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2-3pm

Degrowth and Climate Justice

with Giorgos Kallis and Tonny Nowshin

Live transcript

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SPEAKERS

Canan Batur, Theo Reeves-Evison, Giorgos Kallis, Tonny Nowshin

01:02 Canan Batur

A very warm welcome to **After Growth: A Symposium on Post-capitalist Imaginaries**. My name is Canan Batur, and I'm the curator of live programmes here at Nottingham Contemporary. We hope all of you and your families are well and healthy in these complicated unprecedented times. Today we present the first moment of **After Growth**, a gathering of bodies and minds, an invitation to construct another future. In working through a set of shared concerns, **After Growth** engages with conversation partners, including cross disciplinary scholars, artists and collectives, as well as material references from art, architecture, community led activism and alternative economics. It begins with the product and sense of infinite economic growth as an improvement in social and environmental well being is no longer correct and the need for the evolution of economic growth as a social objective is becoming more and more urgent. **After Growth** then sets out to address the conditions by which post capitalist forms of life and alternative possible economic realities become materialities in time and products of socio historical processes. The need to disrupt the taxonomy of local in its construction, as an order to the

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global essential to after growth. Through this we sharpen our focus upon the subjective orderings to which land, labour and human months of developing are brought into complex relations. Due to the continuing centrality of resources to the geological imperative of capitalist accumulation, After Growth invests not only in the imaginings of a post capitalist reality, but in the grounds of egalitarian modes through which porous lands and porous bodies might be might be read in dynamic interdependencies. Today, we will be having contributions by Giorgos Kallis, Tonny Nowshin, Fernando Garcia-Dory, Pinar Yoldas, Thandi Loewenson and Frances Whitehead. Tomorrow we will continue with the live and in person programme with presentations by Ez North of Land Workers Alliance, Kathrin Bohm, Bahar Noorizadeh, Ama Josephine Johnstone, Manuel Angel Macia, Wild.NG, Asad Raza, T.J. Demos, and Angela Chan. This event also kicks off our new year-long research trend and programme titled emergency and emergence, which investigates transdisciplinary sensorial and speculative practices for imagining and reimagining the planet. Via questions of repair, pedagogy, remediation, and transformation, this programme explores radical sensemaking and questions how to move from emergency to emergence, crisis to renewal. Reverberating with ideas and knowledges opposing racial and colonial, capitalism, conceptual visual culture as well as political ecology and radical politics, emergency and emergence assembles diverse cultural practitioners, collectives and communities to generate new emancipatory possibilities and forms of life founded upon social justice, and environmental well being. The programme will unfold over the course of 2022 and 2023 manifested by way of study sessions, newly commissioned performances, a symposium that we're having today, and a series of workshops as well as writer in residence and a new issue of contemporary journal. Before I give the floor to Theo my co-organiser, some very brief housekeeping notes. Our live programmes of talks and performances and screenings seek to create challenging environments where open mindedness and respect for each other's approaches

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and perspectives can foster growth. So please be mindful and respectful of each other's opinions and views. You're welcome to share your thoughts and your questions, your comments, your references on the YouTube chat. And we will fold these into the conversation. And please bear with us, bear in mind that we have an AI driven live captioning system, a link to which can be found on the YouTube chat that will open in a separate window on your browser, within which you can adjust the scale and the layout to suit your requirements. We will like to use this opportunity to extend our thanks to our funders, the University of Nottingham Nottingham Trent University, Birmingham City University and Leverhulme Trust for generously and graciously supporting today's event. I would also like to acknowledge the staff who are supporting us this evening, Jim, Shannon, Helen, Tom and Craig. Lastly, as with all the events in here, at Nottingham Contemporary, today's talk is free to attend, but all donations are greatly appreciated to help support future free programmes. Without further ado, I would like to bring my co organiser to the floor, Theo the floor is yours.

05:54 Theo Reeves-Evison

Thanks, Canan. And welcome again to the first online component of After Growth, the symposium that attempts to bridge several different scales, temporalities, and audiences to explore what it means to live within planetary boundaries. My name's Theo Reeves-Evison. I'm a research fellow at Birmingham School of Arts and it's fantastic to be able to kick off this first day of the symposium with a few opening remarks. Although we're currently speaking courtesy of zoom, or YouTube, a seemingly context-free and frictionless platform, fingers crossed. I want to start by addressing the fact that these discussions are happening at a specific time and a specific place. They're happening in a country with a vast historic carbon debt forged in the crucible of capitalism and colonialism, which continues to grow despite the numerous pledges and promises over the past few decades and more recently in Glasgow. And in this context, it feels

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important that discussions of how to live within ecological limits train their sights on countries such as the UK, on rich industrialised countries rather than becoming another economic doctrine that's imposed on global sales. At a more local scale, here in Nottingham, where we're broadcasting from, a target has been set to become the first carbon neutral city by 2028 in the UK, which is obviously something to be very positive about. But the way in which such ambitions are realised, opens up key fault lines in how the future of climate change is imagined. One of them is between those who claim it's possible to decarbonise the economy and still have economic growth continue indefinitely, the so called Eco-modernist position, and those who call for a managed reduction in the material throughput of the economy, which is the so called degrowth or postgrowth position. To give you a statistic, and one gleaned from the pages Giorgos, one of Giorgos' books I should add, if compound growth of the economy is 3%, every year, it will take only 24 years for the entire economy to double in size. So as many have come to realise the idea that growth can continue year upon year powered by renewable electricity alone, or nuclear fusion is a fantasy. And the now popular idea of offsetting the environmental damage linked to economic growth often amounts to a form of green colonialism, with poorer nations expected to act as lungs to suck up the pollution of cities and countries on the other side of the world. So it's great to have targets, but how they're reached matters a great deal. This symposium therefore encourages speculation on what many see as inevitable, the ends of growth and the consequences of this, not just for macroeconomics, but for a broader culture of degrowth that includes art, architecture, activism, speculative fiction, as well as questions of social justice that cut across all of these fields of activity. The discussions are also happening within that branch of culture we call climate science, with the word degrowth mentioned for the first time in the latest report, the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and in fact, the word appears at least 15 times in the report with again Giorgos being one

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of the authors cited. This indicates that after many years, the assumed benevolence of endless economic growth is finally weakening. Speaking about degrowth here, and now is both timely and much belated. And although the mention of degrowth in the IPCC report is something of a milestone, it's also 3500 pages long, which doesn't make for great bedtime reading. It's for this reason, among many others, that public free events such as this can do an important job, providing a broader cultural frame for discussions of what it means to live within planetary boundaries. So in what follows, you'll hear from speakers who are passionate advocates of degrowth. Others who may disagree with some of its central premises, and still more who make work that is ambivalent. So picking up this conversation, which I should say owes a debt to many others within the climate movement, and the degrowth movement across the world, the ambition of this symposium is not to impose homogeneity, but to provide a holding pattern for diverse discussions and practices, linking the local to the macro economic, ecology to economy, pastoral traditions to speculative futures, and questions of climate change to climate justice, which is the theme of our first panel on this last subject. It's my great pleasure to introduce our first two speakers, Giorgos Kallis and Tonny Nowshin. Giorgos, who will speak first is an ecological economist and political ecologist working on environmental justice and limits to growth. He has a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a master's in environmental engineering from Imperial College, a PhD in Environmental Policy from the University of the Aegean and a second master's in economics from Barcelona Graduate School of Economics. He is the ICREA Professor since 2010. Before going to Barcelona, Giorgos was the Marie Curie international fellow at the Energy and Resources group at the University of California, Berkeley. Tonny Nowshin is an economist, climate justice and degrowth activist. Tonny grew up in Bangladesh. Along with social movements in Bangladesh, she mobilised to save the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans. She is an international development professional and has worked for German

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and international NGOs. Professionally at the moment, her work focuses on fossil fuel finance. In her activist work, she focuses on centering with the concept of climate justice, at the core of the climate movement by putting forward anti racist and decolonial perspectives and networks. I can't think of a better combination of speakers to get the ball rolling. So it's great to welcome you both, Giorgos, I think you've just put your daughter to bed, she's sleeping, okay?

12:39 Giorgos Kallis

Two of them actually. Exactly the same age, which means they're twins. So it's kind of demanding.

12:47 Theo Reeves-Evison

Over to you. Thank you.

12:48 Giorgos Kallis

Thanks, Theo. Thanks, Canan. Thanks for inviting me here. I'm very happy to share the floor with Tonny. And yeah, try to transmit some of our knowledge on degrowth and climate justice, which I think are two core concepts for the event, you're organising, and to get you thinking for the remaining two today. So to start the conversation, because I'm sure there's gonna be many other great interventions after the two of us. So what is degrowth just to introduce this term that might be for some of your audience new or it might be intuitive, but it also might raise many questions. So what exactly do we mean by that? The term has been mobilised by a community of activists and researchers to provide the framework that explains the roots of the current so called multi dimensional crisis, a crisis that has many dimensions, and also to propose a way out of this crisis. Now, why do I call it the multi dimensional crisis because it's a crisis that has many facets, but these facets are connected one to the other. So on the one hand, we might talk of a crisis of stagnation or stagnating incomes and living standards in all parts of the world in the West, and at the same time, of continuing poverty in our part of the world, which hasn't been eradicated and at

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the same time in the majority in the rest of the world, an immense amount of poverty and inability to meet even basic needs. That's not, this economical material part is not the only part of the crisis - when I talk of a crisis, of spiritual crisis of lack of meaning. A crisis where our goals are dead and we don't know where to be living and the myth that they are being created as we speak, nationalistic myths, populist myths, are quite dangerous, and they're quite invoking the past of the human civilization that we thought we had left behind, but it's always with us, unfortunately, it's part of our psyche, of our social psyche. And it is emerging in moments like that. We might talk of a crisis of inequality, inequalities within the West are the highest they've been for two centuries at least. And the inequalities between the west of the global north and the rest are as high as they've ever been. Perhaps decreasing a little bit nominally in the sense of very, very good people in Southeast Asia, instead of gaining \$1 per day or gaining \$2 per day, you know, in this in statistics, registers as a reduction in equality, but, you know, they double their income. And then you know, Elon Musk's doesn't double it, but he goes from 1 trillion to one point 5 trillion. And this counts as a reduction in inequality, right, because they doubled it while he didn't double it. But that's just an artefact of statistics. The reality right now is that the majority of wealth and more and more wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. In this internally is linked to what we call a political crisis, which is a crisis of democracy. It's a crisis of the democracy because when wealth is concentrated, in very few hands, there's very few hands, which oligarchy, we might call it, controls, results. Finally, we can talk of a crisis of cares, cares in the plural of social care, of our ability to care for one another, and their families and our friends, but also our caring systems, our welfare caring systems, the ones we depend on. The pandemic made that very clear, but it's not only the pandemic, it's every one of us feels it in their everyday that we are asked to juggle too many things, from our trying to people call that euphemistically work life balance, but there's nothing balanced about it. Our inability to take basic care of ourselves,

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but also take care of those we love. And this is another facet of the crisis. So how are all these facets of crisis bound together, those of us who talk about degrowth, argue that if we want to understand the dynamic that drives this crisis together, we have to focus on a core process and a core objective of capitalist society and industrial society, which is the persuades and the imperative of economies to grow year after year, year after year, after two or 3%. That sounds innocent as Theo said. It means doubling of an economy in 24 years, but I think we stopped to short there with my example. Because the doubling I mean, doesn't sound that much like okay, you doubled in 24 years. The thing is in 24 years more, you're like four times bigger, and in 24 years more, you're eight times bigger, and in 24 years more 16 times bigger. That's the power of compound growth. So very interesting 3% per year, it translates into a global economy that it's 10 times bigger by the end of the century. So big as it is our economy, now it has to be 10 times bigger by the end of the century. Obviously, such an enlargement of the economy, has a footprint, has an ecological footprint like changes the earth, it's what we call the Anthropocene that are changes in the surface of Earth. And in the deeper surface of Earth, we have left our mark now. And it's obviously that if we move 10 times more materials, 10 times more energy, 10 times more occupied land by the end of the century, that this has a dramatic environmental effect, then it's already the doublings that have taken place since the 1900s, or 1800s, when capitalism appeared, are already the ones that they are leaving their footprint and they are causing the problems we have now of climate change, etc. But we need to understand a little bit more holistically, what is growth, the process of growth to understand how these different problems and how environmental problems and the inequality problems that Tonny's gonna talk about, how they are linked. So what is growth at the end of the day? Growth is basically a process that started with capitalism. And it was a process that meant that surplus extra product is drawn out of the work of people. And this extra product is taken by a few people who control the means of production. And they invest

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the surplus to produce even more in the future, to produce to construct if you want machines that they can produce even more and even more and even more. Now, the beginning of this process of growth is that drawing of surplus it's means that people produce something but they don't have control of everything they produce. So there is some excess that someone else takes and can invest in the process, so that the whole grows and grows bigger, that's the source of growth. So from the very foundation and from the very beginning of this process of growth that appears with capitalism, and the industrial machines in England, as we said in the 18th century, but then quickly takes up in the rest of the world, first in Europe, and then increasingly expanding, there is a fundamental imperative for this to take place to suppress as much as possible the costs of this process, to suppress the cost of labour of people, to suppress the cost of natural resources, to suppress as much as you can, because so that you grow, you get a bigger surplus or excess out of the production process, so that you can invest it and grow the economy. If you were to pay people back exactly what they produced, and people were to consume it happily ever after, you wouldn't have growth. So growth is a process that fundamentally depends on this symphony, depends on cheap people, cheap nature, cheap bodies, cheap everything. When growth stumbles, as increasingly is the case now, because it will stumble sooner or later, because these doublings every 24 years, you know, every time they are bigger and bigger doublings, like so at some point, it gets like really difficult to sustain these doublings. So when this process of growth stumbles, the natural reaction of the system is to try to suppress the cause, to squeeze as much surplus as still possible out of production. Squeezing these costs means what? Means keeping people poorer than possible so that they are working for a minimum or below minimum wage. It means trying to move production to other parts of the world where people are poor, and they can be exploited. It means trying to go to other places of the world and get resources as cheap as possible fossil fuels, oil or minerals or whatever it is

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that you need but at the lowest possible costs. It means trying to push as much as possible from this cost of production back to people and their families that they have to take care of their own, they have to take care of schools, they have to take care of children, they have to take care of their own health. So again, that the cost is suppressed to its very minimum so that you get some more surplus out and you can keep the economy growing. Now the more the economy is bigger, and it's more difficult to grow, the more you have to suppress the people and get squeeze more out of them. And this is where we are at now. And this is why I argue that the different facets of the crisis that we see from continuing poverty, to stagnating and decreasing living standards, to the crisis of cares, to the increasing inequality, to the destruction of the environment, which is treated more and more as a cheap sink or source of materials. It is linked to this imperative of the capitalist economy to keep growing. So that's what we mean by degrowth is a holistic theory of explaining our current moment and how what might appear as different crises now, you might argue, you know, what's happening here, and what's going on what's happened in Iraq, or what happened in 2008, and what happened with a pandemic are unrelated things. No, they are related, but because there are different facets of this process. Now, that's the understanding, what's the counter proposal? The counter proposal is to try to build up a different economy and a different society that can live well with less and with little. By sharing, and by redistributing what we already produce, which is quite a lot. It's at a global scale, it's more than has ever been produced in human history. I mean, every single country is the most they have ever produced in in our lifetimes. So there is an immense amount of wealth accumulated, and of product produced. And still, it is not distributed in a way that people, the majority of people, can live decent lives. So when we talk about degrowth, we mean about slowing down, slowing down and sharing what already exists, and even less than what already exists in order to live well. What is the basis for doing that? The basis for doing that it's what we call the commons. It is

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people coming together and self organising, organising their own forms of production of consumption, and living well, by relating to one another rather than by trying to buy private goods in the private markets. We can think of the commons in many different ways in many different facets. We can think of them from a community garden or neighbourhood gardens and people come together to form, to something bigger that it's a cooperative or a form of producing together, to something like the Wikipedia or something in the digital sphere, where again people are contributing and creating a collective project without trying to make profit out of it, or we can even think as a commons of the big public systems that we have built. And when I say we, I mean the working class with huge struggles, the systems of public health, of a public education, of mutually taking care of one another, free, of course, and with our own contributions and our own work that it's one of us does as citizens of nations. So if we think of this as the basis of degrowth, the commons, the access to free, low cost public goods, without the need to accumulate and grow, without the need to extract and cheapen people and nature in order to have more and more, this is the basis, this is what we have to defend. And this is the rallying demand around which political movements and political formations and social movements have to organise in order to produce what we call degrowth, which means a world that it's no longer based on this crazy pursuit of an increase of the economy 3% every year all the way to infinity and all the way to destruction. Am I in the 20 minutes, I was timing at around 20 minutes, but I don't know if I have more.

26:25 Theo Reeves-Evison

I think you've got two minutes, if you want to speak more, but if not, no worries.

26:32 Giorgos Kallis

I know that this sounds politically quite impossible right now. Now, in the moment we are of geopolitical rivalries, of an elite that has gone wacko now, both in the East and in the West,

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we shouldn't be so proud about the west right now. Because the west is quite, by west, I mean, Russia right now, but it's a symptomatic problem, symptomatic problem of elites and those who have accumulated so much wealth, and so much power and understand that this accumulation is self destructive. The madness of accelerating the destruction is the quiet, normal reaction for them, you know. Within this dynamic I know that for common people, for working people, our ability to change this seems as weak as ever, and our collective institutions, the social movements, the political parties, the trade unions that have done a lot of the struggle in the past are not at their strongest. So in that sense, I understand that the moment is difficult. But where I take inspiration from is from the fact that humanity has never stalled you know, social change has never stalled, and the social movements, and people have always managed to bring progress against the brutal regimes and against brutal violence. I don't think in that sense, the current moment we are in which is a moment of environmental or climate breakdown, but also breakdown of many other things. I don't think it's unique in any moment in history. So it might seem unique to us in the West, because we live perhaps one or two generations of relative calm, our parents, perhaps a little bit of us. But the only thing that gives me some hope, but it's a weird sense of hope is that if you go back to humanity, and you say, Okay, if I was born then, what would I think, you know, probably would have something in front of us as bad as a climate breakdown or even worse. So I don't think there's been any moment in humanity, where we've faced a better future. So but at the same time, things were also improving, and there have been social improvements. So we have to understand that change is this weird mixture of disasters, disruptions, injustices, but also a constant move I want to think towards more justice. Thanks.

29:08 Theo Reeves-Evison

Thank you. Yeah, what a kind of rich way to kick things off. Tonny, over to you. Absolutely.

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29:16 Tonny Nowshin

Thank you. Yeah, there was really quite a lot of the things when I was listening to Giorgos is, of course, it's the same idea of degrowth. And I think the one point where I come in, in a way like when I got involved with the movement back in 2017 - 18 was like some of the very easier, the first critics of degrowth that how, oh, but isn't it too easy then for people from global north, from white middle class, like mostly at that point from white middle class leftist to say, oh, we don't want more, where still in the global south, the scenario is very different and for the last 20-30 years, the way the whole world bank, IMF, kind of have been preaching, the only way to get people out of extreme poverty is by making the pie bigger like, but this growth narrative that we need growth, so we can have more, and we will be able to share with the rest. And kind of that's where but at the same time, so exactly, if you look at the data, like some of the data and here, let me see if I can quickly share one slide from really back in the days. Okay, let me see if I can quickly. Yeah, yes. So this is kind of Yeah, just to start by defining what is global South, but I think we all kind of know, so I would skip that part. But then to quickly to detangle, like a certain idea of this narrative development of because we earlier used this words of first world country, Third World, and then it had a certain qualitative connotation of development, and it's like a good development or what is like, well, wherever there is, well, that's a good society. So that means developed society or not, so kind of the global north south. The idea comes to kind of detangle from that. So just touching that and quickly, but then what I wanted to show you was sharing by so the number of extreme poor by region is this is kind of this just it is also still an old, older data, but that shows how the poor people in this world is concentrated on certain parts of the world, the Sub Saharan Africa, South Asia, and then reflected to what Giorgos was already saying. So there is this extractive relationship that exists. And then for that, meaning that okay, so then if, if poor are mostly concentrated in the Global South, then how is it even relevant for South to talk about degrowth?

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What the entry point from there? And I guess, that's exactly the core idea how I see that degrowth is the central piece of the decolonisation, it is deeply, it needs to be deeply embedded, like we cannot talk about degrowth without talking about decolonisation, and certain elements of reparation. And that's kind of the connection. And then, just to quickly also debunk this whole myth of how by growing more, we need to, we can lift all of the people up, because that's also one of why even today, especially for the countries in Africa and South Asia, growth is a very strong like, you cannot even critique the way you could you could talk to some spaces in Germany, in Europe, it's not possible. But then when we try to enter a point, if you want to start the discussion, where do you start from, and that's kind of then what I was trying to enter through these three points, like the growth failure, and that's kind of showing that absolute poverty has fallen in the last between 1980 to 2013, like a huge amount from 42% to 10%, but at the same time, so we see globally, there has been some convergence of inequality, but within countries, inequality has increased to an absurd amount. So exactly, referring back to what Giorgos was saying that we see, even though we have, we are generating more and more wealth. But this wealth is not being shared. And because of this dynamic, so this is also a lie, no matter how much we keep producing, it's not by producing more, by growing, we will be able to put people out of poverty. And that's again, like so this similar number, like looking at if we really wanted to take the poorest 10% cut off and bring them to the same amount of income that the 10% richest has, how and then through the growth narrative, if you want to do you try to show that like, yeah, by growth, we can achieve that. What would it mean? And we would mean, even with 10 years growth, we would be there in 35 years, which is very great, like, oh, why not? Then let's do it. But then exactly, the problem is, we cannot the way this world is produced, it is fundamentally extractive. And to do that we are reaching the planetary boundary already. And so this is physically, it's not possible. So this narrative, it's kind of that's why we have to bring and say, yes, this is amazing, we can

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make everybody rich in just 10 years, like in 35 years with the 10% growth. But the problem is our planet is already crumbling. And we don't, we cannot support that within the current process that we have, the process of wealth accumulation that we have, with that it's not possible. And this is kind of again, just to quickly refer back how so what do we mean what's the process of then just again, referring back quickly as it's all like what Giorgos said just connecting that again a bit so then development in the north happened fundamentally at the cost of south so this huge wealth that we see today or that often gets preached by by the World Bank, IMF as a role model, look, you don't need to be like, I don't know like USA or to Bangladesh, they go and be like, ah, you to achieve the level of consumption, the high living standard for Bangladesh, for India, for Bhutan, you need to do this thing, but the problem is they never talk about, like what we never talked about in the main development discourse in this whole economic, the mainstream neoclassical development discourse is that this history is, so, the history fundamentally includes this whole mineral accumulation, the extractivism, there was slavery, there were bodies of people that were taken away from whole continents, that was generations of human labour extracted, without any kind of payment, any kind of even, not even in a human condition. And then there's how those relationships still continues today is a lot of the old big traders, a lot of these big, even slave traders still exist today. And there's direct connection, how some of them are also big financials, some of them are like the big corporate money. So this primary accumulation that happened through a very unjust process is also the poor and the real of today's this highly industrialised world, and that's running like us kind of connected all over. So if we want to say that, oh, Bangladesh could also do that, it is not possible, it's a lie. Because to do that, what we would need is that we would need fundamentally then another set of Latin America, we will need another set of Asia, and China. So to support all of this, the processes that are included in it, and from here, I would then, so yeah, so this is where to make the point that then

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when we talk about degrowth is, first, we need to say if it's like if we imagined the whole world, like an octopus that's kind of interconnected, this whole economic system. And yeah, so they're here just to show like, there's this yoke that Trump's of trade. So it doesn't matter how hard like, fundamentally, when some country has been in early stages, has faced extraction, it's impossible for them to ever catch up in the same same way. And even though when there are new dynamics, like example of this whole free trade, and even the free capital movement, these keeps deepening those extractive relationship rather than actually opening up doors. And this is just to show how even today to some degree, some of the aid relationship, but yeah, I would just skip this for now. And yeah, so then, if this is the point, and if we follow this mainstream group narrative, as I was saying that we would need another set of Africa, Latin America, Asia, which we don't have for each of the continent, then what does it mean, then it really means first, to understand this whole systemic understanding of the economy. And then degrowth comes at the heart of it, because if we want to allow for then the countries, the spaces to really be able to thrive and not be stuck in the single growth narrative, we need to create spaces, we will need to kind of in a way, it's like decolonially, to redraw. And that has to start with degrowth and the degrowth needs to start in the global north, where this whole process started, kind of I like to joke like ahead of the octopus. That's one. And so that's why degrowth is important for the global south from that perspective, fundamentally. And the second point is that it's also kind of to a certain degree, there has been, so there needs to be reparation, the amount of extraction that has happens if we talk about degrowth, without talking about reparation, that itself could also perpetuate injustices. That's why for the degrowth movement, it's also important always connect these two elements and kind of deeply embed this decolonial alignment within the whole discussion. And the third thing is when we try to say that we need to create space for alternative, or there are already lots of different alternative exists, some of like, what Giorgos was sharing. But at the

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same time, because the space is so crunched, it's not there is not enough space for alternatives to growth. It's not even difficult to try to live differently. That's where also degrowth is very key. Because through degrowth, it's possible to reduce, shrink, the way that things are now, the way these economic relationships are embedded and allow for spaces for different forms of living, different forms of co creation, to grow. With this point, there was something else I also wanted to share. Yeah, so these are some of the elements why kind of with the degrowth and the global South, this is an interconnected issue. And with the whole of the climate crisis, this is where, then again comes the whole climate crisis and climate justice element. As you were saying this, the title of the talk is about climate justice. And if you look into the climate justice element, it's also how the climate impact that we're seeing today is fundamentally also the result of this whole CO2, carbon intensive economies, highly industrialised economies and how, if you look into the historical emission of different data, we will see, again, the global north countries have this huge emission. So this whole CO2 cost, that we see that the reason or the source of the climate crisis, but at the same time, then we look at where the impacts are, we would see there is a huge imbalance between the reasons of climate crisis, the CO2 emissions, and the impacted regions where the climate crisis is lashing out. I mean, now it's even coming closer to the global north countries as well. But already for the last 20 years, a lot of displacement. At the moment already some of the data say, in Bangladesh, already, there is 6 million internalised internal climate refugees. And this is going to get worse. And how do we then address that element? How do we talk about addressing these issues? And for to even talk about climate justice, that's where degrowth also becomes central. Because this can also open up this door about what form of what way do we do reparation? In what way we want to allow for space for different countries to even take the responsibility for what has been done, the damage that has been done, and kind of find new ways. So when we talk about climate, if you think climate justice as just a, so climate crisis, first of all,

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climate crisis itself is not a technical problem, it's not just the CO2 in the air. And if you just could find a way to take out all the CO2 or do some geoengineering, we will be fine. So that is not at all the case, climate crisis is a social justice issue. And it is created by again, this economic system that we are living in. So then if we start talking about we need to ensure climate justice, we need to talk about social justices. And that those elements are kind of deeply alarmed. And that's when, yeah, so that's where I was saying that degrowth kind of becomes also crucial for those discussion. And how do we make, how do we imagine living differently? And how do we learn when you want to change our pathway? So if you want to move away from this whole growth discussion, how would, what do we go towards? So one is kind of learning from different communities that already exist, learning from indigenous communities who have been living in this planet way longer than this modern civilisation and never have put this planetary pressure that the earth is now experiencing. And at the same time, we need a huge amount of solidarity, kind of reusing the existing already there, there are some strength to the existing structure where we it's possible to probably connect, respond more quickly if you want to. So there we will need also a different level of coordinated action. But in terms of changing a different, having an attitude having a thought that needs to change. So it will be rather like guided by degrowth principles, we need to shape the next level of climate justice discussions, and the next steps of the policy that we would need to implement. So I think that's, yeah, that's one of the points that I wanted to share. And I would close now and based on if there are any questions, happy to discuss more.

Theo Reeves-Evison 43:40

Okay, thanks. Thanks, Tonny. Yeah, really great overview, some of the issues and the image of beheading the octopus, Grizzly, but very, very kind of useful in thinking about the kind of tentacular nature of how capitalism reaches across the globe. There are no questions I can see in the chat yet, but I can kick things off, perhaps with with where you ended up,

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and, and think not just about the limits to growth, but limits to degrowth as a discourse. And I know there's been quite a lot of work putting degrowth into conversation with issues of when reverse in Latin America or in Africa, philosophies of Ubuntu. Is there an ideal way in which these things can be held together? Is there a kind of movement of movements model that could bring these dialogues to the table together? Or are some of them fundamentally contradictory? So that could be a question to both of you if you want to respond?

44:56 Tonny Nowshin

I could go. In terms of, there has been so from my knowledge, there has been efforts to create spaces where these different movements are coming together and discussing or sharing ideas. I think one thing we need to or what also from the degrowth movement side that we want to create, we push for the reverse, no. So then this and I often find it that for many, it's very difficult within the host, because that's also the whole site, the way the scientific philosophy is at the moment, we have this very strong urge to kind of find one unifying answer to all, this standardisation, there is a strong need to standardise, there's the strong need to bring everything into under one standard formula. But I guess this is also where we need to break away from that thinking and realise that we would have a lot of, we would learn to coexist in plurality and at the same time learn from each other, but not necessarily needing to agree on many things. And here I quickly want to share this. I was in very recently in a conference where we had a beautiful, very powerful workshop from indigenous community from Latin America, there were three different communities, they came together and there was this discussion and one person said that how, how do we create one single epistemology that could allow or that could host all the different epistemologies. And the question itself is very ironic. It's like a oxymoron. But then the response from the from this indigenous leader was, he said, so within the indigenous communities, it's not there's no single. So it's very diverse, not like there's a different worldview, there

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are different stories, a different way of connecting with the world. But there are just two things that are common. And these two are and with these two common things, the whole different indigenous groups are connecting and like living together and these two are one was he said, the nature, the way we they understand nature, and understanding human as a part of nature, that's common amongst all indigenous communities. And the second thing is that that we think about community like communality. It's not about individual, but it's about approaching things, approaching problems, and solutions from a communal perspective. And these two are the common things amongst all indigenous communities. And within that, there are a diverse amount of like, thoughts, stories, and different, reconnecting to things, practices, medicine. So all of this had this huge space to be different. And I think that I found very powerful and I think this is also something that we need to learn more as well from our movement side, and also just generally in a lot of our discourses.

47:49 Theo Reeves-Evison

So Giorgos I don't know if you want to respond to that. But there are quite a few questions in the chat now, so I could.

47:54 Giorgos Kallis

No I think Tonny covered it pretty well. So yeah, I can take care of some of the others.

48:01 Theo Reeves-Evison

So there's somebody asking, JAK asking, first of all, saying that they agree with your essentially Marxist critique of capitalist growth, which is a holistic theory, but is a theory of degrowth or theory of different kinds of growth? That's followed by, sorry, go ahead.

48:25 Giorgos Kallis

I can answer. Yeah. Tell me the second one, too.

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48:28 Theo Reeves-Evison

Yeah. Okay. So the second one, could Giorgos perhaps elaborates on the self contradictory relation between growth and freedom, ie the capacity for collective self legislation and self development, which can be understood as a form of growth in its own right? And yeah maybe we'll leave it there with that one. Okay, yeah, yeah.

48:55 Giorgos Kallis

I think it's a little bit of confusion, I think, with a word with the use of the term growth, so I'm not using the term growth, just in the colloquial sense of increasing a tree or you know, growth in our height, etc, because there are many things that they are increasing in a quantitative way. I'm defining growth has a very specific social process, which is based on accumulation of surplus that it's invested to make more surplus and that it is compound in nature. I think what's really specific in what I'm criticising here is the compound nature of that, so it is, you make something, you save it and then you invest it, which makes even more and then you invest this even more to make even more, you know, this is what we understand as a process of growth. So it's this that I'm criticising. And in that sense, I'm not calling for a better process that does the same thing that grows exponentially to infinity. And I'm also not calling for a better process of growing, drawing surpluses out of people's labour and investing it to make things, you know. I'm basically calling for rethinking this very process and thinking in what other ways, societies and civilisations, what other ways have they found to achieve well being and living well, without going through that process of constant expansion that it's by its very nature is the colonising force, because you have to move to new places, you have to go and do things elsewhere, you know, when there is a constant driver of cumulative or compound expansion. So in that sense, yes, it is a little bit Marxist, in the sense, yes, that I talked about the separation of commoners from their means of production and accumulation. But it's not fully Marxist in the sense that I think where it departs from

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more classic accounts of Marx. And it's not an accident that I depart from those parts. It is a strong idea within socialist thinking, fortunately, not eco socialist, but with a more modern extradition socialist, which says exactly that, that this process is not problematic, per se. But it is problematic only to the extent that it has been driven by capitalists, for the sake of capitalist interests. That's not just a theoretical thing. I mean, when revolution is through capitalists a way out of the countries in Eastern Europe, etc. And they tried to emulate this process, but without capitalists, so they try to emulate with representatives of workers to the extent that the well, they weren't really but the government, the communist governments in power, trying to emulate this process of again, drawing surplus out of workers and investing it in order to produce even more and even more and even more. So this became like a socialist process of growth, which I think is equally problematic. It's not the same as the capitalist process, you might argue, does some things better others worse. Some, I don't really care, you know, like, okay, was the environmental record of communist countries better or worse than capitalist? Maybe it was slightly better, maybe it was slightly worse. But it was a qualitatively very similar, so it wasn't different. One cannot tell me that socialists managed to avert the problems that capitalism had. So I think that in order to produce something different in the future, a socialist project or a different project has to escape from this very dynamic of growth. So in that time system, it's not a theory of a different type of growth. It's a theory of degrowth. The second part I didn't fully understand it, no, I've I've talked a lot I've written in my part of my work about self limitation, but I don't understand why these would be processes of growth. So again, I think, if anything and any development of something or evolution of something, we call it growth, yes, then of course, so we need to keep the word growth, I think for something very specific I'm talking about and then, let's say a development of, let's say, governance mechanisms or institutional mechanisms to deal with climate change. Okay, we can't call that growth in climate change legislation,

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because if we call that growth, then yes, of course, the word loses its specificity. And then of course, I'm not against any type of growth in anything.

54:10 Theo Reeves-Evison

Yeah, thanks. Got another question here from Ruth Guard. So she says, I'm really interested to hear more about degrowth in relationship to the global South, I had only considered how degrowth was necessary within the rapacious economies of the global north, but hadn't understood what the consequences would be for the Global South. How would you mitigate against degrowth consequences in the global south? So yeah, Tonny, I think you already spoke to this quite a lot. So if you can elaborate more, that'd be great.

54:42 Tonny Nowshin

Yeah, I mean, first of all, this is still a like a thought exercise right? We are still not there yet. But if you look at to the, as I was saying, like the system licence or the understanding of the economic structure at the moment, we see that the global south economies are embedded in this centre periphery economic relationship with global north and then once we start having fundamentally like default policies being implemented and rolled out in global north, what it would allow for is first of all, we will be able to change the all the trade relationships like that has been reinforced by World Bank, IMF, that are fundamentally very extractive and so, because and to a degree, as I say, I think one of the first constraints comes, because how many of these countries are earning to some degree is by either producing bananas for Europe or producing clothes for Europe or exporting some specific mineral for Europe. So these are all, the only way to earn money that was forced upon too many like this as I was saying, Giorgos and I both shared about this earlier, very oppressive processes, the colonial system, but then now when you say that we go through a degrowth, that would mean, really break away from this extractive cycle that's ongoing. And that would mean first there has to be reparation.

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So a lot of the wealth that has been accumulated in the earlier times needs to go back and there can be of course discussion, what wealth would it be, then would it be still money in monetary terms, or to what way, to what degree this could be done that I mean, in terms of justice, it's probably it would, it's very difficult to achieve, achieve like the justice just because it's very, very difficult, philosophical discussion as well. But to some degree, we can support for human existence and kind of like the existence or to ensure that everyone has enough to thrive and not have to struggle for food for clothes for the basic human necessities, so that I think have to be at the core and will be at the core. Also, when countries and global North starts being guided with degrowth principle, the whole international relationship, international bodies that regulate trade and economic relationships will fundamentally change. And then the other element would include so there's this reparation element. And at the same time, the second thing would be we would, because at the moment, when the global south countries are also stuck in this very extractive process, that means that people are forced to work like 14 hours, 16 hours without any break, like all of this kind of very crazy situation that exists. And that has nothing to do. So they're earning this money, of course, being part of this structure. But at the same time, when this structure breaks away, that creates a loss for people to exist as we were saying like, the whole idea of degrowth is more creating space for communities like living differently not being stuck with this wage earning, producing and consuming like this cycle of the current structure that we're in. And that would mean we allow for spaces. So first of all, ensuring and it's still today, we know the way we are producing, we are producing enough. So the big problem is redistribution, how we are sharing what we are producing. And once we start taking care of that we could once we, no one needs to also work or be extracted so much. So that would allow for global south countries to also have built different ways of life or even create more spaces for coexistence, like different forms, like think this is why it's fundamental, for global South, it's not possible unless the

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degrowth is happening in the Global North. And that's how it's kind of very strongly connected this two elements, as my understanding is.

58:45 Theo Reeves-Evison

Thank you. Unfortunately, it's three o'clock already. In the UK, I think we could carry these conversations on for another hour. But hopefully there will be opportunities in the future. And in 10 minutes, there'll be an opportunity with two other speakers. So thanks again, Tonny and Giorgos and I'll see everyone else after the break. Thanks.

Colophon

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