

GROWING OTHERWISE

Tereza Stöckelová

Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Lukáš Senft

Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Kateřina Kolářová

Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Abstract:

The prevailing forms of economic growth that implicate persistent increase and acceleration of industrial, agricultural as well as cultural production lead to the ecological and climate emergency. In spite of that, the idea of economic growth upholds its hegemonic position in most of the mainstream public debates. Economic growth is--again--held up as a way to the socioeconomic recovery from the current global pandemic. Even the strategies for “green growth” rely largely on the idea of everlasting growth enabled by technological innovation and effectiveness of production. On the contrary, in efforts to rethink and remake the current forms of growth, “degrowth” is often mobilized as a counter-narrative.

In the context of the ecological emergency, the major concern is how to reconcile human economy with more-than-human ecology. Yet, the idea of degrowth is put under pressure in the face of life beyond human forms. Life beyond the human apparently grows--and decays-- in different ways: symbiotically, parasitically, and also agonistically at times. More-than-human growth is full of ambivalence, tensions and strategic action. It can hardly be fitted into the notion of “degrowth”. In the attempt to broaden the social imagination that could signal ways out of ecological and climate emergencies, we argue that different answers than the concept of ‘degrowth’ need to be engaged. This panel calls for papers that engage with modes of more-than-human growth – including cooperation, negotiation and strategic action as well as ambivalence, tensions and decay – that could provide non-romanticized examples to direct humanity to ‘grow otherwise’. In particular, it invites papers that critically engage with the natural science conceptualizations and methods to account for more than human growth in order to develop new social science and political concepts to rethink and remake the current forms of industrial, agricultural as well as cultural production.

What regimes of growth generated by life beyond the human can help us to rethink human modes of production? What are the temporalities of more than human growth? What can be learnt from the processes of rotting and moldering? What may horizontal growth look like? How can we imagine different modes of division of work beyond ever-increasing speciation and specialization? Or should we abandon the notion of growth altogether? What would be the productive alternatives to both notions of growth and degrowth?

Key words:

growth, climate emergency, more-than-human

