

## Ph.D. Course - May 11-15, 2020, Copenhagen, Denmark

### Degrowth in Europe: Foundations in theory and pathways to practice

*Convened by the Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

#### **Aim and content**

In the context of increasingly acute global socio-environmental problems, there is growing debate about the dominant economic growth-based societal model. Globally, there is a close correlation between GDP growth and the social metabolism of the global economy, as visible in e.g. extraction of materials and GHG emissions. At the same time, GDP growth in wealthy nations delivers less and less by way of increasing happiness and other indicators of wellbeing. This course aims to impart in participants critical questions, concepts, and theories to understand and unpack the merits and problems of growth in our current context and explore alternatives from multiple perspectives.

This course will engage in the 'degrowth' / 'postgrowth' discourse through the perspectives of the complementary and established traditions of i) political ecology, ii) feminist scholarship, and iii) ecological economics. 'Degrowth' (sometimes called 'postgrowth' to more explicitly suggest new trajectories) stems from acknowledgement of the failure of economic growth-based models of 'development' inherent to capitalism. Degrowth rejects the 'decoupling' myth that economic growth can continue alongside environmental sustainability through e.g. future green technologies. Degrowth aims to reinvigorate societal organization, placing wellbeing for all species and natural systems at the center and rethinking our systems of economics, work culture and labor, decision-making, and much more. Each of the scholarly traditions of feminism, political ecology, and ecological economics provide foundational theoretical insights to the steadily expanding degrowth discourse. When paired with that discourse, they also offer substantial guidance to reinvigorate our practices – academic, institutional, and personal.

In brief, this course will survey theoretical contributions to degrowth from various schools of thought, while emphasizing praxis in multiple social spheres and similarly, scholar-activism. The course unfolds within a frame of Degrowth in Europe, emphasizing what European peoples and States can and must do, starting within our own region.

#### **Expected learning outcomes**

The course aims to enable and advance critical engagement with degrowth scholarship and praxis. Learning outcomes include:

1. Knowledge of key arguments and areas of consensus within degrowth studies from the perspective of academic traditions of Political Ecology, Feminist scholarship, and Ecological Economics.
2. Analytical and evaluative skill development in relation to research within the field of degrowth studies, drawing on academic traditions of Ecological Economics, Political Ecology and Feminist scholarship.
3. Competence to critically discuss current and imagine new policies and practices.

#### **Teaching and learning methods**

A blend of lectures with substantial plenary and group discussion (so be prepared to share!) + a field trip to an activist collective to talk praxis and scholar/activism.

## Course assessment

Course assessment is constituted by three requirements:

1. In advance of the course, all participants must read texts assigned by lecturers.
2. In advance of the course, participants must work together in groups to write and then submit short reflection pieces and prepare critical questions to the texts assigned by lecturers.
3. Active participation throughout.

ECTS: 5

**Course dates:** May 11-15, 2020

**Deadline to apply:** February 1, 2020 (Official registration and payment link will be provided followed acceptance). See 'Practicalities' below for details on how to apply.

**Venue:** Institute of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen, Rolighedsvej 25, 1958 Frederiksberg, Denmark

**Fee:** 75 euro nonrefundable

**Literature and schedule:** To be confirmed following enrollment. A detailed program and full literature list will be communicated shortly after approval of your application.

## Confirmed lecturers

Wendy Harcourt, Professor of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development, International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Erik Gómez-Baggethun, President of the European Society for Ecological Economics and Professor of Environmental Governance, Department of International Environment and Development Studies/Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Jens Friis Lund, Professor of Political Ecology, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen

Rebecca Rutt, Assistant Professor of European Environmental Policy, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen (Course organizer)

## Practicalities

The course will be held at the Frederiksberg Campus of the University of Copenhagen and will be open to 20 participants. We invite applications from PhD candidates whose research interests align with the thematic scope of the course. **Candidates should apply by sending both a 1-page CV and a 500-word outline of their project. This outline should *specify how their PhD project relates to the overall theme of this course (including the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted), or describe their motivation for attending the course including how it might inform their future research and practice.* Applications should be sent to Ruth Pinto (rp@ifro.ku.dk), no later than February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.** Successful applicants will be notified by February 20, 2020. Participants must then pay a nonrefundable fee of 75€ by March 10 to confirm their participation. Lunch on all days and one dinner will be provided. Participants must cover their own transport and accommodation. We encourage participants to take land-based travel if at all possible. Accommodation suggestions and other practical information will be sent following approval of registration. We are unable to provide grants to cover travel and accommodation, but if you need letters of support to apply for external funding, just get in touch. Working language is English.

Questions can be sent to Rebecca Rutt (rlr@ifro.ku.dk). We look forward to hearing from you!