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COMPLUTENSE

D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (2014). *Degrowth: a vocabulary for a new era*. Routledge.

Degrowth is a controversial umbrella term that entered the international academic arena in 2008. It challenges the hegemonic idea that economic growth should be the main motivation and goal of societies. Actually, constant economic growth in the context of a limited biosphere, other than being a bio-physical impossibility, is likely to be socially corrosive. Data (and commonsense) suggest that there is a correlation between economic growth and the ongoing collapse of the earth's living systems. Moreover, economic growth may also damage the well-being of societies by increasing inequality and undermining democracy. Given that the impact of the global economy has already transgressed many environmental thresholds that put human survival at stake, the question remains: how we can reduce our use of energy and materials so as to avoid ecological collapse, while creating a just and desirable society for all?

This is a collective volume that called on 56 contributors from a diverse range of experiences, places, and academic backgrounds. In brief entries, ranging from two to four pages, each of the authors illuminates a different aspect of the degrowth debate, from their own unique perspective. At the end of each essay, the authors include some bibliographical references for those readers with an appetite for further exploration of the topic covered. The contributions tend to be reader friendly and provide clear and concise explanations of complex concepts (societal metabolism, entropy), broad terms (capitalism, growth), transdisciplinary fields (bioeconomics, political ecology), evolution of movements and critiques (of development, currents of environmentalism, environmental justice, neo-Malthusians), new terminology (newtopians), and issues that are crucial for the degrowth debate (care, commodity frontiers, commons, conviviality, decolonization of the imaginary, new economy). Following the preface, foreword, and a brilliant introduction that contextualizes the project, the main body of the book is divided into four main sections (lines of thought, the core, the action, and alliances), each of them featuring several keywords in alphabetical order.

The first section introduces some of the lines of thought that are converging in the degrowth theoretical framework (sources of degrowth). This includes the anti-utilitarian movement, the bioeconomics of Georgescu-Roegen, the post-development critiques, the environmental justice movement and broad theoretical concepts informing the practices of political ecology and ecological economics. The next section, the core, is the longest and includes explanations of some of the recurrent terms and concepts in the degrowth debate. Some of them are terms associated with influential philosophers for degrowthers, such as conviviality (Ivan

Illich) and autonomy or decolonization of imaginary (Cornélius Castoriadis); other terms are very popular in the ecological economics literature (dematerialization, entropy, Jevons' paradox, peak-oil). All of them have to do, in one way or another, with the social and ecological limits of growth. In part 3, the book switches from theory to practice. This section (the action) includes examples of creative practices—not necessarily new—that are already liberating spaces from the market economy and decolonizing the dominant imaginary (back-to-the-landers, co-operatives, digital commons, eco-communities, *indignados*, newtopians, urban gardening), as well as desirable policies from the degrowth perspective to overcome many of the current pressing socio-environmental problems while enhancing democracy (basic and maximum income, community currencies, debt audit, job guarantee, public money, work sharing). The fourth section identifies possible alliances between degrowth and other movements, theories, and experiences (*Buen vivir*, economy of permanence, feminist economics, Ubuntu).

This book is of great interest to all kind of readers, since it digests, summarizes, and enhances some of the more important developments resulting from the convergence of the humanities and the social and ecological sciences in the last decades. It provides much-needed vocabulary in the context of the current epistemological crisis and collective myopia, in which the reductive language of narrow notions of individualism and economicism legitimizes the persistent neoliberal attack on both life supporting systems and social well-being. This mainstream ideology, with its obdurate hubris and scientifically obsolete logic, prevents society from thinking outside its self-imposed epistemological limitations. In that context, this book is a much welcome contribution that changes the terms of the conversation, not only the content, by exercising a clear thinking that points directly to the root causes of the most pressing problems of our time, rather than merely trying to address the symptoms.

This volume is a source of fresh ideas that articulates a useful language to fight the omnipresent ideology of disconnection that permeates consumerist cultures and global policy. This book is indispensable for all scholars that believe in meaningful research with real socioecological implications and frontally reject the tendency toward narcissistic, self-promoting academic postures and depoliticize intellectual games in the midst of the current ecological and social collapse. In addition, I highly recommend it to everybody that wants to see a better world but does not know where to start creating it.

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