



Destaque Semanal

Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism refers to the conviction that all Africans and descendants of Africans in the diaspora share a common history, common interests and, ultimately, a common fate which thus(...)

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Degrowth

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Degrowth is first and foremost a radical critique of the growth ideology. This ideology is at the core of western culture's colonial project. It is built around the widespread common sense that "in order to feel well we need more (stuff)"; or, to be more precise, that "in order to feel better we need more and more". This common sense has spread out in parallel with the expansion of the industrial economic development and of liberal democratic culture; which legitimizes each individual to mobilize all the needed resources for achieving her/his/their own personal wants and wishes. This is the cultural bedrock that allows the indisputable support for individualism in the western culture and expansion on extended scale of capitalist socio-economic forces. The diagnosis of this societal model, based on the quest for growth, clarifies the multiple predicaments of this ideology: it is ecologically unsustainable, because it promotes the continuous expansion of material extraction and energy use while discarding increasing amounts of waste that damage the sink capacity of ecosystems; it is socially unjust because it (re)produces class, gender and racial inequalities. Indeed, it is not by chance that in these conditions of social inequality at the top of the ladder sit (the elder), white, heterosexual, capitalist male. Last but not least, the growth ideology is culturally devastating because, while establishing itself as universal hegemony, it annihilates all the other forms of human life, ways of beings and epistemologies. In the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the modern westernized capitalist world drive *epistemicides*.

However, the degrowth narrative does not consists only of a *pars destruens* i.e. it is not only a claim to unlearning and undoing the idols and the false notion of growth-led westernized society. Degrowth vision also encompasses a *pars construens* i.e. it aims to promoting and acting for ecologically sound and socially equitable societies. Degrowth is built around a common sense according to which "people should live simply so others,

human and non-human may simply live". A common sense that does not only imply to make material and physical space for other socio-natures characterized by others metabolic profiles; but also signifies to deflate the modern western subject in order to leave ontological and epistemological space to others humanities. It aspires to undo the universal modern capitalist mode of life and move towards a pluriverse. Following the Spanish ecofeminist Amaia Orozco, degrowth can be defined as a concrete vision to steer the transformation of the westernized society putting at its center the sustainability of life while discussing what is the life that is worth the effort to be sustained. Degrowth hints to a leaner societal metabolism (less material extraction, less throughput, less waste, etc.), this provides the conditions for supporting lives that merit the joy to be lived. However, the shrinking of societal metabolism for diminishing the socio-ecological impacts of capitalist expansion shall not mislead the reader; the emphasis of degrowth is not on less but on different.

Degrowth is anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist and decolonial; thus it envisions a society with different gender relations and roles, different distribution of paid and unpaid work, different cultural interactions, different co-evolutionary paths between the human and non-human species. The life that degrowthers commit to sustain does not aspire to be a chimeric emancipation from nature and/or from the body, as the civilizing colonial project of the capitalist modernity does. For degrowthers the body's materiality comes with the immanent vulnerability of what it is alive, and shows the condition of inter-dependency and eco-dependency of existence. This is the reason why care is the main commons for instituting a society that wants to sustain life. Care as corollary in co-habitation and sharing. However, for degrowthers the conceptualization and the performance of care should not to be simply associated to love and good sentiments, it would be pernicious. On the contrary, it has to be able to recognize, show and take responsibility for the arduous and sometimes nasty work that taking care and giving care entail. This is the only praxis that recognizes and legitimizes a life that it is also an experience of interdependence and vulnerability. A life without pain and free from all kinds of obligations and sacrifices is the promise of the western modern capitalist world, which happens in exceptional and rare cases, but at the cost of systematic exploitation and inequality.

Degrowth might sound like a new Eurocentric lesson, once again Europeans preaching what to do and how to face the multiple crises that people around the world live with. You might think that degrowth is a series of proposals that once again universalize and impose the very specific issues that Europe faces to the rest of the world. Indeed, degrowth is Eurocentric, but in a more narrow and probably less negative sense. Degrowthers from Europe want to tell a story about practitioners, activists and scholars that open up the imagination for going beyond a society founded on growthism. Paraphrasing Boaventura it is an attempt to rediscover the South that exists in the North.

References and further readings:

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