

## BOOK REVIEW

*The case for degrowth*, by Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D’alisa, Federico Demaria, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 2020, 107+index pp., € 9.99 (e-pub), ISBN: 9781509535644, €11.30 (paperback), ISBN: 978150953563, €39.60 (hardback), ISBN: 9781509535620

The book under review offers a new perspective on how to shift towards less damaging, more sustainable, fairer and more fulfilling ways of living. It therefore invites the readers to rethink what really matters in their lives and calls for actions towards building an equitable and sustainable future with the help of insights provided in the book. The authors argue that economic growth is the root cause of environmental degradation and social ills. They further assert that the costs of economic growth have become unbearable. As an alternative approach they suggest degrowth: ‘*The advocates of degrowth want to see societies slowing down by design, not disaster*’ (9). The book is structured around three overarching questions: (1) *whether economic growth is good for humanity*; (2) *what alternative pathways may be pursued*; (3) *what policy reforms and strategies can help overcome the sacrifices of growth*. The authors make their case with the help of five chapters, a list of references at the end of each chapter and a set of frequently asked questions.

Chapter 1, ‘A Case for Degrowth’, introduces the book. It starts with defining the purpose of the book, then presents the main arguments one by one. The authors explain how material and economic growth coupled with its rhythms are pushing social and natural systems to their limits. They illustrate that people have been making sense of what is going on for themselves and have come together in order to build resilience against the madness of growth and its consequences. On this ground, ‘*degrowth calls for slowing down in ways organised to minimise harm to other humans and non-humans*’ (26). However, the authors remain aware of the need to understand the sociocultural systems that play a key role in people’s involvement in expansionist processes of change as shown in historical transformations. Chapter 2, ‘Sacrifices of Growth,’ raises the question whether economic growth is good for humanity. The authors argue that growth occurs on the basis of unequal exchange and exploitation. Our planet is finite, yet growth obsession is infinite. It is therefore fundamental to reorient our value system from a growth economy to a human economy. The next chapter, ‘Making Changes on the Ground’ addresses what alternative pathways we may pursue towards a fairer and more sustainable future while putting humanistic values at the centre of change. Acknowledging already existing wisdom from the ground, this chapter is built on the key concepts of commons and commoning. It then presents existing practice and expanding possibilities to design the alternative ways of living called ‘community economies’. An important message of this chapter is that degrowth is not promoting a new

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

dominance over one another; instead, it aims to cultivate a diversity of ways of living. Chapter 4, 'Path Breaking Reforms', proposes a set of five policies, namely: a green new deal without growth; universal basics such as basic income, education, health-care, food, housing and transportation for all; reclaiming the commons; reducing working hours; and the development of public finance that greens and equalises society. The authors mention that some of these policy ideas have started to emerge in both Europe and North America, however, there are still considerable differences between the two. For example, the 'European Green New Deal' proposal has a different focus than the 'Green New Deal – USA' as the former seeks to support health, happiness and the environment instead of focusing on GDP growth, while the latter promotes green growth, even though both of them address the same challenges. The chapter further extends policy proposals and their synergies, and closes with the idea of welcoming new insights from the non-OECD countries so as to acknowledge different realities on the shared planet. Chapter 5, 'Strategies for Mobilisation' promotes building alliances as a key strategy to create a support base for mobilising political change, while the authors acknowledge that the degrowth movement is unlikely to emerge as a huge wave connecting many movements due to their diverse interests. It therefore raises questions about *'how degrowth-oriented transformations can be mobilised, by whom, and for whom?'* (77) The book's 'Frequently Asked Questions' section clarifies a number of important issues from a degrowth perspective and is anchored by four main topics: (1) Green Growth; (2) Growth, Poverty and Inequality; (3) Managing without Growth; and (4) What Can I Do.


All in all, this book is an informative, ground-breaking publication for those who are seeking an alternative perspective to the current challenges relating to sustainability and development. It contributes to this line of knowledge by approaching the problem from a feminist degrowth perspective in which its scope goes beyond an impact of climate change. It therefore brings a holistic understanding when explaining the causes and consequences of the problem, and introduces alternative pathways, policies and strategies toward desired change. Another strength of this book is that it does not intend to create a new hierarchy of power by advocating one path towards degrowth over another. Instead, it acknowledges that our planet is shared and that different realities co-exist. I urge you to read this thought-provoking and important publication.

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