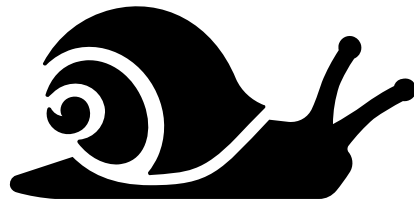


Degrowth: A good life for all

Introducing Degrowth



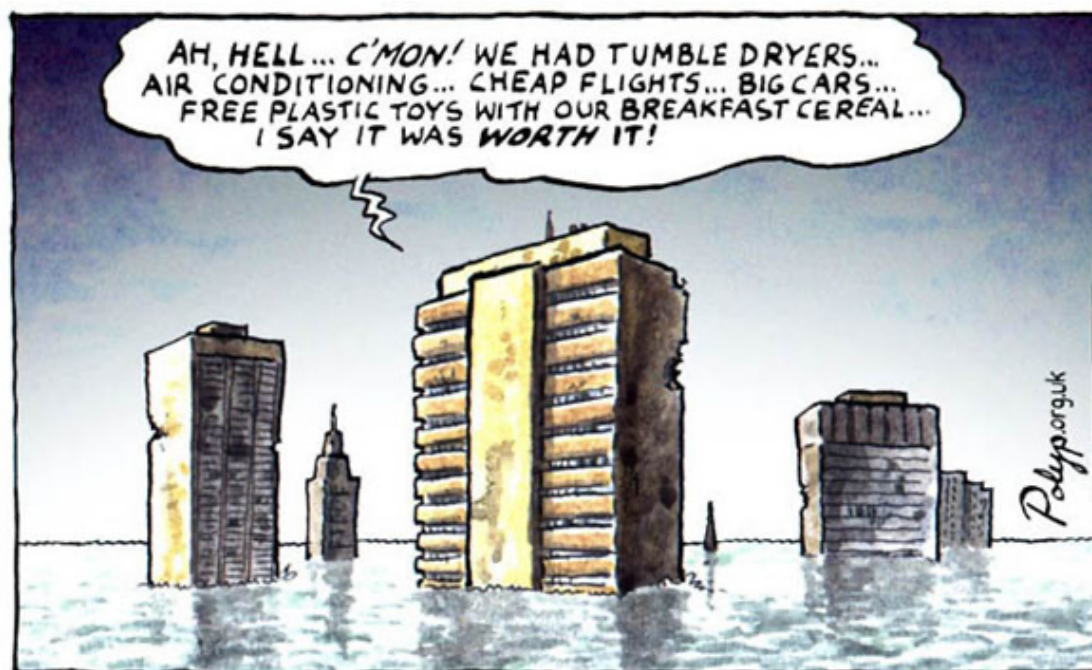
“Anyone who believes in indefinite growth on a physically finite planet is either mad, or an economist.”

– David Attenborough

Climate change, pollution, extinctions, cost of living, crime, depression: we all know the problems.

Degrowth is a lifestyle, an economic system and a rapidly expanding international movement.

Politicians aim for about 3% **GDP** growth per annum, which is a doubling every 23 years. In 69 years, our economy would be eight times as big as it is now. Totally crazy. Every 23 years a doubling of material use: timber, metals, fossil fuels, fish, etc – and the waste we produce. This growth is killing the natural environment that keeps us and our kids alive.



Corporations strive to keep growing using “efficiencies” like automation, contract labour and layoffs. This increases social problems such as unemployment, under-employment, meaningless jobs, inequality.

Degrowth is not recession. It is about everyone having the essentials: food, shelter, medical care, modest amounts of (renewable) energy, etc. People will have fewer possessions but more time with family, friends and community. They will be

more self-reliant and have more self-respect. There would be less crime and better health.

The Degrowth movement is **rapidly building**. There are university degrees in Degrowth. The roots of the movement go back to the 1800s. May 2023 saw the “Beyond Growth” conference hosted by the European Parliament.

There are **many movements** that have a lot in common and share similar goals: Degrowth, Steady State Economy, Solidarity Economy, Permaculture, the ZAD in France, Regenerative Farming, the Zapatistas, Transition Towns, Urban Farming, Black Lives Matter, the New Economy Network, Eco-socialism, Community Gardens and Guerrilla Gardening, La Via Campesina farmers’ movement, Eco-anarchism, Eco Villages, the Pluriverse, Ecofeminism, Radical Ecological Democracy, A Simpler Way, and many more...

We need Degrowth of material and energy use so we can enjoy **growth** of communities, health, equality and justice. Plus, inner growth: values, relationships, self-reliance, self-respect, calm, joy – a shift from external gratification to internal. And of course, growth of life: in gardens, farms and natural areas.

The changes needed are **radical but achievable**. In overdeveloped countries we must massively reduce our consumption of stuff and fossil fuels. Our lives will become more local with many products sourced from nearby, less commuting and fewer cars. Many people will grow much of their own food. There won’t be as many big houses with few occupants.

To get to a sustainable society we need **major change in our economy and political systems**. But that won’t happen till

enough people demand change. Research shows that “enough” is between 4% and 25%.



Industrial agriculture with its chemical fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, and vast over tilled monocrops is destroying the soil and insects that our life depends on. It makes a few companies rich as small farmers and rural communities are squeezed.

What about **renewable energy, recycling**, etc? They are all part of Degrowth. We need renewables and recycling. But as long as the economy is growing, they won't save us. Research shows that as our economy grows, environmental damage also grows. We need to de-grow our economy.

What about **efficiencies**? Without Degrowth these add to the problem. Stuff is cheaper so we buy more stuff (the “Jeavons paradox”), creating the same or more environmental damage.

Many fear the “collapse” of civilisation; but **breakdown** is already happening. Floods, fires, insects disappearing,

depression, drug use, global debt. The zombie apocalypse is already with us. Time for a change.

Degrowth sees **population** as part of the problem. Every effort should be made to reduce it. But the global population growth rate peaked in the 1960s and continues to fall. Over the last century population grew four times while real GDP rose by a factor of 24. Consumption is our biggest problem.

At 5.8 global hectares per person, Australia's **ecological footprint** is more than double the world average of 2.6 gha and nearly four times the global available biocapacity per person of 1.5 gha. (<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/countries/>)



Countries must “wake up” and take action. But why risk our economy when Australia is only a tiny fraction of global consumption? Because one country must lead. Once the myth of infinite growth is shattered, it will send shock waves around the world. Now is the time to focus on global justice, on resilience, disaster readiness, and adaptation rather than on short-term profits. If no country leads then the economy will be the least of our worries – we are currently on track for 2.7 degrees warming, or much more, which means dire consequences. Who better to lead? Yes, we all have our daily problems, but Aussies are well educated, resourceful, and have one of the highest standards of living of any country.

What should we do?

Learn about Degrowth, Permaculture, and how we can change the system to a better life for all.

Raising awareness is the most important action. We need a critical mass so that the media and politicians wake up.

Photocopy this zine and give it to as many people as possible. Spread the message with family, friends and on social media.

We must **adjust our thinking**. Our lifestyle isn't normal, neither historically nor now. In Australia median household income is over \$US44,000. Globally, the median household income is \$US12,000. Round the world, a typical person might be able to afford a bicycle, a mattress, and a small cooking stove. About a billion people are living below the \$2.15 per day poverty line.

Many of us Australians feel stretched on our current income. But our planet demands that we use less stuff. We need to make it a lot easier to secure our basic necessities – while using less of the stuff we could do without. Degrowth is about us all working out how we can do this.

Continue the **well-known actions** you are probably already doing. The “seven R’s”: Refuse (don't buy); Reduce; Reuse/Repair; Recycle; Rehome; Replant; Rot (compost). Eat less industrially produced food. Buy local. Drive less. Plant some veggies and fruit or nut trees. Become politically active (for example in your local Degrowth group).

If you have a **higher income**, you can do more. Divest your investments from fossil fuels. Don't fly unless it's really important. Move to a smaller house with a bigger yard for veggies. **Be an early adopter**. If family and friends see you make major changes they will notice and try out something new.

More information

Degrowth is also known as Post-growth, Décroissance, Postwachstum, and has similarities with Doughnut Economics.

Websites:

- degrowth.info
- resilience.org
- policy.idn.osuny.site (Degrowth Policies)
- facebook page: Degrowth - it's urgent
- simplicityinstitute.org
- postgrowth.org
- steadystate.org
- kateraworth.com (Doughnut economics)
- footprintnetwork.org

Books:

There are many, here are a few:

- F. Liegey & A. Nelson: *Exploring Degrowth* (2020)
- J. Hickel: *Less is More* (2020)
- G. Kallis: *In Defence of Degrowth* (2017)
- D. Holmgren: *RetroSuburbia* (2018)
- T. Jackson: *Prosperity Without Growth* (2017)
- K. Raworth: *Doughnut Economics* (2017)
- S. Alexander: *Degrowth in the Suburbs* (2018)
- A. Nelson: *Beyond Money: A Post-capitalist strategy* (2022)
- F. Liegey & A. Nelson (eds): *The Routledge Handbook of Degrowth* (2025)

This zine was produced by the Melbourne/Naarm branch of Degrowth Network Australia.

Please share it widely!

All images from: <https://polyp.org.uk/>

Want to join our movement?

Contact: degrowthnetwork@proton.me

To learn more about Degrowth Network Australia:
degrowth.info/en/blog/degrowth-network-australia