

# DEGROWTH AND SUFFICIENCY

*Exploring the Contours of a Post-Growth Economy*

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# VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

*Aiming for material sufficiency.  
Exchanging superfluous material wealth  
for non-materialistic sources of meaning  
and happiness*

- *for ecological viability*
- *for social justice*
- *for human flourishing beyond consumerism and productivism*
- *for an economics that aims for 'enough, for everyone, forever'*

# DEGROWTH

*Planned contraction of the  
energy and resource demands  
of overgrown economies*

# **PREREQUISITES FOR A DEGROWTH TRANSITION**

1. A crisis (or crises) that the system cannot resolve
2. A coherent alternative political project
3. A coalition of social forces driving change
4. Broad cultural consent (even passive consent)

# THE FIRST PREREQUISITE IS MET

- Capitalism is not in crisis – capitalism *is* the crisis.
- Capitalism *must* grow for stability but *cannot* keep growing for ecological reasons
- Capitalism is unable resolve this fundamental contradiction – we need an alternative.

# LIMITS TO GROWTH: A RESTATEMENT

- Global economy in gross ecological overshoot
  - Billions still live in material destitution
  - Global population expected to be around 9.8 billion by 2050
  - Every nation on the planet – even or especially the richest – are seeking perpetual economic growth
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- This is a recipe for ecological (and thus humanitarian) disaster
  - There are limits to growth

# THE SECOND PREREQUISITE

## Is there an alternative political project?

- Alternatives to GDP as a measure of economic progress
  - Diminishing resource caps
- Reduced working hours (in formal economy)
  - Rethink government spending
  - Renewable energy transition
- Restructure banking and finance systems
  - Population policies
  - Distributive justice

# HARD TRUTHS ABOUT DEGROWTH

- A coherent political project but currently both politically and socially unpalatable
- Degrowth is necessary but generally unthinkable
- Therefore, a 'top down' politics of degrowth will not *lead* the transition but will only ever be an *outcome* of social movements driving change 'from below'

# THE THIRD PREREQUISITE

Is there a comprehensive coalition of social forces seeking to create a radically new economy?

Four key features of an emerging degrowth economy:

- Non-monetary forms of the sharing economy
  - An informal network of household economies beyond the market
- Increasing efforts to localise economies (privileging bioregional rather than global modes of production and consumption)
  - New communitarian economic enterprises beyond the profit motive



# THE FOURTH PREREQUISITE

Question: Is there broad based cultural consent (even passive consent) for a post-capitalist economics of degrowth?

Answer: No.

Why? Two main reasons:

- A deep-seated techno-optimism deflects attention away from the need to rethink capitalist systems of production
- A dominant cultural consciousness that sees consumer affluence as the pathway to happiness and fulfilment

**THANK YOU**