



**Second international Conference  
on Economic Degrowth for Ecological  
Sustainability and Social Equity,  
26-29 March 2010, Barcelona  
[www.degrowth.eu](http://www.degrowth.eu)**

**Degrowth Declaration Barcelona 2010**

In the midst of an international crisis more than four hundred researchers, practitioners and civil society members from forty countries gathered in Barcelona in March 2010 for the Second International Conference on Degrowth. The Declaration of the First International Conference in Paris in 2008 noted the looming multidimensional crisis, which was not just financial, but also economic, social, cultural, energetic, political and ecological. The crisis is a result of the failure of an economic model based on growth.

An international elite and a "global middle class" are causing havoc to the environment through conspicuous consumption and the excessive appropriation of human and natural resources. Their consumption patterns lead to further environmental and social damage when imitated by the rest of society in a vicious circle of status-seeking through the accumulation of material possessions. While irresponsible financial institutions, multi-national corporations and governments are rightly at the forefront of public criticism, this crisis has deeper structural causes. So-called anti-crisis measures that seek to boost economic growth will worsen inequalities and environmental conditions in the long-run. The illusion of a "debt-fuelled growth", i.e. Forcing the economy to grow in order to pay debt, will end in social disaster, passing on economic and ecological debts to future generations and to the poor. A process of degrowth of the world economy is inevitable and will ultimately benefit the environment, but the challenge is how to manage the process so that it is socially equitable at national and global scales. This is the challenge of the Degrowth movement, originating in rich countries in Europe and elsewhere, where the change must start from.

Academics, activists and practitioners met in Barcelona to structure proposals toward an alternative, ecologically sustainable and socially equitable degrowth society. The conference was conducted in an inclusive and participatory way. In addition to standard scientific presentations, some 29 working groups discussed hands-on policies for degrowth and defined research questions, bringing together economic, social and environmental concerns. New ideas and issues absent from mainstream dialogue on sustainable development were put on the table: currencies and financial institutions, social security and working hours, population and resource consumption, restrictions to advertising, moratoria on infrastructure and resource sanctuaries, and many others. A wealth of new proposals evolved, including: facilitation of local currencies; gradual elimination of fiat money and reforms of interest; promotion of small scale, self-managed not-for-profit companies; defense and expansion of local commons and establishment of new jurisdictions for global commons; establishment of integrated policies of reduced working hours (work-sharing) and introduction of a basic income; institutionalization of an income ceiling based on maximum-minimum ratios; discouragement of overconsumption of non-durable goods and under-use of durables by regulation, taxation or bottom-up approaches; abandonment of large-scale infrastructure such as nuclear plants, dams, incinerators, high-speed transportation; conversion of car-based infrastructure to walking, biking and open common spaces; taxation of excessive advertising and its prohibition from public spaces; support for environmental justice movements of the South that struggle against resource extraction; introduction of global extractive moratoria in areas with high biodiversity and cultural value, and compensation for leaving resources in the ground; denouncement of top-down population control measures and support of women's reproductive rights, conscious procreation and the right to free migration while welcoming a decrease in world birth rates; and de-commercialization of politics and enhancement of direct participation in decision-making.

We assert that these proposals are not utopian: new redistributive taxes will address income inequality and finance social investments and discourage consumption and environmental damage, while reduced working hours with a reinforced social security system will manage unemployment. As the economy of wealthy parts of the world quietly contracts and our damage to the environment through new infrastructures and extraction activities is constrained, well-being will increase through public investments in low-cost social and relational goods.

Every new proposal generates several new objections and questions. We do not claim to have a recipe for the future, but we can no longer pretend that we can keep growing as if nothing has happened. The folly of growth has come to an end. The challenge now is how to transform, and the debate has just begun.