

DEGROWTH – SHRINKING TO SURVIVE THEN PROSPER

DeGrowth is a resurgent survival strategy for contemporary civilization:

Step One: The footprint of human consumption must shrink so that most humans -- and ALL other species -- do not have to perish just so a few humans at the top of the Ziggurat can survive for a while longer in luxury and superabundance.

Step Two: Transition to a Steady State Economy where consumption is in Balance with sustainable and renewable resources. In this way, ALL species have the opportunity to prosper because of the Balance between consumption and regeneration.

At the end of March this year 500 citizens turned up in Barcelona for the Second International Conference on Degrowth (aka, 'DeGrowth,' a topology which makes it clear that the focus is on the rate of GROWTH and achieving Balance).

In April a similar gathering was held in Vancouver. DeGrowth is popular in Regions such as the Vancouver New Urban Region (NUR) which is # 4 on the 2010 Mercer Quality of Living Survey Best 50. (The Barcelona NUR is #44 and the Paris NUR is # 34 on the Mercer list.)

The first international conference on DeGrowth was held in Paris in 2008. The Paris conference produced a declaration that defines 'degrowth' as "a voluntary transition towards a just, participatory and ecologically sustainable society." The declaration states that "if humans do not bring global economic activity into line with societal needs, the result will be a process of involuntary and uncontrolled economic decline or collapse." One may assume this use of 'collapse' is the same as 'THE Collapse' articulated by Jared Diamond.

From these statements it is clear that DeGrowth is in the enlightened self-interest of ALL humans, not just a few at the top of the Ziggurat.

The Barcelona conference organizers have posted a 'virtual conference' that provides links to the visuals from many of the key presentations. The presentations are grounded in science and history. There is data on topics that range from Happiness to the Wealth Gap and from Equity to the History of Steady State Economy. Those familiar with the classical steady state authors, Herman Daily, et. al., as well as with the recent writings of McKibben, Florida, Reich, Diamond and others, will feel right at home. Go to www.degrowth.eu and judge for yourself.

Enterprise Media did not seem interested in covering the Barcelona conference. Information about the conference turns up via Google but there are no obvious links to Enterprise Media coverage. *Wikipedia* has a detailed summary of 'degrowth' and documents why DeGrowth is a 'resurgent' survival strategy as opposed to a new strategy.

The OVERARCHING perspective of DeGrowth is that CONSUMPTION cannot exceed the capacity of renewable resources, PERIOD.

Most of the presentations appear to assume that humans are already in OVERSHOOT. OVERSHOOT has been temporarily masked by humans living on exploitation and consumption of Natural Capital. For this reason SHRINKING consumption is the FIRST step on the path to a sustainable trajectory. (The movie “HOME” is a good place to get a graphically powerful overview of this reality. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU>)

The overall objective of DeGrowth that can be gleaned from the presentations is to peacefully and equitably evolve lower per capita consumption AND lower the number of consumers through enlightened self-interest including rational population trends via pillow talk – not war, famine or state dictates.

DeGrowth goes far beyond the typical concern for ‘conservation.’ As far as EMR is aware, only ASAP in Charlottesville is addressing these issue in the Commonwealth.

The Bottom Line is that it will not be possible to maintain civilization with great disparity between the per capita wealth of those at the top of the Ziggurat and those at the bottom.

Further, Balance must exist WITHIN every Ziggurat at Community, Region, MegaRegion, Continent and Globe scales.

On the specific topic of “growth”:

DeGrowth advocates would agree with Edward Abbey:

“Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

Perpetual growth of consumption is not just impossible, to advocate perpetual growth of consumption is immoral.

Seeking to stimulate growth / consumption and controlling the profit to promote the prosperity of a specific cohort of humans has a long tragic history. That is true whether the cohort is an:

- Ethnic group (Hitler / Aryans)
- Self appointed and / or hereditary ‘leaders’ (North Korea)
- Governance philosophy (communism for example)
- Religious belief (you choose one), or
- Economic system’

No sustained application of ‘growth for the sake of prosperity’ for a special class is

even conceivable in a 'flat' world with:

- **Wide-spread literacy,**
- **Instant communications / information dissemination, and**
- **Weapons of mass destruction.**

As noted at the outset:

DeGrowth is a 'resurgent' survival strategy for contemporary civilization, it is not a new idea.

DeGrowth advocates that the human consumption footprint must SHRINK so that most do not have to perish in order so that for a few to prosper.

DeGrowth advocates transition to a Steady State Economy where consumption matches sustainable and renewable resources so that ALL have the opportunity to prosper, not just a few at the top of the Ziggurat.

The goal of ALL having the opportunity to prosper was the idea of the Founding Fathers in the United States 235 years ago except that:

1. 'ALL' did not include slaves of either sex, Females of any class, and most of the males that did not reside at the top of the Ziggurat, and
2. It was assumed (and made nation-state policy by Andrew Jackson) that there existed in the US infinite resources which could be consumed by citizens to achieve their individual health, safety and welfare.

Humans have come a long way, but they have even farther to go to achieve a sustainable trajectory.

The perspective at SYNERGY is that DeGrowth will only succeed when there is a Critical Mass of citizens that understand the need for Fundamental Transformations in settlement patterns, in governance structure and in economic systems. Anything less comprehensive will just lead to disputes akin to how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

The SYNERGY perspective is based on a thesis that is 2,300 years old, first articulated by Aristotle:

Human settlement patterns are an organic system. See *The Shape of the Future*.

The successful evolution of human settlement patterns must be founded on an understanding of organic systems. Action to achieve a sustainable trajectory must start at the smallest scale – the Unit, the Dooryard and the Cluster and proceed up to the Neighborhood, the Village, the

Community and the Regional scales. Dictates from 'the state' or 'the nation-state' down do not work. See *TRILO-G: How to Make the World a Better Place One Alpha Community at a Time*.

One strategy may be Study Circles that set Sweden on the path to a sustainable trajectory.

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