



THEME COMMONS

SUB-THEME:

Environment, ecology and sustainability

TITLE OF WORKSHOP

**De-growth and/or sustainable human
development**



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Degrowth and Sustainable Human Development: in search of a path toward integration”, by Federico Tabellini, Patrizio Ponti

ABSTRACT

We think that most of the current research concerning “degrowth” shares a common theoretical trait that we consider a weakness: it lacks an underlying theory of justice that should — or, at least, could — orient the public action in the wished “degrowth society”. Indeed, this may be the outcome of an intentional choice or of an unintentional omission, depending on the different approaches of several theorists. In the first case, the choice is often justified as an “optimum” solution in order to avoid the illiberal and paternalistic outcomes that many theorists consider congenital to any theoretical and political perspective claiming a universalistic approach.

In the second case, the theorists focusing on the ecological limits to the human action (including Georgescu-Roegen) do not make explicit the justice principles and the well-being evaluation criteria that they are implicitly embracing (for instance, the supposed advantages of “sobriety” for human well-being).

We think that we have to choose and to make explicit a theory of justice because we believe that any theory concerning human action, even those that claim to be purely descriptive, they subtend a specific idea of human being and they have a normative component (besides a prescriptive one).

Looking for a possible solution, we try to trace an integration path between a specific theory of justice (the capability approach of Martha Nussbaum) and the Bioeconomics theory of Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen in its more recent formulation. We outline the two theories, pointing out their foundations and showing their complementary aspects. The capability approach, besides being the fundamental theoretical basis of “human development”, may become the conceptual framework needed to explicate the ultimate aim of degrowth, a “human well-being” which is otherwise too vague and undefined in order to justify and to promote any cultural and political change. On the other hand, the theory of Nussbaum, with its “thick, vague conception of the good” (Nussbaum,

2003) and the consequent draft of a provisional list of ten central capabilities, needs a definition of the bio-ecologic limits to the pursuit of a good and “really human” life by the human beings. Finally, we do not want to create a “simple” costs-benefits scheme, but to stress the connections to show the possibility of an optimal integration of the two theories.



THE AGENDA 21 - MYTH OR REALITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT? By Ricardo Braunl, PhD

ABSTRACT

An unstable world economy and social unevenness, particularly in developing nations, demonstrates that a new development order is necessary to improve quality of life and the protection of the environment for the future generations.

The implementation of sustainable development may seem a simple concept when written on paper. However to carry-out long term actions put forward by the Agenda 21 (AG21) at the local level represents one of the main challenges as local governments in general do not have the capacity to effectively implement the process.

The allocation of regular and consistent financial resources is one of the main ingredients for the sustainable development process. But traditional plans and projects financed by national and/or international funds may not be sustainable in the long-term because they become dependent on external funding. In other words sustainable development cannot be solely through economic investment it is necessary to go beyond. This includes the 'need for political will', radical institutional reforms, social participation in the decision-making process and sustainable economic policy formulation. A comprehensive AG21 municipal environmental planning and management process is necessary not only to improve local institutional framework but also incentive continuous participation of local stakeholders at all levels of society.



Future Sustainable Innovation: The “+Zero” Indicator

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Is it possible to de-growth through the promotion of eco-innovation for a sustainable human development?

Given the internationalization of innovation forced to respond to the need for resources, this paper proposes a system of indicators in order to measure the impact of innovation projects, processes and investments for a future sustainable growth or a “degrowth-innovation”.

Eco-innovation related activities have been classified, analyzed and measured through a set of balanced indicators in order to define a multi-criterion indicator system, called “+ Zero”. The results of the application of the proposed indicator are explained in order to identify projects and innovations able to balance the company’s competitiveness, the environmental improvements and the social needs.

As case study, the “+Zero” system of indicators has been applied to different activities carried out by research institutes and in order to validate the methodology and different technologies have been analyzed. In this sense, eco-innovation can have a critical role in the sustainability of the planet. The use of specific indicators is needed in order to analyze and evaluate the future potential effect of the innovative measures once they have been introduced in processes and products.

The “+Zero” indicators will enable industry in a more long-term vision based on eco-innovation criteria being encouraged to obtain a “zero, but positive growth” maintaining the balanced business for a sustainable quality of life.



TACKLED ISSUES

- Capability approach
- Bio-economics
- Theory of justice
- Policy Grids- Policy making
- Economics- capabilities an analysis
- Eco-innovation
- Eco-efficiency
- Future — sustainability
- Indicators
- Quantitative approach-measuring
- Human dimension limits

GIVEN ANSWERS

M. Neussbaum — capabilities approach — 10 capitalists, the role of industry and production-investment; theory of limits/boundaries_ green growth and investment, they should go together. The role of participation policy grids — experimenting democracy and capability

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS, MESSAGES & COMMENTS

- what's the correlation between degrowth - green economics — eco efficiency?
- What is the relation between human and social approach?
- Experiment a theoretical model into practice
- Equal weight to social economic and environment pillars?
- : how could Eco-efficiency be measured, in terms of employment, etc?
- Positive degrowth: +zero?
- Are there other sustainable models?