

## **An analysis of degrowth: potentialities and limits in the development field**

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### **Abstract**

*The traditional understanding of the development discourse has relied for centuries on the imperative of economic growth. In this context, the de-growth movement represents an alternative approach that highlights the limits of the current policies and their threatening effects on human life in the social, economic and environmental fields. This paper analyses the stages through which the growth-oriented approach has revealed its unsustainability but also the aspects that the de-growth community has failed to consider, exposing the movement to harsh criticism. Nonetheless, the disruptive effect of de-growth and the subsequent new terms of the debate have allowed scholars to explore new ideas. In particular, in the field of international development, de-growth has led to the collapse of the 'developed-underdeveloped' system and as a result, third world countries are slowly regaining their own voice in determining the best paths to improve their lives. For de-growth to become feasible in more countries, it is necessary that the legal approach considers the intersections between all the fields of study affected by this radical change.*

**Keywords:** *de-growth, economic, environment, international, development, underdeveloped*

## Introduction

The idea of endless growth has characterised national and transnational economic policies as well as development economics since the Industrial revolution. However, problems such as the uneven distribution of resources among rich and poor, their unrestrained exploitation and the progressive awareness of their limited availability have led some academics to question the sustainability of this approach. In particular, these concerns - together with the low growth rates of the last few years - have fostered the development of numerous “post-growth” alternatives.<sup>1</sup> Among them, one of the philosophies that has gained more consensus is de-growth. Based on the downscaling of production and on sustainability, de-growth challenges the assumption that economic growth is necessary for society’s wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this essay is to outline the role of the growth question in development economics, explain the motives of the actuality of degrowth theories, and show how they can serve the International development movement’s purpose to improve human life. In addition, it will be argued that de-growth’s objectives cannot prescind from the intervention of the state. For this reason, in order to manage the complexity of de-growth, the traditional legal approach has to overcome its limits and embrace a multidisciplinary perspective.

## The role of growth in legitimating the modern/underdeveloped countries division

Growth has for a long time been the parameter according to which power relations were established.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the question of its desirability has affected the core ideas behind International development since their first appearances, regarding the legitimation but also the modalities of international interventions. In 1949, during his inaugural speech, the US President Truman divided the world into “developed” and “underdeveloped” nations considering the level of economic advancement, and called upon the so-called “developed world” to help those countries

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<sup>1</sup> Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, ‘The post-growth economy needs a degrowth vocabulary!’ (2017) 17(1), *Ephemera*

209<<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=2c49b699-445e-4ac3-becd-41b6455df9ee%40sessionmgr4007>> accessed 06 December 2018

<sup>2</sup> S Tardif and A. Milette-Gagnon, *La décroissance à l’horizon du désastre Le Délit* (23rd October 2018) <<https://www.delitfrancais.com/2018/10/23/la-decroissance-a-lhorizon-du-desastre/>> accessed 06 December 2018

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The history of development* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Zed Books 2014)

that were still yet to grow.<sup>4</sup> This kind of discourse was not neutral and carried with it the “Modernisation theory” wherein progress could be brought to economically low-performing societies only through the replication of the conditions that had permitted the advanced societies to grow such as mass production, urbanization, technical agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Strong support for this view came from the economist Walter Rostow who had theorised five stages of economic development from agricultural economies to maturity<sup>6</sup>, highlighting the leading role of Western countries in force of their major industrialisation and consequent wellness. This set of beliefs and the corresponding development agenda went into crisis for several reasons. Firstly, since the end of the Cold war, environmental issues, such as global warming have arisen. In fact, considering that the first development movement was inextricably connected with growth and consumption, the degradation of the environment was perceived by the political world as a fair price to pay for improving man’s conditions.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1972 the Club of Rome published a report named *the limits to growth* that gained immediate popularity. Having analysed all the costs of growth —such as food, pollution and the usage of non-renewable resources— the authors concluded that continuing down the same path men would have soon consumed the Earth’s resources in a brief space of time.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, Third World countries have suffered social, economic and local environmental issues in the attempt to conform to the goals that Western countries had set for them.<sup>9</sup> The obsession for growth that characterised “developed countries” produced damages such as the ones described by Timothy Mitchell in his article “America’s Egypt: Discourse of development industry”. In his work the author criticises the US development ideas and related investments to increase Egypt’s production of meat instead of focusing on the potential of non-animal agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Policies of this kind, that should have improved the country’s economic performance, turned out to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 69-79

<sup>5</sup> Arturo Escobar, *The making and unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton University Press 2011)

<sup>6</sup> Walter Rostow, The stages of economic growth (1959) 12 ‘Economic Review’ 1-16 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2591077>> accessed online 18 May 2019

<sup>7</sup> Susan Baker, *Sustainable development* (Routledge 2006)

<sup>8</sup> Donella H Meadows, Dennis Meadows, et. al, *The limits to growth* (Potomac Associates Book 1972) 88

<sup>9</sup> (n7) 158-159

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Mitchell, ‘America’s Egypt: Discourse of development industry.’ (1991) 169 ‘Middle East Report’ 18 <

[http://politicsofsyria.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/5/2/13525224/mitchell-americas\\_egypt.pdf](http://politicsofsyria.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/5/2/13525224/mitchell-americas_egypt.pdf)> accessed 07 December 2018

benefit only the rich minority of the population.<sup>11</sup> The final effect was, therefore, the widening of the social gap.<sup>12</sup>

### Origins and fundamental beliefs of degrowth

As a result of the physiological problems of the growth-oriented approach, alternative ideas like degrowth started to emerge. The first uses of the expression degrowth (originally *décroissance*) can be dated back to 1970s along with the publishing of the Limits to growth report. However, it was not until the 2000s that the movement was organised in what today represents the point of connection between post-development and ecological movements.<sup>13</sup> According to the academic association Research & Degrowth, It calls for a future where societies live within their ecological means, with open, localized economies and resources more equally distributed through new forms of democratic institutions'.<sup>14</sup> Federico Demaria, writing about degrowth, instead chose to highlight its purpose to 're-politicise the debate' on the social and ecological reforms, refusing the contemporary views on the world and looking for more sustainable solutions.<sup>15</sup> The impact of de-growth on the development studies can be highly beneficial. By accepting de-growth theories, the level of growth is no longer considered a factor of superiority and as a consequence, Western theories on how progress and development should be reached cease to be assumed as universal and indisputable. In this sense, Serge Latouche, one of the main *décroissance* theorists, described it not as a concept but as an attempt to critique the growth theories and allow the international community to free itself from the preconceptions that have characterised the previous development discourse.<sup>16</sup> The setting provided by de-growth provokes the loss of significance of the adjective "underdeveloped" and, as a result, the Global South regains dignity, autonomy and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 'History of De-growth' *Research & Degrowth* <<https://www.degrowth.info/en/a-history-of-degrowth/>> accessed 06 December 2018

<sup>14</sup> 'Definition of De-growth' *Research & Degrowth* <<https://degrowth.org/definition-2/>> accessed 06 December 2018

<sup>15</sup> Demaria F, Schneider F, Sekulova F, 'What is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement' (2013) 2 *Environmental Values* <[https://www.degrowth.info/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/What\\_is\\_Degrowth\\_FDemia-2013\\_Env\\_Values-libre.pdf](https://www.degrowth.info/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/What_is_Degrowth_FDemia-2013_Env_Values-libre.pdf)> accessed 8 December 2018

<sup>16</sup> Serge Latouche, 'Degrowth Economics', *Le monde diplomatique* (November 2004) <<https://jussemper.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/Degrowth%20economics,%20by%20Serge%20Latouche.pdf>> accessed 9 December 2018

the possibility to propose alternative views on how to improve its conditions. In this sense, the rising popularity among academics of “buen vivir” or good living, is a perfect example. Not only does it prioritise the collective good over the individual’s good, but it also promotes a shared economy and consumption patterns based only on what is necessary.<sup>17</sup> In short, the emergence of movements like these proves that around the globe, different peoples have started to work out alternative methods to what are perceived as common problems of the dominant capitalistic approach.

### **Did the growth-oriented development projects actually improve underdeveloped countries’ economic conditions?**

In development projects, economic growth has always represented one of the main goals that the leading countries thought they had to pursue in order to improve underdeveloped countries’ quality of life. However, this goal failed from several perspectives. In the first place, despite the amount of time and money spent, the greatest share of the wealth produced stays within the Global North (as confirmed once again by the 2018 Wealth report of Credit Suisse).<sup>18</sup> This situation can be reconnected with the “dependency theory”, according to which the “periphery” can never develop following the same manner of the developed countries.<sup>19</sup> It asserts that in a globalised economy, the economic processes of the underdeveloped countries are shaped by the global market just to meet the strongest economies’ needs; thus the whole system is characterised by inequality.<sup>20</sup> In addition, when traditional growth-based development projects succeeded in creating wealth, they reached only a part of the population. Privatisation, one of the main strategies applied to reach economic growth, might have caused more damage than advantages in many cases.<sup>21</sup> The cause is that it has led to an unsolvable conflict between profit-maximisation goals and

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<sup>17</sup> Gudyanas in Oliver Balch, ‘Buen vivir: the social philosophy inspiring movements in South America’ *The Guardian* (4 February 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/buen-vivir-philosophy-south-america-eduardo-gudynas>> accessed 7 December 2018

<sup>18</sup> Credit Suisse Research Institute, ‘Global Wealth Report 2018’ (18 October 2018)

<sup>19</sup> Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive accumulation, governmentality & Post-Colonial Capitalism* (Routledge 2007) 9

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Jaya Shukla, ‘Privatisation strategy: Did it enhance Africa’s economic competitiveness?’ *The New Times* (28 November 2017) <<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/224403>> accessed 10 December 2018

the welfare needs of the population in key fields like education and health.<sup>22</sup> De-growth offers another idea of development that does not focus completely on economic performances: it does not imply that growth must be banished but only that we should focus on new ways to reduce consumption rather than increase it to foster production.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, de-growthers challenge the assumption that GDP is an exact measure of happiness. The Easterlin paradox declares that after the basic needs are satisfied, an increase in GDP per capita does not correspond to an increase in public happiness.<sup>24</sup> Accepting de-growth means that International development projects will have larger horizons and will be able to explore all the different means of improving well-being.

### **Environmental concerns: degrowth development projects and a smarter use of resources**

Despite some refusal to acknowledge the existence of climate change<sup>25</sup>, scientists continue to warn the international community about the environmental disasters that could follow this level of production. It has been reported that in two decades the level of greenhouse gases has risen by 41 per cent and that in order to maintain the global temperature below 1.5C the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should be reduced to a 'net zero by mid-century'.<sup>26</sup> Now, the world can only afford to produce a considerably low quantity of carbon each year, relative to previous decades, and as Hickel pointed out, is necessary to leave a bigger share to developing countries while applying de-growth measures to the Global North.<sup>27</sup> In general, Degrowth is based on the idea that endless growth is not possible or sustainable in the long term in a world with finite

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> François Schneider, Giorgos Kallis, Joan Martinez-Alier 'Crisis or opportunity? Economic degrowth for social equity and ecological sustainability.' (2010) 18 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 512-513 <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652610000259>> accessed 10 December 2018

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> 'Trump on climate change report: 'I don't believe it'' *BBC News* (26 November 2018) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-46351940>> accessed 10 December 2018

<sup>26</sup> 'Greenhouse gas levels in atmosphere break another record, UN report shows. *UN News* (22 November 2018) <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1026391>> accessed 9 December 2018

<sup>27</sup> Jason Hickel, 'We need economic 'degrowth' to stop a carbon budget blowout' *The conversation* (18 September 2014) <<https://theconversation.com/we-need-economic-degrowth-to-stop-a-carbon-budget-blowout-31228>> accessed 10 December 2018

resources.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, in order to safeguard the environment, it tries to reduce the impact of men's activities.<sup>29</sup> Some of the initiatives are for instance the promotion of local production, the reduction of the "production-trade-consumption" process and a strong recycling component to minimize waste production.<sup>30</sup> De-growthers reshape the concept of development, detaching it from economic growth and focusing on the best way to use available resources without compromising the system in the long term. The UN Sustainable Development Goals had the merit to bring the richer countries' behaviour under the spotlight. However, as 2030 approaches, little has been achieved with respect to the above-mentioned environmental issues. Michael Howes attributes this result to the fact that sustainable development still has a strong growth component and it is extremely difficult for a country to effectively reconcile environmental protection and economic growth -although in a contracted form-.<sup>31</sup> As the author perfectly summarises, saving a forest is not as lucrative as selling the wood that comes from it.<sup>32</sup>

### **Theoretical limitations of degrowth**

As it is inevitable, de-growth encounters certain limitations. The formulation is not definite and that contributes to creating a situation where several slightly different versions of de-growth coexist, breaking the unity of the movement and exposing it to strong criticism. In addition, de-growth is often accused of being excessively theoretical and for supposedly targeting all forms of growth.<sup>33</sup> For instance, it is undeniable that the Western lifestyle is characterised by the production of superfluous goods that go far beyond our needs and do not increase our well-being.<sup>34</sup> However, as Schwartzman rightfully points out, de-growth needs to move towards a more careful

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<sup>28</sup> (n 15) 196

<sup>29</sup> Giacomo D'Alisa, Federico Demaria, Giorgos Kallis, *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era* (Routledge 2015) 61

<sup>30</sup> Giorgos Kallis, *Degrowth* (2018 Agenda Publishing) 177

<sup>31</sup> Michael Howes 'Why sustainable development plans have failed' *Business Daily Africa* (3 April 2017) <<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/analysis/Why-sustainable-development-plans-have-failed/539548-3876264-2x0u20/index.html>> accessed 10 December 2018

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> David Schwartzman, 'A Critique of Degrowth and its Politics' (2012) 23:1, *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 119-125 <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10455752.2011.648848>> accessed 11 December 2018

<sup>34</sup> Don Fitz 'Should socialists support de-growth?' *Climate and Capitalism* (25 March 2013) <<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2013/03/25/should-socialists-support-degrowth-2/>> accessed 11 December 2018

analysis one that targets only those forms of growth that provoke undesirable consequences and recognise the value of other forms of growth (such as the increase in the production of photovoltaic/water heaters).<sup>35</sup> The same scholar also offers another just critique: by over-focusing on local policies, de-growthers risk forgetting the global dimensions of the problems they try to address and therefore that transnational policies play a non-secondary role.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, some are proposing to use a completely different term: Jason Hickel generally speaks of the need for a more positive language<sup>37</sup> while Jeroen Van Der Bergh defines de-growth as confusing and calls for a move to a-growth which is 'the indifference to growth'.<sup>38</sup> De-growth, he states, would actively aim to lower GDP and as a result, even investing for positive changes would be impossible.<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, embracing a-growth would simply mean to switch priorities and make the right choice for the environment/social wellbeing, regardless of a potential loss of an increase in GDP.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not a-growth is more desirable than de-growth, words are undeniably powerful. This was shown by the fact that Truman was able to determine decades of foreign policy by simply speaking about underdeveloped countries. At this stage de-growthers do not seem to realise it and keep splitting into theoretical disputes.

### **Law and de-growth: the importance of a comprehensive analysis**

The grassroots origins of de-growth have always contributed to the democratic character of the movement's proposals.<sup>41</sup> However, Riccardo Mastini observes how numerous de-growthers have started to believe that popular initiatives did not have

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<sup>35</sup> (n31)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Jason Hickel, 'Forget developing poor countries, it's time to de-develop rich countries' *The Guardian* (23 Sep 2015). <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/sep/23/developing-poor-countries-de-develop-rich-countries-sdgs>> accessed 9 December 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Jeroen C.J.M. Van den Bergh, 'Environment versus growth — A criticism of "degrowth" and a plea for "a-growth"' (2010) *Ecological Economics* 1 <[https://www.wachstumimwandel.at/wp-content/uploads/van-den-Bergh\\_2010\\_Degrowth-versus-a-growth-EcolEcon.pdf](https://www.wachstumimwandel.at/wp-content/uploads/van-den-Bergh_2010_Degrowth-versus-a-growth-EcolEcon.pdf)> accessed 11 December 2018

<sup>39</sup> Jeroen C.J.M Van den Bergh, in '*Agrowth – should we better be agnostic about growth?*' *Research & De-growth* <<https://www.degrowth.info/en/2017/03/agrowth-should-we-better-be-agnostic-about-growth/>> accessed online 25 July 2019

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Riccardo Mastini, 'Degrowth: the case for a new economic paradigm' *Open Democracy* (8 June 2017) <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/degrowth-case-for-constructing-new-economic-paradigm/>> accessed 23 May 2019



the expected impact and that the state must necessarily step in to effectively lead to change.<sup>42</sup> Also Pansera, in writing about de-growth, supports this perspective and defines it as a “political project”.<sup>43</sup> In such context, policies and regulations inevitably assume a role of primary importance. Significant in this direction is Amanda Perry-Kessaris’ theorisation of the “socio-econo-legal” lens.<sup>44</sup> According to it, in fact, economics and law are intertwined and cannot be analysed separately.<sup>45</sup> The role of the sociological approach is then to allow scholars to understand the circumstances in which the law was “created, destroyed, used and abused”.<sup>46</sup> Ecological law is the result of the application of a similar perspective that calls for an integrated understanding of law and economics.<sup>47</sup> Garver writes that “The rule of ecological law is a fitting complement to de-growth”.<sup>48</sup> This expression, which the author himself describes as rare, combines the rule of law with environmental concerns.<sup>49</sup> In particular, it advocates for “system-based legal mechanisms” (such as the Montreal protocol) to set out global limits of human activities.<sup>50</sup> What is different from environmental law, is the adherence to the tenets of ecological economics in formulating these new legal constraints; and in particular the understanding of a single “life-system” where the fate of human beings cannot be separated from what happens to the eco-system.<sup>51</sup>

Ecological law represents a good attempt to apply the legal perspective proposed by authors such as Perry-Kessaris. What is clear is that the formulation of de-growth-related policies must definitively pass through a multidisciplinary

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Mario Pansera et. al, ‘Innovation for de-growth: A case study of counter-hegemonic practices from Kerala, India’ (2016) 1 (12) Journal of Cleaner Production 1-2 <[https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/files/177788517/amended\\_manuscript\\_WITH\\_CHANGES\\_270616.pdf](https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/files/177788517/amended_manuscript_WITH_CHANGES_270616.pdf)> accessed online 29 May 2019

<sup>44</sup> Amanda Perry Kessaris, ‘Approaching the Econo-Socio-Legal’ (2015) 11 Annual Review of Law and Social Science 57 <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-120814-121542>> accessed online 28 May 2019

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Amanda Perry-Kessaris, ‘*Socio-Legal Approaches to International Economic Law: Text, context, subtext*’ (Routledge 2013) 6

<sup>47</sup> Geoffrey Garver, ‘The Rule of Ecological Law: The Legal Complement to Degrowth Economics’ (2013) 5(1) Sustainability 316 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su5010316>> accessed online 29 May 2019

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 324

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 325

perspective. In fact, this passage is necessary to overcome the natural obstacles met during the implementation of a complex philosophy whose interventions aim to modify the way in which legal, economic and social life have been understood for centuries.

### **The effects of development policies that embrace de-growth and multi-level governance**

Once the importance of the role that could be played by the state and by its laws is understood, it is possible to consider de-growth objectives as viable alternatives. However, it is clear that in a hegemonic context, mainstream domestic politics tend to pursue growth and make market-oriented decisions.<sup>52</sup> As highlighted by Chiengkul, the main issue is that de-growth policies cannot be applied by a few countries because forms of retaliation and “political isolation” would be likely to follow.<sup>53</sup> Pansera and Owen, then, chose to write about what they perceived as a positive application of de-growth in the development plans adopted in Kerala, India in the context of political (yet normative-oriented) decentralisation.<sup>54</sup> In particular, their work focused on the proposals and practices of the Kerala Science Literature (KSL) movement, a group of academics that since 1960s, contrasted the growth-oriented modernisation agenda led by Prime Minister Nehru.<sup>55</sup> The two authors observe that the KSL has promoted alphabetisation and awareness of environmental issues, as well as provided technological tools to local communities, considering local needs.<sup>56</sup> Pansera and Owen conclude that mainstream development policies in India ignore the unequal access to development possibilities and that however, KSL has shown how de-growth can be a feasible alternative by focusing on the local level.<sup>57</sup> In conclusion, the pervasive transition required by de-growth has to pass through the state because, as put by Smith, industries will never “commit suicide” by directly embracing de-growth if the state does not establish rules in that sense.<sup>58</sup> However, while waiting for the

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<sup>52</sup> (n38) 1881

<sup>53</sup> Prapimphan Chiengkul, ‘The Degrowth Movement: Alternative Economic Practices and Relevance to Developing Countries’ (2018) 43 (2) *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 87 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375418811763>> accessed online 26 May 2019

<sup>54</sup> (n38)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Smith, R (2011) in Mary P. Murphy, ‘Translating degrowth into contemporary policy challenges’ (2013) 21(2) *Irish Journal of Sociology* 87 <<https://doi.org/10.7227/IJS.21.2.6>> accessed online 24 May 2019

national authorities to act, lower levels of non-state governance have shown the benefits of de-growth in terms of environmental gains, development and social inclusion.

## **Conclusion**

Degrowth developed as a response to the damage provoked by the unscrupulous pursuit of power and wealth through production and consumption. In particular, it tried to address social and ecological problems by designing a new path for development, challenging the developed/underdeveloped division and holding every country responsible for the safeguarding of the planet. This new path will hopefully respect and consider the unique characteristics of the peoples whose conditions it tries to improve without failing to evaluate the limits of the environment. It is clear that its formulation is somehow too ambiguous and that its agenda has been until now rather general. However, it seems hazardous to completely reject all the contributions to the debate that it has thus far provided. The signal that something must change to preserve our planet has come through different names, e.g. de-growth, buen vivir, sustainable development; and this proves that the awareness of the risks of the current approach is increasing. Hopefully a more detailed agenda will be provided in the near future but if not, de-growth has already proved part of its potential by successfully questioning hyper-industrialization and the dangers of the dominant lifestyle. Nonetheless, for more results to be possible, it is necessary to overcome infightings and radicalism. In fact, In a moment where our carbon footprint has substantially risen and is becoming more and more unsustainable, quick and widely shared solutions are essential. Doubtlessly, Considering the global dimension of the issues addressed by de-growth, any change must pass through state institutions and law. As highlighted by many academics, the traditional approach used to understand endless growth's repercussions is insufficient if based on the lens provided by single fields of study. For this reason, laws must integrate other perspectives such as the economic and the sociological one. However, the states that wish to implement de-growth policies still face hostilities on a global level. Therefore, even if the central state has undeniably the widest range of action, decentralised multi-level governance initiatives (such as the ones applied in the Kerala model), have proven that they can serve de-growth's purposes by empowering local communities.

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