

Theme Descriptions: Degrowth and Ecological Economics, 2020.

1 Urban and spatial planning

What might a truly sustainable city look like under conditions of planned or unplanned degrowth (for example, energy descent, climate impacts and supply chain disruption)? What frameworks can help us imagine such a future? What are the likely and feasible forms of collective action for bringing about the necessary political, economic and ecological urban and peri-urban alternatives? How do these questions relate to spatial and urban planning, its politics and economics, including questions of financialisation, speculation, and land ownership?

2 Materials, Energy, Waste and Climate

A core concern of both degrowth and ecological economics communities is protecting human well-being while radically decreasing resource throughput to within planetary boundaries, including climate change. Such a future will see significant constraints to both the availability and usage of basic materials including water. Alternative livelihoods will still require energy supply and basic materials, but their production, availability, consumption, as well as their use and discarding will change. This theme will explore these challenges and alternatives for the just management and governance of energy and materials.

3 Communication, Education and Pedagogy

This broad theme concerns the how and the what of communicating ecological economics and degrowth. Contributions will include presentations of books and other media, discussions of communication strategies, analysis of the publication industry and market and how to navigate it with non-mainstream topics and messages. Theoretical and practical contributions will also be welcome on the presentation of the difficult issues broached by both degrowth and ecological economics to a variety of specialist and non-specialist audiences.

4 Feminism

Exploration of the gendered dimensions of building alternative livelihoods in times of political and ecological crises. Gendered relations fundamentally impact how we conceptualize the transformation towards a socially just and ecologically sound degrowth society. Contributions will explore these issues theoretically and in terms of policy and practice

5 Green New Deal

The various Green New Deal (GND) proposals promise not just to decarbonize the economy, but to reinvigorate democracy and deliver justice for workers, climate refugees, and other marginalized groups. As such the Green New Deal offers an opportunity to build a broad coalition of support, including workers in the very sectors that currently destroy climate and ecosystems. However, policy discourses that deny, or only minimally engage in addressing, the tensions and trade-offs between social and ecological concerns, are problematic, both practically and theoretically. This issue is particularly acute on a global scale: is the GND dependent on increased and hyper-extractivism in the global South, for example? We welcome submissions that critically examine the GND, as well as other related win-win policies, by comparing them in relation to the minimum requirement of degrowth, namely matter-energy throughput reduction.

6 Law, Governance, Policy and Politics

Being multi-faceted, post-growth policy-making, law and governance needs the involvement of multiple stakeholders and their varying approaches towards sustainable solutions. All three dimensions, environmental, social, economic of Sustainable Development need to be addressed, balanced and integrated but also at times prioritised and trade-off against one another. This raises difficult questions of democratic governance and law. Questions to be addressed might include 1) the general interplay between degrowth and Ecological Economics and the policies and instruments inherent to them for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including political parties and social movements; 2) income questions and related sustainable transition pathways, 3) questions of local-global and Global North – Global South relations for worldwide action oriented policies through non-state stakeholders, and 4) the assessment of laws and policies of regional integration towards circular economy. 5) Theoretical and disciplinary frameworks such as jurisprudence, economic valuation and development studies will also be under scrutiny.

7 Alternative livelihoods, well-being and ways of living

Under conditions of stabilisation and material contraction of the economy, what are the implications for equity, work and well-being? How does this affect different social systems, for example the recently industrialising versus post-industrialised economies, or Northern welfare States versus societies with a more limited publicly organised safety net? What influence do social and technical provisioning systems have on the levels of resource use associated with well-being? How should well-being be understood? How can feminist and indigenous perspectives contribute to and shape these debates? Do proposals for policy innovations such as Universal Basic Income or Universal Basic Services have relevance to these questions? What do these changes and challenges mean for time-use?

8 Alternative economies

What new forms of economic organisation and relationships are required in a society beyond growth? Does a degrowth society require a post-capitalist economy, given the structural growth dynamic built into capital accumulation? If so what forms should this take? Contributions are invited to consider decommodified forms of provisioning beyond markets, such as commoning, different forms of ownership, such as cooperatives and common property regimes, alternative modes of allocation, reciprocation and exchange, different dimensions in the democratisation of economic decision making, and different forms of economic planning. We also welcome contributions drawing on lessons from history and the experience of alternative political economies, particularly in relation to the question of capitalist versus non capitalist futures.

9 Transitions / Designs for the future

What is involved in the transition to a society and economy that lives in harmony with the ecosystem? What are the challenges and resistances and the social and political processes involved in overcoming them? In what ways can the future be designed? What will be lost, destroyed, abandoned and what will be gained or regained? What is happening now that prefigures these transitions? What design frameworks could help?

10 Rural/agriculture/food

Rural settings are a key element in a post growth future. This broad theme covers questions of food, food systems (including dominant agricultural systems and agroecology), wild ecosystems and rewilding, land-use (including the impacts of biomass and carbon sequestration), re-ruralisation of society, rural-urban connections, and rural social movements.

11 Arts

To explore the potential of art and other creative methods for both understanding of, and activism around, degrowth, climate, economic and social justice and for communicating the degrowth message. The arts as means of social transformation. Arts, crafts and future alternative livelihoods. Theme can include participative arts sessions and workshops, walking tours and visits, as well as reports on arts interventions.

12 Activist

A broad and diverse range of activism now converges around degrowth ideas, not always utilising the term. What is the role of political and community activism in encouraging the adoption of degrowth perspectives and alternatives? The theme will include scholar-activism and academic activism as well as community and movement-based campaigning and activism. Contributions will facilitate a joint discussion and sharing of experiences on degrowth activism while being opportunities for networking among activists from diverse contexts.

13 Organisation and Business

What forms of organisation and production are appropriate to a sustainable degrowth (or other post-growth alternative) society? How can different organisation forms can help achieve the needed transformations to such societal alternatives? How can various approaches to organisation theory and research contribute to our understanding of these transitions and future societal arrangements? What are the implications for re-organising production, distribution and consumption in an ecologically safe and possibly post-capitalist society and economy? We welcome theoretical contributions as well as those based on research and practice in a variety of contexts.

14 Theoretical perspectives

This broad theme is for contributions to theory. Contributions can include debates within ecological economics and its relationship to heterodox traditions in economics and to mainstream neoclassical economics. Contributions are also welcome from other allied disciplines including, development studies, geography, philosophy, political economy, political science, psychology and sociology. We encourage contributions that cross disciplinary boundaries. We also welcome contributions that foster dialogue between academic and activist communities and in particular between ecological economics and activist knowledge.