

Degrowth: Is there hope?

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Keywords: degrowth movement, hope, utopia, decolonisation of the imaginary

Degrowth is a political project and movement calling for creating a more sustainable and more equitable socio-economic system that would not be driven by the imperative of economic growth and exploitation (D’Alisa et al., 2014; Asara, 2022). One of the key steps in the task of unmaking the growth-oriented capitalist system (Feola, 2019), according to degrowth theory, is decolonisation of the imaginary, which implies imagining a future beyond economic growth and capitalism, and challenging the mainstream narratives about economy and society (Latouche, 2014). Thus, in its system change thinking degrowth relies on a utopian vision of a better, i.e., more equitable and more sustainable, future where everyone can live a good life (Muraca, 2013). In this sense, conceptually utopia and hope are central to the degrowth vision.

In 2023, we conducted a survey among the participants of the 9th International degrowth conference in Zagreb and also online via degrowth-related mailing lists to study the understandings of the concept of a good life within the degrowth community. A total of 246 responses were collected. One of the surprising findings came in response to the question related to the likelihood of achieving a good life for all according to the degrowth vision — only 22% of respondents believe that it is likely. This finding suggests that there is actually a lack of hope within the movement that is aiming to instil radical hope. Drawing on this finding, in this contribution we are offering a reflection on the following points:

- the role of utopia in the degrowth movement and project;
- the narratives about the future(s) that exist in the degrowth movement; and
- the role of positionality in climate crisis- and capitalism-related hopelessness.

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