

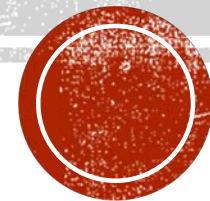
DEGROWTH

@DESIGN FOR SOCIAL CHANGE 2021

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[@eevahoutbeckers](#) (Twitter, Instagram)

eevahoutbeckers.fi



MAJ JA TOR NESSLINGIN SÄÄTIÖ



KONE FOUNDATION

NODUS

Sustainable
Design
Research

Aalto University
Design Research

A''

POSTGROWTH WORK & LIVELIHOODS

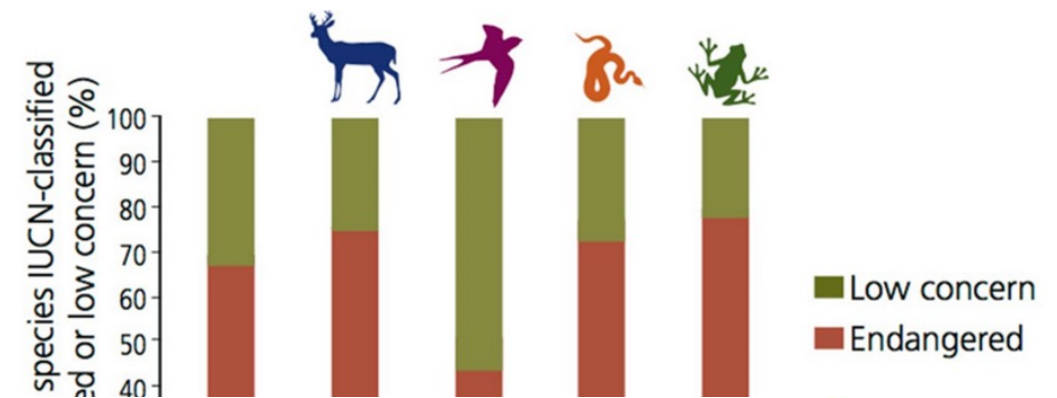
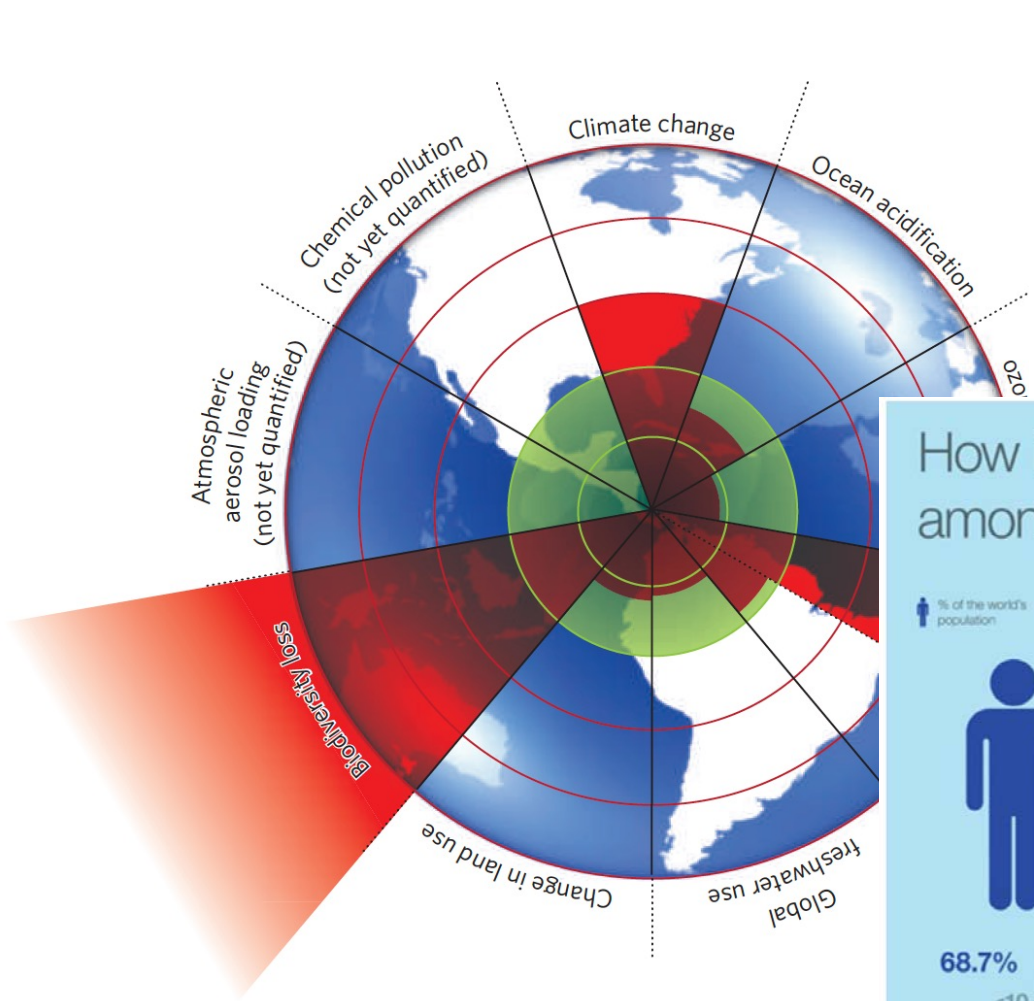
Postdoc project

- Funded by Kone Foundation, Maj and Tor Nessling Foundation & Foundation for Economic Education (2017; 2019-2022)
- Ethnographic fieldwork since late 2016
 - Self-sufficiency households
 - Forest economy & land management
 - Postgrowth workers

Affiliations

- Department of Design, Aalto University
 - NODUS research group (Sustainable Design Research)
- *Degrowth* movement & *Meidän metsämme* citizen movement
- *Untame Lab* research collective | untame.fi





Source: Rockström et al. 2009

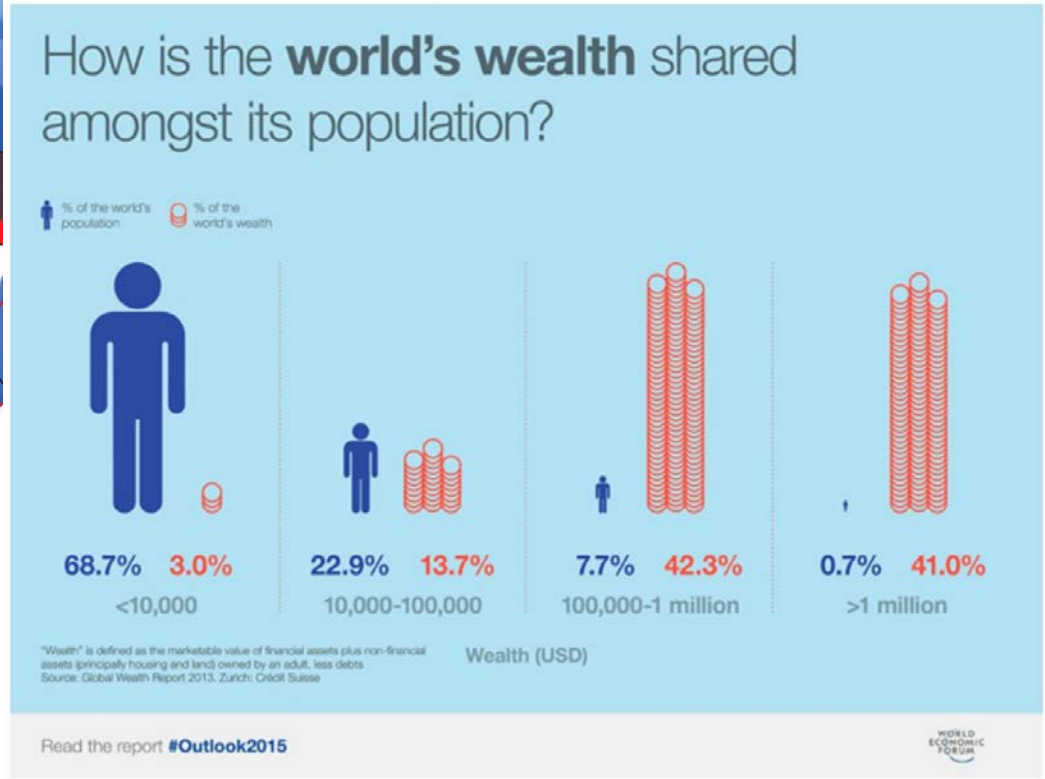


Figure 1. Two aspects of 'decoupling'

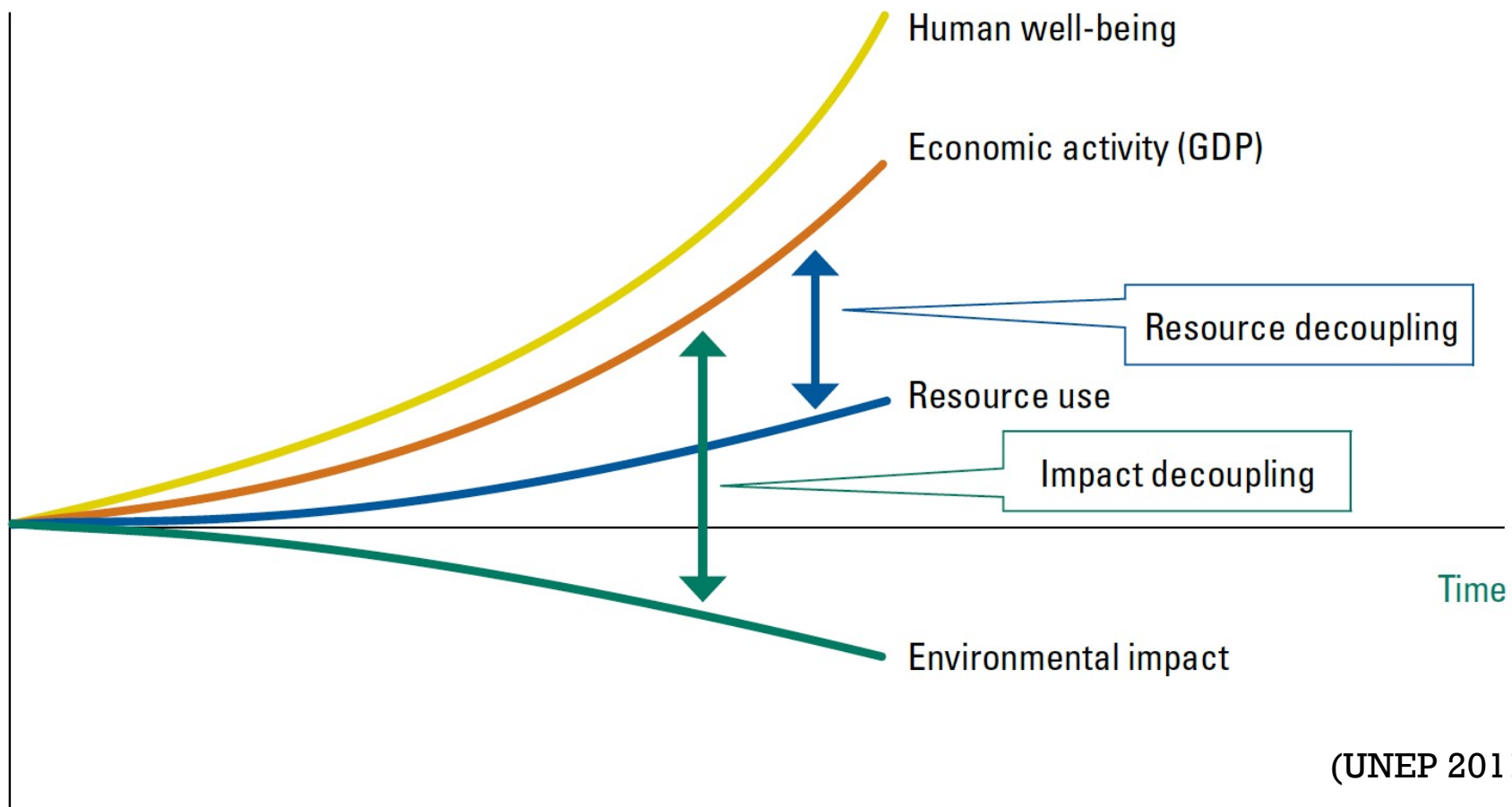
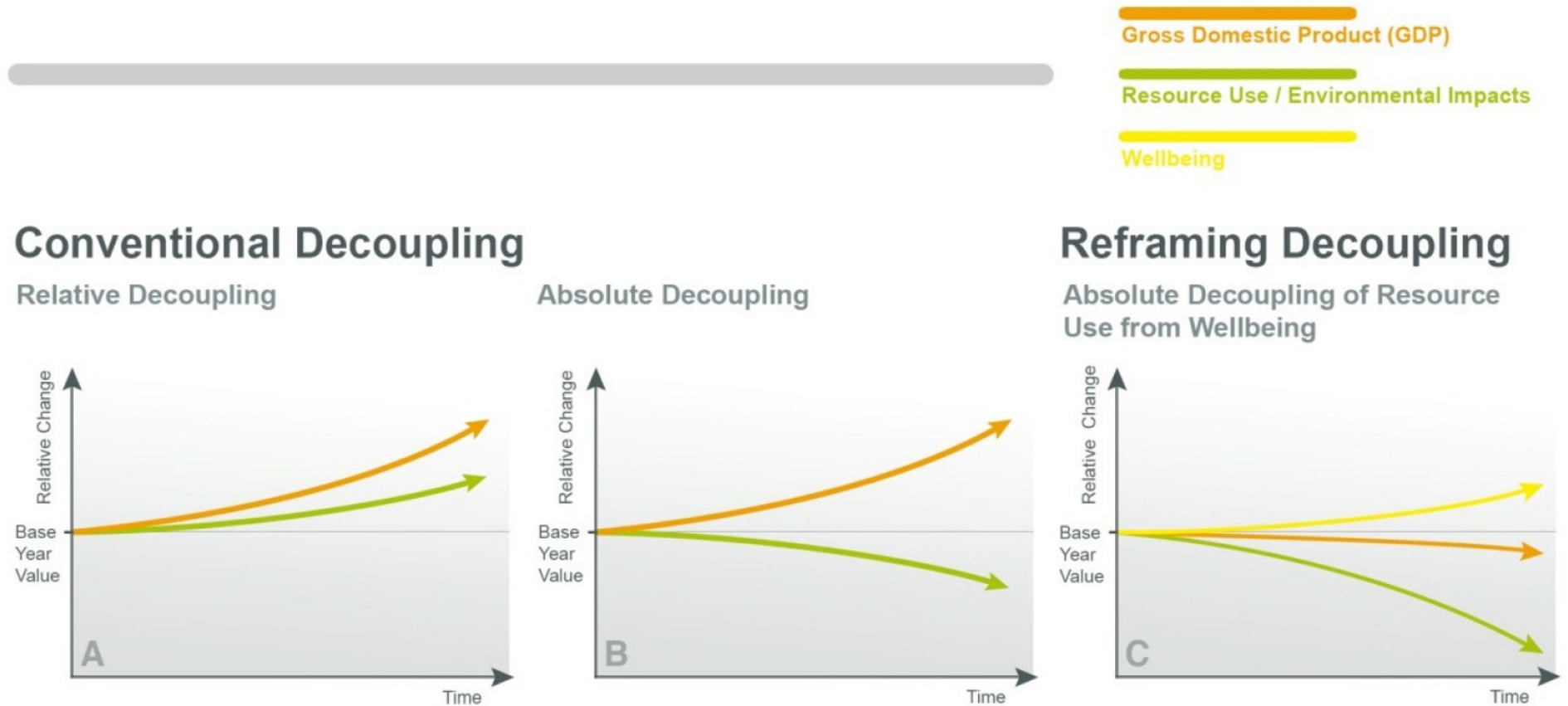


Figure 1: Decoupling Concepts



NO EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR LASTING DECOUPLING (PARRIQUE ET AL. 2021)

- A need for an **absolute, permanent, global, large** and **fast enough** decoupling of economic growth from all critical environmental pressures
- There is **no empirical evidence** for such a decoupling currently happening in materials, energy, water, greenhouse gases, land, water pollutants, and biodiversity loss
- Decoupling in these either only **relative** (in most cases), **observed temporarily**, and/or **locally**
- **Absolute decoupling only**
 - during rather short periods of time,
 - concerning only certain resources or forms of impact,
 - for specific locations, and
 - with very small rates of mitigation

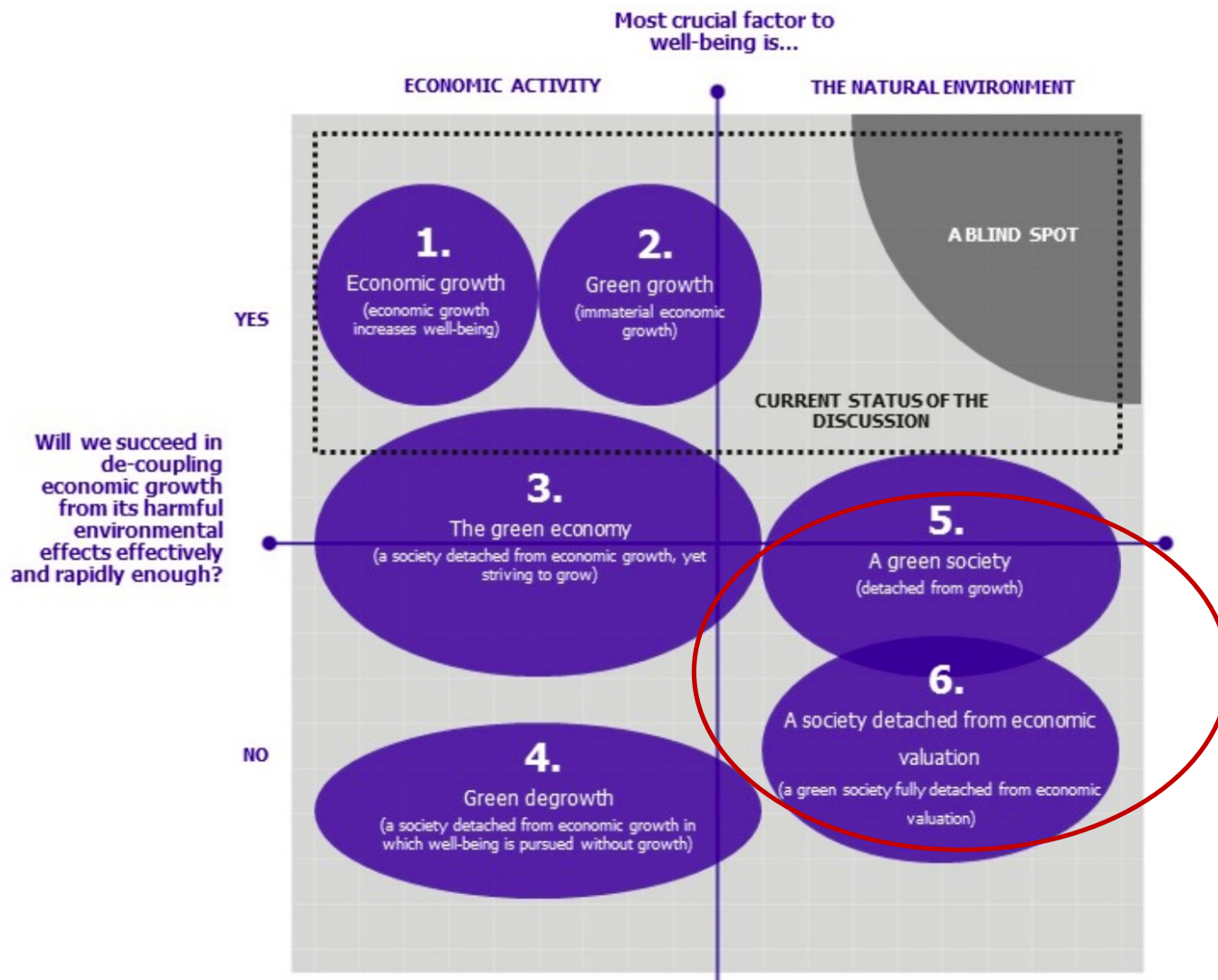




Image: Harri Säynevirta (Kuvia Suomesta)



Sustainable economy viewpoints in public discussion



Järvensivu, T. (2015)
<http://www.degrowth.fi/2015/12/six-perspectives-on-sustainable-economy.html>



GROWTH CRITICISM

- Continuous exponential economic growth is a **utopic** model
 - Raworth (2017): In the discipline of economics, there is no answer how to land the aircraft
- Growth and Development are the products of **colonising Western thinking** (Latouche, 2009)
- The overuse of resources is justified by the need for economic profits that enable
 - human wellbeing
 - environmental protection
 - *[insert what is commonly considered good]*

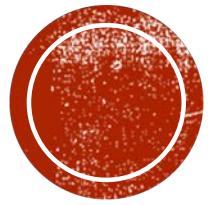


CHANGE IS ALREADY HERE

- Europe - one of the affluent economies - has entered an era of **slow or no growth** (Jackson 2019)
- The capacity for economic growth and the justification for it have decreased in occidental societies (Büchs and Koch 2017)
- Instead of economic growth, **wellbeing and care** at the centre of policy-making (Dengler and Strunk 2018)

- BUT: Since many human societies and welfare systems are based on economic growth, **transformation is difficult** to make (Büchs and Koch 2017)



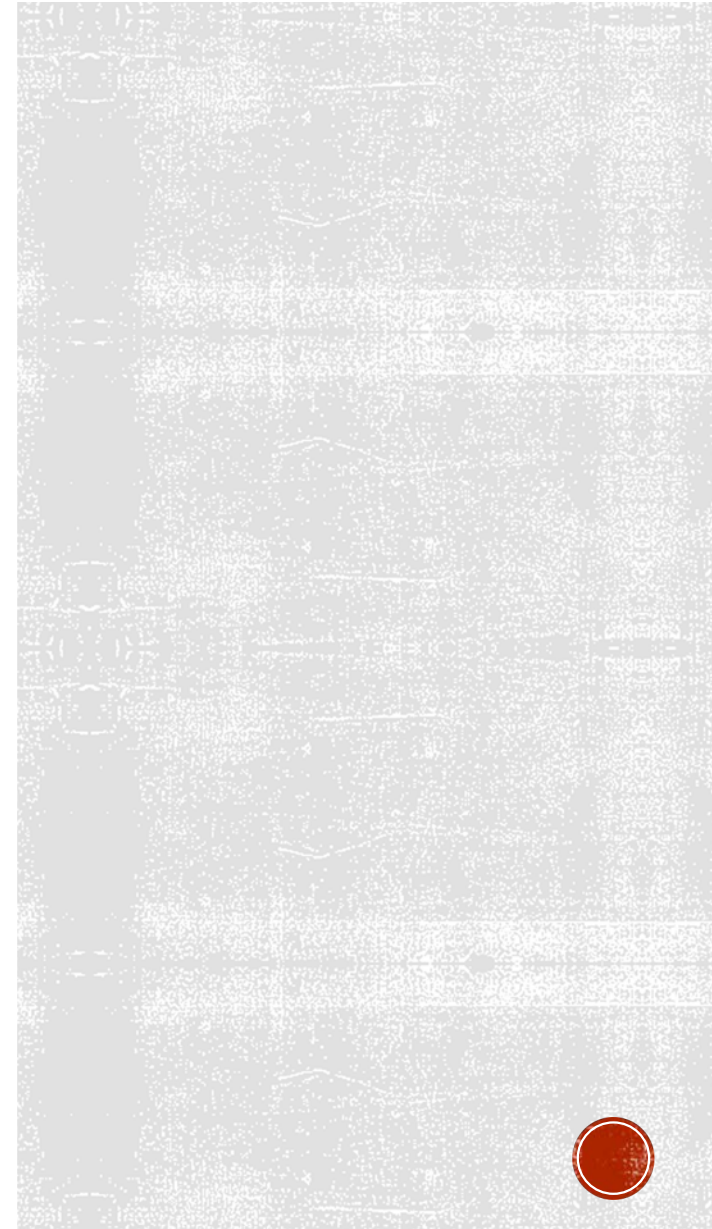


WHAT IS DEGROWTH?



*“Degrowth refers to a
radical politico-
economic **reorganisation**
that leads to smaller and
more equitable social
metabolisms.”*

(Gerber 2020)

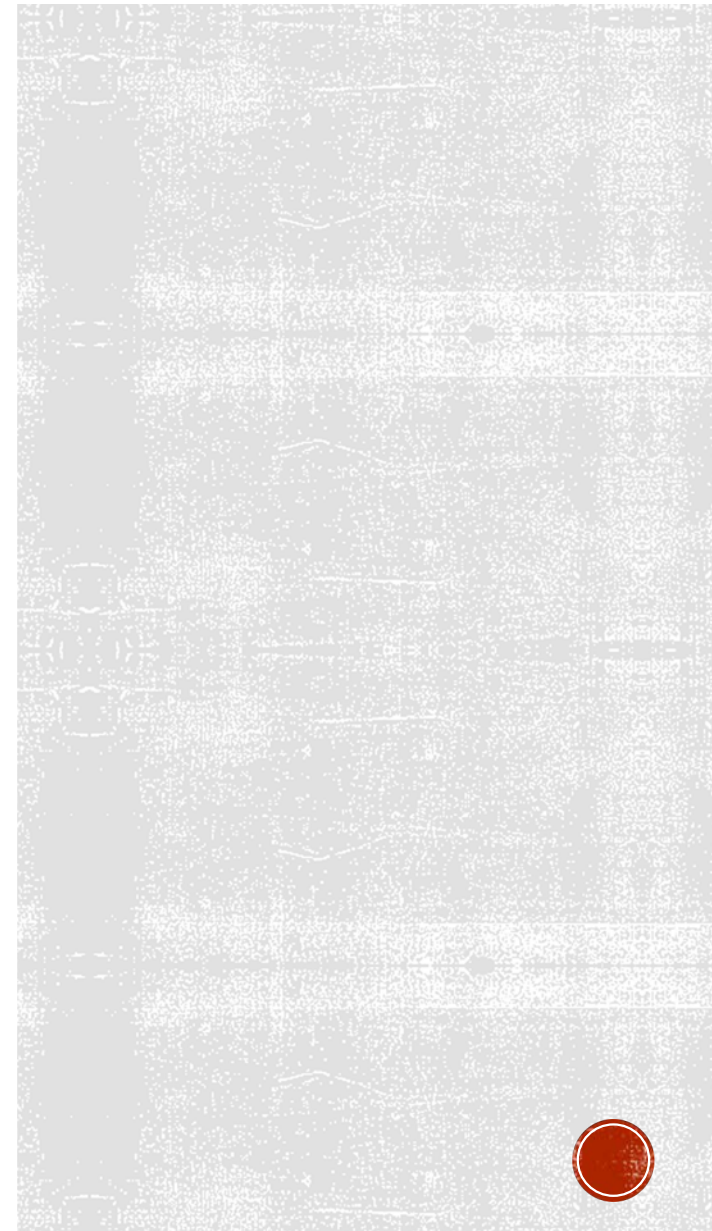


Few consider it possible to detach
from the vicious cycle of economic
growth.

(Latouche, 2009)

*"degrowth is a response to the lack of
democratic debates on economic
development, growth, technological
innovation and advancement"*

(Demaria et al. 2013, p. 199)



DIFFERENT REGIONAL MOVEMENTS & CONCEPTS

- *Décroissance*
- *Postwachstum*
- *Steady-state //
doughnut economics*
- *Prosperity without
growth*
- *Kohtuusliike*
- ...?



Photo by Krzysztof Niewolny on Unsplash

TO CONSIDER

- Why degrowth \neq Criticism of the Growth paradigm
 - There are growth critics who don't consider themselves as 'degrowers'
- There are as many reasons for degrowth as there are its proponents



SOME COMMON PRINCIPLES

- A need for a **paradigm** change
- Philosophical position, a state of mind, a perspective, ...
- Dismantling the hegemonic focus on economic growth
- Economic growth can take place in regions that need it for increasing wellbeing
- No ready, easy, quick solutions for the redistribution of wealth
- Learning by **doing**
- Different opinions about the need of a (radical) revolution



MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT DEGROWTH

- Recession
- Miniature capitalism
- Rejects technology
- The end of innovation
- Against human nature (that aspires Progress)
- Retrograde (idealising the past)
- Reactionary
- Austerity
- Aesthetic
- Authoritarian
- Sectarian (isolated communities)
- Survivalist
- Reduction of consumption is deprivation
- Romanticising poverty

(Parrique 2019)

<https://twitter.com/timparrique>

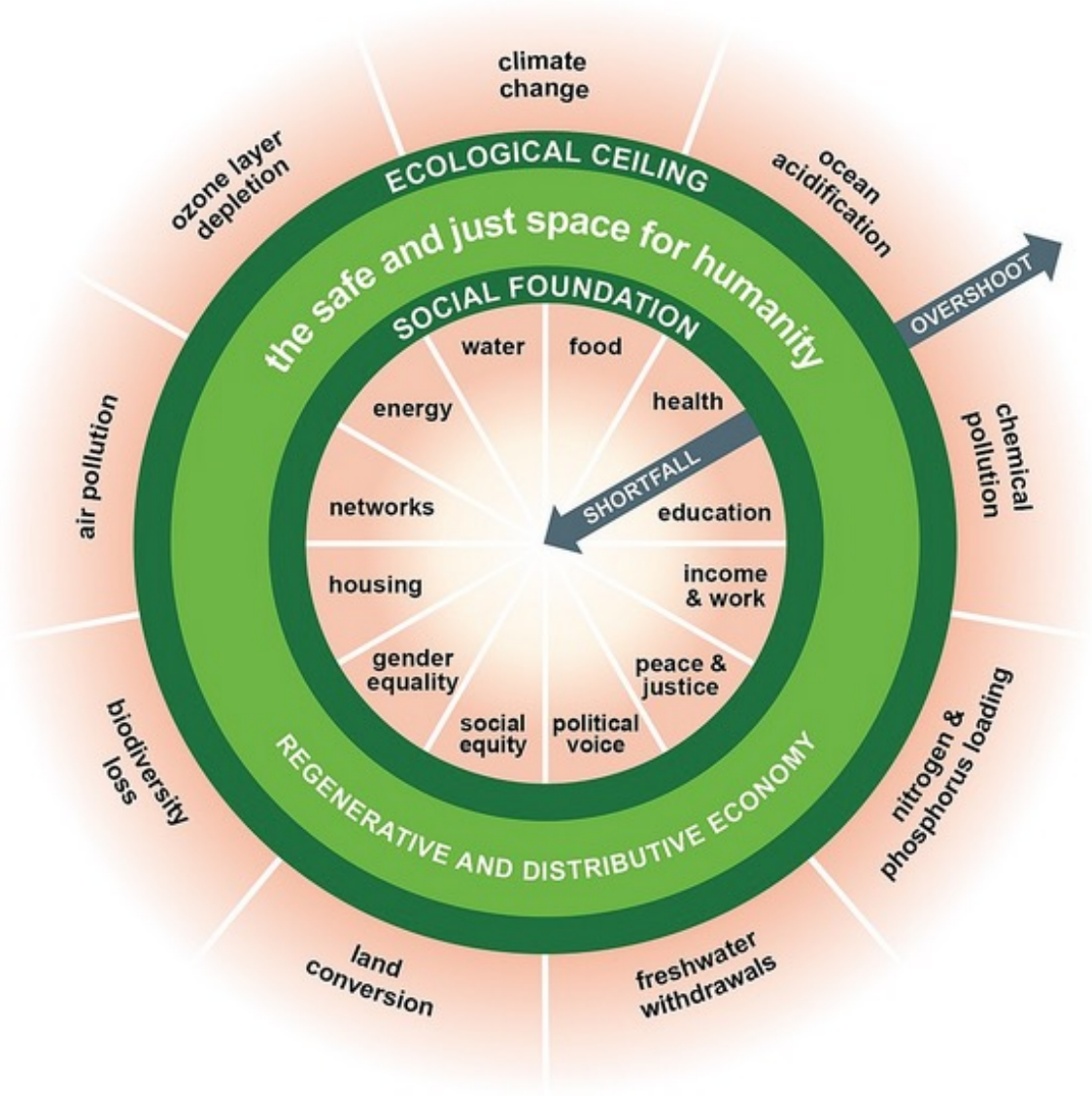


CHANGE WITH 8 R'S (LATOUCHE, 2009)

- **Re-evaluate**
 - what matters
- **Reconceptualize**
 - key notions such as wealth, poverty, value, scarcity and abundance
- **Restructure**
 - the productive apparatus and social relations to fit these new values
- **Redistribute**
 - wealth and access to natural resources between North and South and between classes, generations and individuals
- **Relocalize**
 - savings, financing, production and consumption
- **Reduce**
 - production and consumption, especially for goods and services with little use value but high environmental impact
- **Re-use & Recycle**
 - Products & waste

Explanations: https://degrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Kallis_Farewell-to-growth-Latouche.pdf

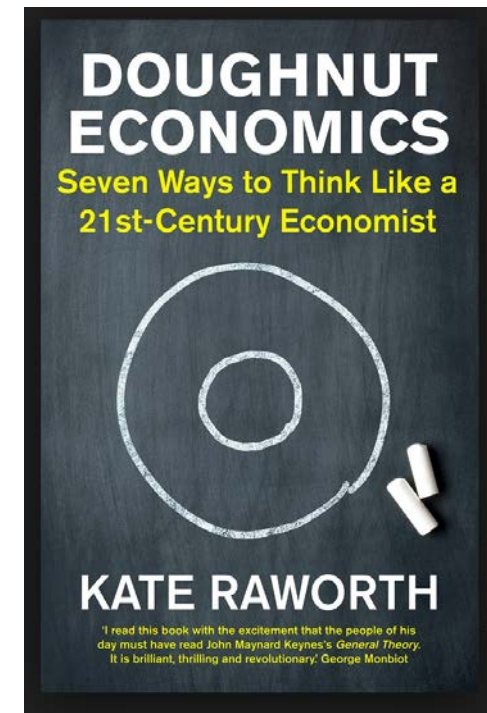




DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS: SEVEN WAYS TO THINK LIKE A 21ST CENTURY ECONOMIST

1-3

- Change the goal: from GDP growth to **the Doughnut**
- See the big picture: from self-contained market to **embedded economy**
- Nurture human nature: from rational economic man to **social adaptable humans**

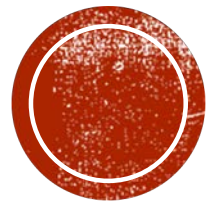


- Get savvy with systems: from mechanical equilibrium to **dynamic complexity**
- Design to distribute: from ‘growth will even it up again’ to **distributive by design**
- Create to regenerate: from ‘growth will clean it up again’ to **regenerative by design**
- Be Agnostic about Growth: from growth-addicted to **growth-agnostic**

4-7

Seven ways to think like a
21st century economist
by Kate Raworth





DEGROWTH IN PRACTICE



THE DEGROWTH SPECTRUM

Based on a survey conducted in an international degrowth event (2015), **5 clusters of degrowers:**

- Sufficiency-Oriented Critics of Civilization (22%)
- Immanent Reformers (19%)
- Voluntarist-Pacifist Idealists (23%)
- Modernist-Rationalist Left (13%)
- Alternative Practical Left (22%)

(Schmelzer & Eversberg 2017,
Eversberg & Schmelzer 2018)



DEGROWTH MOVEMENT IN FINLAND

Consist of citizens, researchers, activists, politicians, civil servants

- Informal | Unregistered | Networked | Decisions based on consensus & silent approval

Roots in the environmental movement

Local independent groups with own organisational practices

- Salo | North Karelia (Joensuu) | Kymenlaakso (Kouvola, Kotka) | Oulu | Helsinki | Jyväskylä

Activities

- Lobbying political candidates & politicians | Annual meetings
- Thematic work: Anti-extractivisms | Forest economy | Self-sufficiency | Land management etc.

Communications

- www.kohtuusliike.fi | @kohtuusliike (Twitter, Instagram)



Welcome to the next annual
degrowth meeting in
autumn 2022 in Helsinki

Any interest in co-
organising?

[contact details from Eeva]

**ANTI-
COMMERCIAL
BREAK**



MANY RELATED FINNISH INITIATIVES

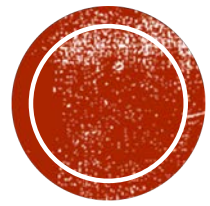
- Elokapina [extinction rebellion Finland], <https://elokapina.fi>
- Climate movement, eg. <https://climatemove.fi/en>
- Ecological reconstruction <https://eco.bios.fi>
- Ehtaraha [alternative finances] <http://www.ehtaraha.fi>
- Finnish Ecovillage Network SKEY ry <http://genfinland.weebly.com>
- Community currencies, eg. Stadin aikapankki <https://stadinaikapankki.wordpress.com/>
- Eetti ry [for ethical consumption] <https://eetti.fi/>
- Maanystävät [Friends of the Earth] <https://www.maanystavat.fi/>
- ...



DEGROWTH INTERNATIONALLY

- Degrowth network in Europe <https://www.degrowth.info>
- Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance (FaDa) <https://www.degrowth.info/en/fada>
- In North America <https://www.postgrowth.org>
- In Latin America & Caribians <https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com>
- Green New Deal Europe <https://gnde.diem25.org/>
- ...





DESIGN FOR DEGROWTH?



RELEVANT CRITICISM

- Eco/feminist critique, eg. how to avoid renewing patriarchal order, including gendered division of labour?
- In practice, how to address hegemonic globalisation with (local) pluralism in modern societies?
- How to get people on board to enact a systemic transformation?



LEVERAGE POINTS

(Gaziulusoy et al. 2021)

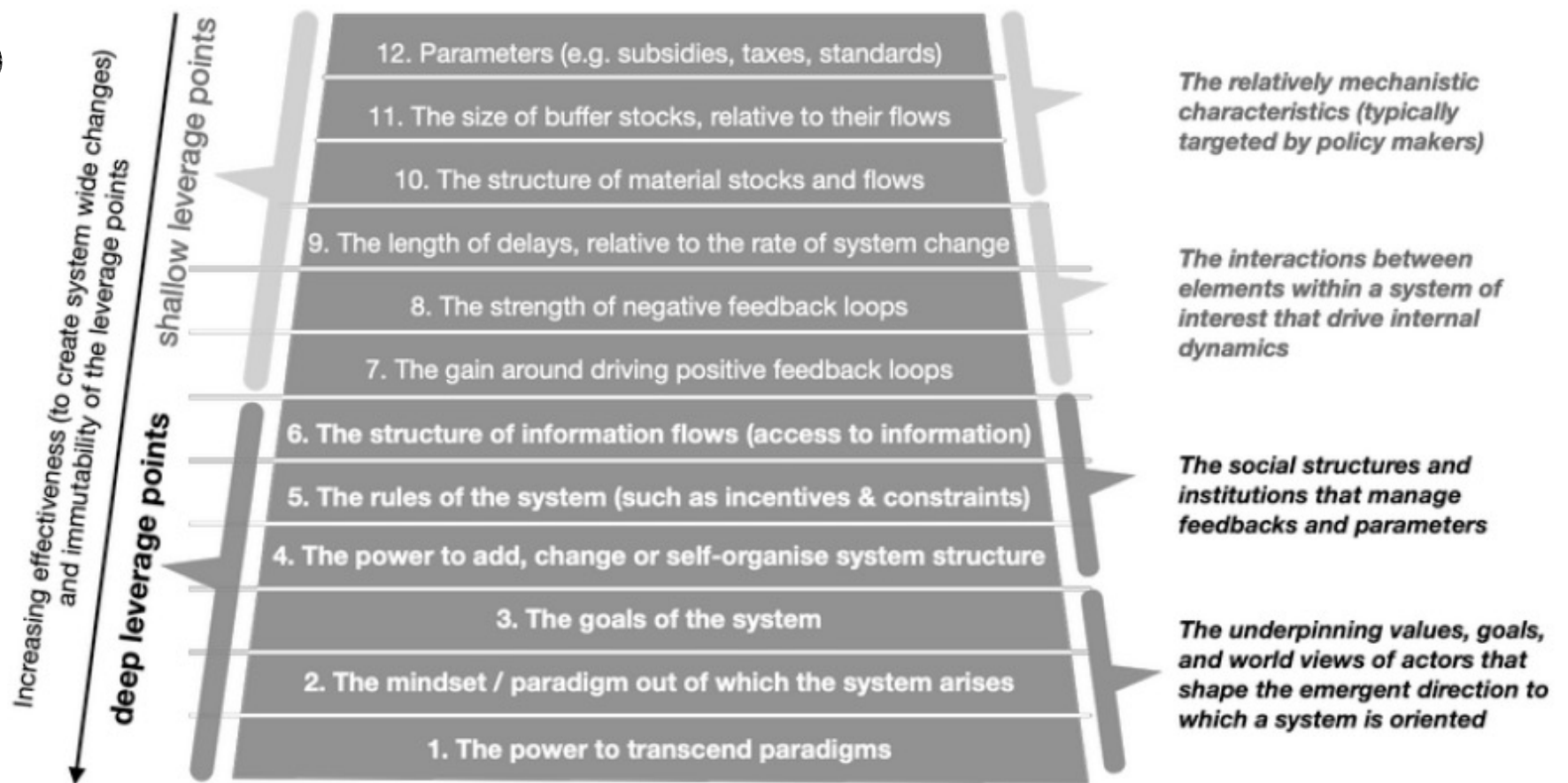


Figure 1. Leverage points to intervene in a system (adapted from Meadows, 1999 and Abson et al., 2017).

FOUR PREREQUISITES FOR A DEGROWTH PARADIGM SHIFT (BUCH-HANSEN 2018, 161-162)

1. A deep **crisis** of the existing system and of the prevailing paradigm.
2. An alternative **political** project.
3. A comprehensive **coalition** of social forces waging political struggles with a view of making the project hegemonic.
4. (At least passive) **consent** in the population.



DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS (DFST)

Sustainability Transitions

- Structural, and in some cases radical, changes in systems that support human society (Loorbach 2010)

Transitions are Design Challenges (Gaziulusoy & Ryan 2017)

- **CREATIVE**: conceptualisation of new systems
- **TECHNICAL**: selecting, designing and developing new systems
- **POLITICAL**: designing participatory and democratic processes of deliberation

Design for sustainability transitions is now recognised as the emergent edge of design for sustainability field (Ceschin & Gaziulusoy, 2016)



DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS (DFST) + DEGROWTH (DG) = ADDRESSING NORMATIVE DEBATES

The strength of DFST lies in the focus on solutions

- Theories on **how to achieve transitions** could be applied to achieving sustainable degrowth
- The practical tools of DFST could in turn assist with **developing pathways**
- Demonstrate that degrowth is **not necessarily** fully **utopian**
- DFST creates spaces for **hopeful speculation**
- Action for **engaging different actors** is a strength in DFST
- Works **with the establishment** to create “institutional innovation”

The strength of DG is evident in the accommodation of multiple perspectives in building of theory and practice including the “suppressed” and the “voiceless”

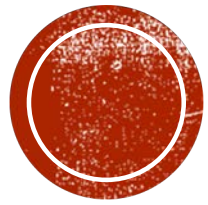
- DFST can benefit from DG discourse to **expand and strengthen** its theoretical core
- DG can feed into DFST practice of creation of **imaginaries that are radically different** than the projection of present



QUESTIONS & SOME RESOURCES

- Max Koch' work about wellbeing at [Google Scholar](#)
- Wellbeing economy project <https://weall.org/>
 - Report: <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/measuring-the-wellbeing-economy-how-to-move-beyond-gdp>
- Map of degrowth initiatives <https://map.degrowth.net/>
- Recent books about degrowth
 - [Towards a Political Economy of Degrowth](#)
 - [The Case for Degrowth](#)
 - [Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World](#)





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