

**Socially Sustainable  
Economic Degrowth in  
Europe:  
A Summary of Progress in  
Research  
2008-2010**

**Joan Martinez Alier**  
**Hali Healy**  
ICTA UAB

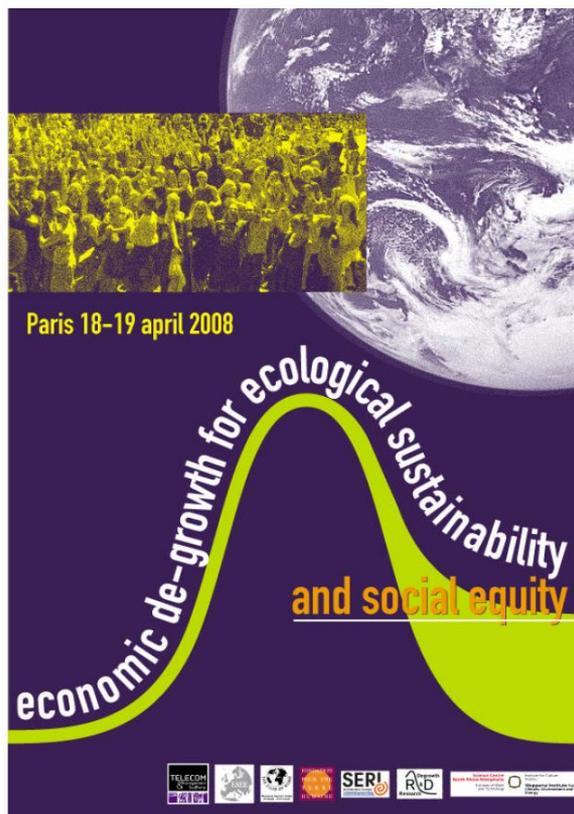
Madrid/Barcelona 25/26 March 2010

# 1st International Paris Conference, April 2008

(<http://www.degrowth.net/>)

Economic De-Growth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity

Paris, 18-19 April 2008



# Conference in European Parliament, April 2009

(<http://www.clubofrome.at/2009/degrowth/index.html>)

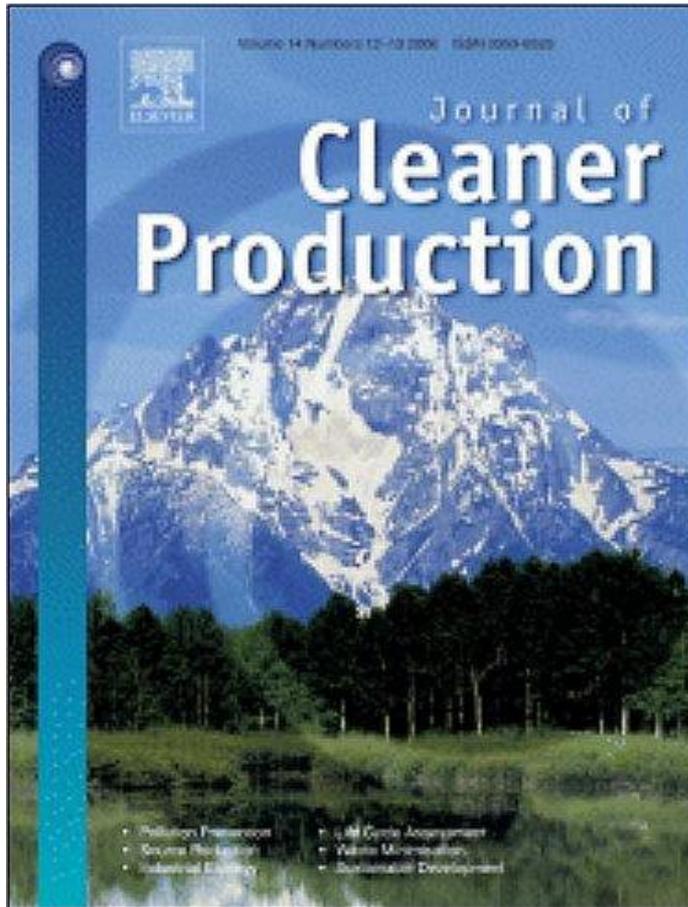
socially  
sustainable  
economic  
*degrowth*



# Special Issue, JCP

Special Issue,  
Journal of Cleaner Production  
18(6), 2010

Crisis or Opportunity? Economic  
Degrowth for Social Equity and  
Ecological Sustainability



Introduction by Schneider F, Kallis G,  
Martinez-Alier J

- Editorial - **Serge Latouche**
- Why environmental sustainability can most probably not be attained with growing production, **Roefie Hueting**
- Energy transition towards economic and environmental sustainability: feasible paths and policy implications, **Simone D'Alessandro Tommaso Luzzati Mario Morroni**
- Relax about GDP growth: implications for climate and crisis, **Jeroen van den Bergh**
- Impact caps: why population, affluence and technology strategies should be abandoned, **Blake Alcott.....**

# Sustainable de-growth: Mapping the context, criticisms and future prospects of an emergent paradigm

(Forthcoming in *Ecological Economics*)

*Joan Martínez-Alier, Unai Pascual, Franck-Dominique Vivien, Edwin Zaccai*

## **Abstract**

“Sustainable de-growth” is both a concept and a social-grassroots (Northern) movement with its origins in the fields of ecological economics, social ecology, economic anthropology and environmental and social activist groups. This paper introduces the concept of sustainable de-growth by mapping some of the main intellectual influences from these fields, with special focus on both the Francophone and Anglophone thinking about this emergent notion. We propose hypotheses pertaining to the appeal of sustainable de-growth, and compare it to the messages enclosed within the dominant sustainable development paradigm.....

# **Socially Sustainable Economic Degrowth**

*(Development and Change, 2009)*

*Joan Martinez Alier*

## **ABSTRACT**

- a) Economic growth is not compatible with environmental sustainability. The effort to push up the rate of growth by increasing obligations to repay financial debts is in direct conflict with the availability of exhaustible resources and with the capacity of waste sinks.
- b) The economic crisis of 2008–09 has resulted in a welcome change to the totally unsustainable trend of increasing carbon dioxide emissions. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 was generous to the rich countries, giving them property rights on the carbon sinks and the atmosphere in exchange for the promise of a reduction of 5 per cent of their emissions relative to 1990. This modest Kyoto objective will be fulfilled more easily because of the economic crisis. This shows that economic de-growth, leading to a steady state, is a plausible objective for the rich industrial economies.
- c) This would be supported by the environmental justice movements of the South, which are active in resource extraction conflicts.

# Degrowth Events

## London Conference, Jan 12 2009



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### RETHINKING ECONOMIC GROWTH Towards an international degrowth network

- I. Degrowth: A Systemic Approach - Dr. Mauro Bonaiuti, University of Turin (Italy)
- II. Civil Society and Degrowth in Europe - Leida Rijnhout, ANPED (Belgium)
- III. Degrowth and the Firm - Dr André Reichel, Stuttgart University (Germany)
- IV. Policies for Sustainable Economies - Dr. Stephen Spratt, nef (the new economics foundation) and Professor Tim Jackson, University of Surrey (UK)

7.00 pm, Tuesday 12 January 2010  
at Hub King's Cross  
34b York Way, London, N1 9AB  
Book your free ticket at [www.degrowth.eventbrite.com](http://www.degrowth.eventbrite.com)

#### Background information

Faced with widespread ecological, social and political crisis, with injustice, insecurity and possible collapse of the economic system itself, civil society, academia, government and the general public are searching for new and fair sustainable economic models. In many parts of Europe, a strong movement has emerged around the concept of Decroissance (Degrowth). Sustainable economic degrowth has been defined as 'a smooth, voluntary and equitable downscaling of production and consumption to ensure human well-being and ecological sustainability locally as well as globally in the short and long term'; Kallis, Schneider and Martinez-Alier, 2008).

Serge Latouche, French economist and founder of the Decroissance movement, emphasises that Degrowth is above all a slogan, and that there are no "ready-made political solutions". Indeed, overcoming today's model to develop a truly just, sustainable social system based on Degrowth raises vast, complex problems that cannot be solved by simplistic solutions. However, with considerable academic progress in recent years, Sustainable Degrowth is far more than just a criticism of neo-classical economics.

The concept of Decroissance shares many features with approaches better-known in the UK such as steady-state economics, and prosperity without growth. The goal of this event is to bring together these visions and contribute to the establishment and consolidation of an International network, one that values the complementarity and diversity of the many emerging European movements, and encourages and enables collaboration between researchers, CSOs and policymakers in order to move toward realizing a Degrowth society.

#### Speakers

**Mauro Bonaiuti** was one of the first scholars to focus on the field of bioeconomics and sustainable Degrowth. President of the Italian Degrowth Association he has published more than 30 papers and three books on the subject. He has taught Economics at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, and Environmental and Territorial Economics at the University of Bologna. He has given more than a hundred talks on Degrowth, complex systems theory and alternative economies.

**Stephen Spratt** is Research Director and Chief Economist at nef, chairing its Research Design Group and directly overseeing work on Business, Finance and Economics. His areas of work include: building social and environmental value into public and private decision making, economic modelling of sustainable economies, business and financial sector reform, innovative financing mechanisms, and national and international regulation. Prior to joining nef Stephen was Head of Research at Intelligence Capital Limited, and an advisor to the Commonwealth Business Council.

**André Reichel** has a PhD from the Institute of Economics and Law at the University of Stuttgart where his research focused on management systems for regional sustainability programs. He is scientific coordinator of the Graduate School for Advanced Manufacturing Engineering in Stuttgart and responsible for its Sustainable Manufacturing programme. Andre is also a member of the Stuttgart regional assembly where he holds a mandate for the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen).

**Tim Jackson** is Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey and Director of the newly-awarded ESRC Research Group on Lifestyles, Values and Environment (RESOLVE). RESOLVE aims to develop understanding of the links between lifestyle, societal values and the environment by providing evidence-based advice to policy-makers who are seeking to understand and to influence people's energy-related behaviours and practices. Tim sits on the UK Sustainable Development Commission and chaired their Economics Steering Group.

#### Map



#### In association with

GROWTH & TRANSITION



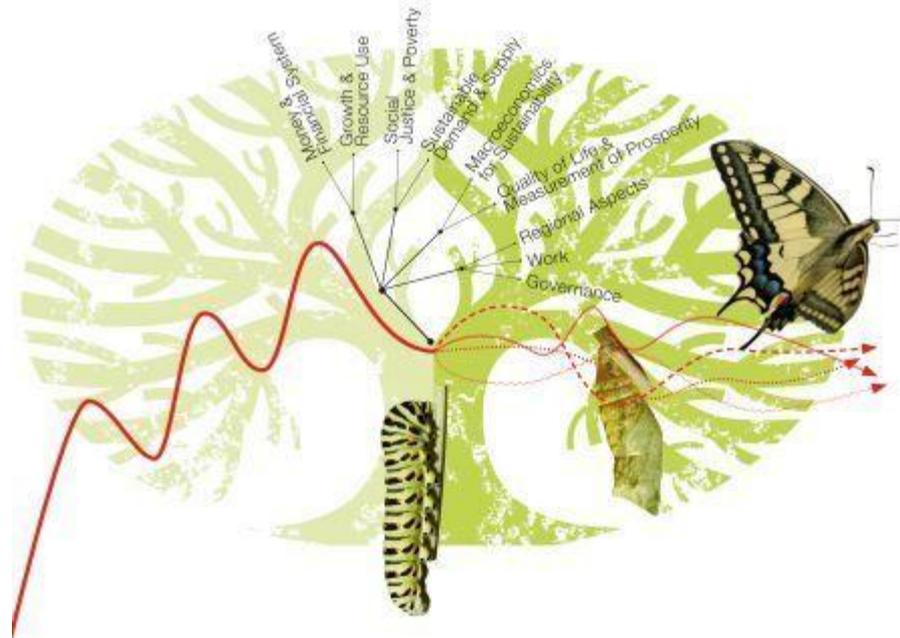
28-29 January 2010, Vienna  
[www.growthinttransition.eu/conference/](http://www.growthinttransition.eu/conference/)



26-29 March 2010, Barcelona  
[www.degrowth.es](http://www.degrowth.es)

# Conference in Vienna, Growth in Transition, 28-29 Jan.2010

A conference on the difficult prospects for growth given the increased amount of energy and materials that are used by the economy



## Barcelona Degrowth Conference, 26-29 March 2010

Thirty years ago, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen published a book in French (edited by Jacques Grinevald and Ivo Rens) with the title “Démain la Décroissance” (Degrowth Tomorrow) (1979). We say, “Aujourd’hui la Décroissance” (Degrowth today). 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 will take place in Barcelona, it follows from the first international conference (Paris, April 2008).



The Second International Conference on Degrowth will develop concrete proposals and define key research questions for an action on degrowth. Local currencies, sharing work and housing, reducing pollutive infrastructure, challenging advertising, ensuring basic income and adopting income ceiling are some of the themes put on the agenda the conference working groups.

**EVENT IS ORGANIZED BY**

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# Is Degrowth unstable?

- **Tim Jackson (in *Prosperity without growth*, 2010) argues that degrowth is unstable. Without growth, private investment decreases, the government then must increase public expenditure, then the public debt increases, then we get into a “fiscal crisis of the state” in order to pay the debt... downward spiral.**
- **However, nobody is preaching Degrowth forever: degrowth should lead to a steady state economy (in terms of energy / materials use), as C. Kerschner has shown in his article in JCP.**

# Beyond GDP

- **There is a debate in Brussels on “beyond GDP”. Macroeconomic accounting is badly done.**
- **This not new – remember Sicco Mansholt 1972 (president of the EC), remember Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, 1971, Kenneth Boulding, 1968, Roefie Hueting, 1980, Herman Daly, 1973 (steady-state economy)... Beyond GDP lies economic degrowth towards a steady state economy with less use of energy and materials.**

# A multi-criteria approach to macroeconomic assessment

- **Instead of focusing in GDP growth, and instead of trying to “green” GDP accounts (as even President Sarkozy said a few months ago, drawing on Sen and Stiglitz)**
- **Try to import into politics a multi-criteria approach – GDP down a bit, unemployment increases, GHG down, soil sealing down, well-being up or down? (Shmelev and R.Labajos, in *Ecological Economics*, 2009, for Austria since 1950 to today).**