- Data portrait: methodology and results.
- Discussion on research and method
- Discussion on political process

Seminar 9 & 10- Mladen Domazet

Navigating justice and sustainability in the 21st century is hard enough without trying to weld together two associative, but often ambiguous concepts, like ‘degrowth’ and ‘doughnut economy’. Yet, in searching for a conceptual reconstruction of the real processes and cultural strategies (common and individual) to secure wellbeing or need satisfaction, these associative and impactful concepts can attain understanding more easily than other difficult coin concepts (e.g. entangled humanism, politics of swarming or genocentrism). These seminars will (1) present the philosophy of science behind Doughnut Economics, (2) application of the doughnut to Barcelona and Degrowth, and (3) a proposed modification – a degrowth donut – and explore their strategic and explanatory potential. The aim is to directly, viscerally and quantificationally deny the centrality of economics as the dominant definition of human interaction with each other and living nature, whilst allowing comparable assessments of goal setting and attainment.

Material

Seminar 8

- <https://doughnuteconomics.org/tools/167>
- <https://doughnuteconomics.org/news/48>
- <https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelonasostenible/ca/barcelona-sostenible/tags/objectius-compromis/page/el-compromis-ciutada-per-la-sostenibilitat-2012>
- <https://www.barcelona.cat/emergenciaclimatica/ca>
- <https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelona-pel-clima/en/barcelona-responds/introduction/how-do-we-do-barcelona>

Seminar 9 & 10

- ZOE Institute – A compass towards 2030; or Kohei Saito, *Marx in the Anthropocene*, chapter 4 (pp. 103-130)
- Domazet et al. 2020. Mental Models of Sustainability: The Degrowth Doughnut Model; or <http://ipe.hr/en/degrowth-donut/>

Seminar 12: Design Global, Manufacture Local

14:00 CET, February 10th, 2025

Instructor

Alekos Pantazis

Assistant Professor, University of Thessaly

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0904-4697>

Objectives

Go through what is Commons and Digital commons. Delve into blending elements of physical and digital commons under the concept “Design global, manufacture local”/”Cosmolocalism”. We will examine the sustainability and social characteristics of such an emerging mode of production through cases of primary sector.

Structure

2,5h seminar

Content

Commons-based initiatives transform the way we work and interact. The dominant system utilises their dynamics to steer them for its own profit and perpetuation. Can we understand those dynamics and use them towards post-capitalist futures?

Material

- Kostakis, V., Niaros, V. & Giotitsas, C. Beyond global versus local: illuminating a cosmolocal framework for convivial technology development. *Sustain Sci* 18, 2309–2322 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-023-01378-1>
- Bauwens, M., Kostakis, V. and Pazaitis, A. (2019). *Peer to Peer: the Commons Manifesto*. London: University of Westminster Press. Accessed July 8, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.16997/book33>. Chapters: 1 & 2

Seminar 13: Tourism and Degrowth

14:00 CET, February 17th 2025

Instructor

Macià Blázquez Salom

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Universitat de les Illes Balears

Content

The tourism industry serves as a lens to examine inherent contradictions within capitalism, revealing challenges related to biophysical limits, socio-economic disparities, and local dispossession. Our research explores the concept of tourism degrowth through a framework of planned contraction and convergence, specifically focusing on the intentional reduction and equitable redistribution of throughput per capita.

Material

- Asunción Blanco-Romero, Macià Blázquez-Salom & Robert Fletcher (2023) Fair vs. fake touristic degrowth, Tourism Recreation Research, DOI: [10.1080/02508281.2023.2248578](https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2023.2248578)
- Ivan Murray, Robert Fletcher, Macià Blázquez-Salom, Asunción Blanco-Romero, Ernest Cañada & Filka Sekulova (2023) Tourism and degrowth, Tourism Geographies, DOI: [10.1080/14616688.2023.2293956](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2023.2293956)

Seminar 14th: Degrowth and eco-social enterprises

14:00 CET, February 24th, 2025

Instructor

Eva Fraňková

Assistant Professor, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

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Objectives

- Get basic orientation in the definitions - social enterprise, social economy, third sector etc. (EU approach, national specifics, other discourses)
- Understand the basic principles of (eco-) social enterprises (ESE)
- Discuss ESE in the context of degrowth
- Discuss the characteristics of “degrowth businesses” and how much they overlap with ESE

Structure

2,5h seminar

Introductory activity in small groups (3-5 people)

Presentation by EF with space for clarifications + discussion

Group work in smaller groups (3-5 people)

Closing joint discussion

Content

The transition to an equitable and sustainable degrowth society calls for re-thinking, re-conceptualisation, and also for actual practical change of many economic institutions – including the definition, aim and structure of its current basic building block – the enterprise. There are various existing concepts of alternative businesses, e.g. the concept of social enterprises and - more generally – the social solidarity economy discourse. We will look at the basic principles of social enterprises (SE) in the EU context and their national variations. Beyond this EU institutional approach, we will discuss the concept of diverse economies, and the broader meaning of the term “eco-social enterprise” that includes many economic alternatives – both historical and current, institutionalized and grass-root/un-incorporated ones. Finally, we will look at the recent degrowth business literature to see how much the existing conceptualizations and practices of SE are compatible with the degrowth vision of a new economy.

Material

- JOHANISOVÁ, Naděžda, Tim CRABTREE a Eva FRAŇKOVÁ. 2013. Social enterprises and non-market capitals: a path to degrowth? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 38, pp. 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2012.01.004>
- Johanisová, N and Fraňková E. 2017. Eco-social enterprises. In Spash, Clive L. *Routledge handbook of ecological economics : Nature and society*. London: Routledge, pp. 507-516. Routledge International Handbooks.
- European Commission. 2020. *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Comparative synthesis report*. Authors: Carlo Borzaga, Giulia Galera, Barbara Franchini, Stefania Chiomento, Rocío Nogales and Chiara Carini. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://europa.eu/!Qq64ny>
- Khmara, Y and Kronenberg J. 2018. Degrowth in business: An oxymoron or a viable business model for sustainability? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 177, pp. 721-731. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.12.182>
- Hinton, J. 2021. Five key dimensions of post-growth business: Putting the pieces together. *Futures*, Vol. 131, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2021.102761>

Seminar 15: Blue Degrowth: Repoliticizing the Sustainability of the Ocean Economy

14:00 CET, March 10th, 2025

Instructor

Borja Nogué-Alguero

ICTA-UAB and R&D

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Content

In recent years, several international actors (think tanks, governments, financial institutions, and NGOs) have been promoting the ocean as the latest global economic frontier in which to pursue projects of sustainable growth. Such projects are publicized under the umbrella terms of ‘blue economy’ and ‘blue growth,’ which have also become discursive platforms to highlight the economic importance and the future potential of ocean resources and maritime industries. Blue growth proponents, such as the OECD, the FAO or the European Commission, position the sea as pivotal in the resolution of humanity’s most pressing social and environmental problems —such as secular economic stagnation, resource depletion, and ecological crisis— promoting the idea that new technologies, with proper market incentives and technocratic regulation, allow for an expanded and intensified use of the ocean’s vast natural assets in a sustainable manner, which will boost global economic growth. Meanwhile, the UN’s declaration of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) exemplifies a parallel growing preoccupation with the ecological status and integrity of marine ecosystems due to increased anthropogenic pressures. Missing in the cornucopian visions of the ocean as the great but delicate container of unexploited global wealth, is the defense of social and environmental limits to growth and the promotion of alternative ways to inhabit and relate to the sea that are not based upon enclosure, extractivism, accumulation and dispossession of the marine space and its resources. Blue Degrowth is an attempt to build a counter-paradigm to the mainstreaming of oceanic growthism in academia, policy circles and public opinion. This seminar will give both an overview of the re-emergence of the ocean as a site for contemporary visions and projects of growth together with the recent articulation of radical socio-ecological critiques and alternatives.

Material

- Barbesgaard, M. (2018). Blue growth: Savior or ocean grabbing? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(1), 130-149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1377186>
- Ertör, I., & Hadjimichael, M. (2020). Editorial: Blue degrowth and the politics of the sea: rethinking the blue economy. *Sustainability Science*, 15(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00772-y>
- Hadjimichael, M. (2018). A call for a blue degrowth: Unravelling the European Union’s fisheries and maritime policies. *Marine Policy*, 94, 158-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.05.007>
- Nogué-Alguero, B. (2020). Growth in the docks: Ports, metabolic flows and socio-environmental impacts. *Sustainability Science*, 15(1), 11-30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00764-y>

- Voyer, M., Quirk, G., McIlgorm, A., & Azmi, K. (2018). Shades of blue: What do competing interpretations of the Blue Economy mean for oceans governance? *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 20(5), 595-616.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2018.1473153>

Seminars 16 & 17: Debt and Degrowth

14:00 CET, March 17th and 24th, 2025

Instructor

Tilman Hartley

Utrecht University and University of Cologne

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Objectives

This course will explore current debates surrounding personal and state debt, and their relationship to the politics and policies for degrowth. We will examine the causes and consequence of personal indebtedness using both theory and case studies; look at how today's banking and monetary system creates a dependency on economic growth; and explore a broad range of potential policies for tackling personal and state indebtedness during degrowth.

Structure

The course has two, two-and-a-half-hour classes. You should have read the readings carefully in advance. This preparation is necessary to be able take part in the group work in class.

Content

The first class examines the future viability of interest-bearing debt, looking at both theoretical debates and at the historical record of personal debt and the problems associated with it. The second class focuses on state debt, highlighting the differences between household and public debt, and between private and state money creation.

Material

Seminar 16: Personal debt and degrowth

- Hartley, Tilman, and Giorgos Kallis. 2021. 'Interest-bearing loans and unpayable debts in slow-growing economies: Insights from ten historical cases'. *Ecological Economics* 188(107132): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.107132>

Optional:

- Atkinson, Abbye. 2019. 'Rethinking credit as social provision'. *Stanford Law Review* 71(5): 1093-1162. <https://review.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/05/Atkinson-71-Stan.-L.-Rev.-1093-2019.pdf>

Seminar 17: States, money, and degrowth

- Boait, Fran, and Graham Hodgson. 2018. Escaping Growth Dependency: Why reforming money will reduce the need to pursue economic growth at any cost to the environment. London, UK: Positive Money.
http://positivemoney.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Escaping-Growth-Dependency-final_print.pdf

Optional:

- Mellor, Mary. 2019. 'Democratizing finance or democratizing money?' Politics & Society 47(4): 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329219878992>

Seminar 18: Food production and distribution, with and without markets

14:00 CET, April 7th, 2025

Instructor

Sam Bliss

University of Vermont

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https://twitter.com/ii_sambliss

Objectives

This course will explore market and non-market institutions for organizing economic activity. The focus is on the production and distribution of food. Food (i) is a physiological necessity, (ii) consists of organisms from ecosystems, and (iii) has cultural importance in every society on Earth. Moreover, 10% of the world suffers from hunger even though more than enough food is produced to feed everybody. In fact, agriculture's enormous scale is driving the Earth system past critical thresholds of planetary sustainability. We will think together about actually existing alternative food practices in service of imagining radically different food systems. Beyond food, the lessons from this seminar offer a framework for evaluating modes of exchange in general.

At the end of this seminar, students should be able to:

- distinguish between market and non-market economic practices;
- describe attributes of market and non-market distribution;
- explain economic institutions in coevolutionary terms;
- articulate their stance on markets for food; and
- envision food systems—or assemblages of systems—beyond growth.

Structure

2,5h seminar

Content

Students will read chapter 3 in Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2014) Braiding Sweetgrass before class. Seminar will begin with an activity to stimulate thinking about the market and non-market food

practices we each participate in. This will be followed by a one-hour lecture on the instructor's research within non-market food practices in Vermont, USA, with opportunities for discussion scattered throughout. We will spend the final hour discussing exchange in practice and in theory. This course's content is purposefully not tied directly to degrowth. The assignment, for those students who choose to do it, involves relating these ideas to degrowth (see Assignment section below).

Material

- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2014. "The Gift of Strawberries." In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, 22–32. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.
https://unmhonorsart.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/kimmerer_braiding_sweetgrass.pdf

Optional:

- Bliss, Sam, and Megan Egler. 2020. "Ecological Economics Beyond Markets." *Ecological Economics* 178: 106806. Full text available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3655676. (Recommend sections 1, 2, and 3.6.)

Additional:

- Barbieri, Lindsay, Sonya Ahmed, and Sam Bliss. 2019. "Farming within Limits." *Interactions* 26 (5): 70–73. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3348795>
- Gerber, Julien-François. 2020. "Degrowth and Critical Agrarian Studies." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 47 (2): 235–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1695601>.
- Infante Amate, Juan, and Manuel González de Molina. 2013. "'Sustainable de-Growth' in Agriculture and Food: An Agro-Ecological Perspective on Spain's Agri-Food System (Year 2000)." *Journal of Cleaner Production, Degrowth: From Theory to Practice*, 38 (January): 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2011.03.018>.
- González de Molina, Manuel, and Juan Infante Amate. 2010. "Agroecología y Decrecimiento. Una Alternativa Sostenible a La Configuración Del Actual Sistema Agroalimentario Español." *Revista de Economía Crítica* 10: 113–37.
- Gomiero, Tiziano. 2018. "Agriculture and Degrowth: State of the Art and Assessment of Organic and Biotech-Based Agriculture from a Degrowth Perspective." *Journal of Cleaner Production, Technology and Degrowth*, 197 (October): 1823–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.03.237>.
- Hoehn, Daniel, Jara Laso, María Margallo, Israel Ruiz-Salmón, Francisco José Amo-Setién, Rebeca Abajas-Bustillo, Carmen Sarabia, et al. 2021. "Introducing a Degrowth Approach to the Circular Economy Policies of Food Production, and Food Loss and Waste Management: Towards a Circular Bioeconomy." *Sustainability* 13 (6): 3379. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063379>.
- McGreevy, Steven R., Christoph D. D. Rupprecht, Daniel Niles, Arnim Wiek, Michael Carolan, Giorgos Kallis, Kanang Kantamaturapoj, et al. 2022. "Sustainable Agrifood Systems for a Post-Growth World." *Nature Sustainability* 5 (12): 1011–17. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-022-00933-5>.
- Nelson, Anitra, and Ferne Edwards, eds. 2020. *Food for Degrowth: Perspectives and Practices*. New York: Routledge.

Seminar 19

14:00 CET, May 19th, 2025

Instructor

Lucía Muñoz Sueiro

ICTA-UAB and R&D

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<https://www.realpostgrowth.eu/people/lucia-munoz-sueiro/>

Objective

This course will explore the strategic employment of cultural practices and imaginaries for a degrowth transition.

Structure: 1 class of 2,5h

Course: In this course, we will examine how popular culture, including both ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ cultural forms, contributes to shaping degrowth imaginaries and advancing degrowth practices. We will begin by exploring the concepts of prefiguration, popularization, and pressure, as outlined by Meissner (2021), alongside what I call postfiguration, to explore how popular practices can inspire alternative futures that challenge dominant growth-oriented logics. We will analyze and discuss various examples, such as the controversial case of traditional whaling in the Faroe Islands (Olsen; Bogadóttir, 2017). The course will conclude with a collaborative mapping of popular culture practices that could be strategically leveraged for degrowth politics.

Keywords: popular culture, anthropology, prefiguration, cultural heritage, traditions

Material

- Meissner, M. (2021). Towards a cultural politics of degrowth: prefiguration, popularization and pressure. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.2972>
- Olsen, E. S.; Bogadóttir, R. (2017). Making degrowth locally meaningful: the case of the Faroese grindadráp. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 24(1), 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.2458/v24i1.20888>

Seminar 20

14:00 CET, May 26th, 2025

Instructor

Julia Grosinger

ICTA-UAB

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Objective

The transitioning to a degrowth society requires strategies that explicitly include rural zones. The overall objective of this class is to develop an understanding of the interconnections between economic growth paradigms and rural areas. We will examine and structure these relations at global, national, and local levels from a human geography perspective. Following this, we will explore and reflect on potential strategies for operationalizing degrowth at the local rural level, considering the context of global inequalities.

Structure

1 class of 2,5h

Content

The class is organized into four segments. We will:

- Present various concepts of rurality
- Analyze growth paradigms (social, spatial, organizational) in rural areas
- Explore potential strategies and relevant indicators at the local rural level
- Critically assess ways to avoid "rural romanticism" or "local traps" from a wider perspective

Each segment includes a short lecture that introduces the key concepts, followed by group work or fishbowl discussions. While the case studies are framed within a European context, students are encouraged to share examples from outside Europe during the discussion.

Keywords: rurality, growth paradigms, multi-scalar analysis, local

Material

- Perkins, H. C. (2006). Commodification: re-resourcing rural areas. *Handbook of rural studies*, 243-257.

Optional:

- Massey, D. (2008). A global sense of place. In *The cultural geography reader* (pp. 269-275). Routledge.
- Students are invited to review the assigned article from Seminar 3: Savini, F. (2021). Towards an urban degrowth: Habitability, finity and polycentric autonomism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X20981391.

Assignments

Block 1

Choose 1 assignment from the options below:

Deadline: January 10th

1. Housing (FRANCOIS) PENDING
2. Human-nature bonds: Please have a look at this video Mauna Kea, Hawaii by Indigenous activist Pua Case. Please describe (1 full page max) the importance of spiritual, historical, and cultural perspectives for knowing (epistemology), existence (ontology), and protecting nature against infrastructures, mining, oil drilling, and the like. What can Degrowth and EJ literatures learn from these lived experiences? For example: What is understood as nature? Which elements does it contain? How is it protected and why? What are the historical injustices behind proposed projects? For more information on the case see here: EJAtlas (KSENIJA HANACECK)

Block 2

Choose 1 assignment from the options below:

Deadline: Feb 28th

1. Energy Justice & Energy communities: An energy company (private or public) is planning the installation of a large-scale and centralized renewable energy project in proximity to your community, creating negative impacts on both social and environmental relations. Write a manifesto (for a local newspaper or civil assembly) on which you call your community to challenge this project and propose an alternative such as a small democratically owned one. Explain to your peers why the large-scale project is problematic, (both in terms of the local impacts it will create and the type of development it promotes. Then elaborate a proposal for an alternative energy project, including the following considerations: land use planning related to the project (energy production, and other coordinated land uses such as food production, housing, recreation, conservation), justice-based concerns (including recognition, participation, distribution), the type of ownership the project will have (collective, municipal), the end-uses of the produced energy and how the revenues of the project will be distributed/reinvested. Feel free to choose the specifics of your location/project- it can be your hometown or a place close to you-, you can refer to the customs and practices of your community and natural elements/resources. Remember this is a manifesto so you have to encourage them! Extension: 2 pages max. (MARULA & SOFIA)
2. Doughnut economics: In 800-1000 words describe a proposed research to either:
 - (a) Understand the potentials for degrowth transformation based on the comparison of 2 countries' degrowth doughnut profiles (with your own selection of indicators)
 - (b) Propose an additional indicator to include in degrowth doughnut; with justifications for inclusion (why it is important to track this, how widely available is the database, who owns/collects the data) (CLAUDIO & MLADEN)

Block 3

Choose 1 assignment from the options below:

Deadline: May 11th

1. Blue degrowth (BORJA) PENDING
2. Debt and degrowth. This course explores current debates surrounding personal and state debt, and their relationship to the politics and policies for degrowth. We examine the causes and consequence of personal indebtedness using both theory and case studies; look at how today's banking and monetary system creates a dependency on economic growth; and explore a broad range of potential policies for tackling personal and state indebtedness during degrowth. You may write an assignment, in academic or blog style, on these or any related aspects of the course. Working in small groups is encouraged; solo work is also perfectly acceptable. Word limit: 1000 words (roughly 2 pages) (TILMAN)
3. Food for degrowth: Write a 600- to 1000-word essay explaining what any of this has to do with degrowth. What difference does the presence or absence of markets make to the chances of realizing degrowth? Explain not just how different market and non-market institutions might align (or not) with the principles of degrowth, but also how they might facilitate or impede the actual biophysical growth of the economy. How does organizing production and exchange via markets versus alternatives, such as central planning or decentralized gifts, affect the quantities of materials and energy societies use? In other words, do certain ways of organizing production and distribution generate growth? Do certain ways constrain growth? How else might our distribution mechanisms (markets, gifts, government programs, and so on) influence the possibilities for degrowth transformation? These are the main questions to address in your essay. You do not have to address them all. (I'm using the words exchange, transfers, distribution, institution, and mechanism somewhat loosely and interchangeably here, but you can define your terms for the ways things are allocated more precisely in the essay.) You can answer this prompt in any way you see fit. You can make an argument against or in favor of markets. You can lay out a different typology of distribution mechanisms that is more nuanced than, or entirely separate from, market/non-market. You can criticize the ideas presented in the seminar. You can focus your thinking about distribution on food, like the seminar, or on another good, service, or resource. Or you can address the issue of exchange more generally. You can focus on a specific geographical region or a particular project. You can contrast basic income policies with policies that provide free access to necessities like food, shelter, and care. What is important is that you have an argument, a central idea around which the essay revolves. (See Guideline 1 below.) If, after reading these guidelines, you would prefer to do an alternative assignment on the same topic, propose it to Sam. Alternatives could include, but are not limited to, writing something on a related topic for publication in any outlet or expressing your ideas in ways other than writing, such as by making a video or art piece. You are especially encouraged to do written or other creative projects that can reach broader audiences. To propose an alternative assignment, send a short, written description of what you plan to produce to Sam at samcbliss@gmail.com. (SAM)