

Some Questions and remarks on overall Strategy for collective Action – by Anne and Arndt Jacobi

As a prerequisite for „organizing collective action for Degrowth [DG]“ we think it is helpful to ask the following questions:

Question 1: Do we need more details and consensus on 'what is degrowth' in the movement in general?¹

Examples:

a) The 'money-question': Do we need a moneyless society or can DG also be achieved in a money-based society?

The answer would have influence eg on strategy, evaluation of success / failure of projects (stirring paper of Gualter) or evaluation of feedback loops between levels (see stirring paper of Narberhaus). For example, a complementary currency project could be evaluated as successful with respect to localisation of consumption, but could push the values further towards consumerism (even if local!) and monetarisation -> negative feedback loop

b) Government institutions: In so far as they are hierarchical and exert power: Do we want to eliminate them or modify them to be more democratic or leave unchanged? Ie do we need a hierarchy-free, power-free society for degrowth or is representative democracy (which implies power exertion of representants over citizens) acceptable?

Question 2: Do we need more details and consensus on 'how' to achieve DG?

This means on a meta-level: Do we go towards degrowth 'via the possible' / via intermediate steps, or do we go for the final goal directly, (see also stirring paper Narberhaus, broken story 2)?

Example: Basic income is not a useful direct goal if one is aiming for a moneyless society, but may be nevertheless a useful intermediate step with wanted effects?

Question 3: It seems reasonable and necessary to link up with other groups, movements etc for promoting DG collective action. What are the criteria for identifying the groups and the

¹ Our own (utopian?) vision of Degrowth (applicable globally):

- Economy: give and take society (no money, no exchange, as much as possible is 'common', sufficiency, post-fossil / renewable resource consumption)
- Politics: (basis-)democratic, participative, cooperative on all levels, no hierarchies (anarchic/libertarian), consensus where possible
- Culture: not consumption- / accumulation-oriented, focus on social interaction, knowledge acquisition, enjoyment of nature, music etc
- Agriculture: organic, respecting animals and biodiversity

Some consequences / examples:

- All limited resources have to be commons.
- Less car-traffic, less 'work' (eg 20h/week – or less), better work, less consumption of 'nature', organic food, no 'agrarian deserts', clean air, water, oceans
- Common gardens / gardening, public bookshelves, discussion workshops, public transportation, nature excursions, concerts, choirs – all for free!

appropriate way of association?

Example: 'Adhering groups' of MDF (stirring paper of Aillon et al.): Adhering to statutes as criteria is ok, but only if those statutes are not too vague, because otherwise there is the danger of cooptation.

We assume that no consensus is possible yet in all of the DG community with regard to the money question, the government / hierarchy question and possibly others.

We assume that consensus can be reached after more practical experience / theoretical knowledge has been gained.

Therefore we propose that it is a legitimate strategy to try to reach a DG society via some intermediate goals/steps.

That way, at least for now, we do not need to agree if a certain goal is final or intermediate, but only if the steps lead in the right direction. This will already be difficult enough.

Through this approach less time is spent on discussions between different 'belief-groups'; time is gained for more cooperative research and gathering experience.

Remark 1: We are convinced that we need to strengthen democratic abilities and participation. This touches all 3 levels (niches, culture and regime, see stirring paper of Narberhaus) and should be a goal of the 'collective action for DG' even though there is a GAP for democracy.

By the way there are NGOs specialising in this, for example <http://www.democracy-international.org/>, <http://www.mehr-demokratie.de/>. Have they been involved so far in the DG-movement?

Remark 2: There is no doubt that intensive discussions, research, learning experiences etc for a smooth transition to DG is essential. But a situation might arise where there is only a short time window for the chance of change (like it happened in GDR, Russia,...). It would be crucial to be prepared for this, i.e. to have something like a contingency (emergency) plan. Wouldn't it be reasonable to have a workstream for this?