

# Reflections on 'society' and 'space' in the degrowth debate

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# Outline

1. Hypothesis and objectives
2. Why society-space relationships?
3. Degrowth as a “local ecological democracy”
  - a) The “local”
  - b) The “ecological”
  - c) “Democracy”
4. Conclusion and further research

# 1 Hypothesis and objectives

- Hypothesis: Degrowth is to do with a reconfiguration of society-space relationships.
- Objectives:
  - To identify what are considered ‘successful’ society-space relationships in the degrowth debate,
  - To highlight some of the facets of these society-space relationships as they are presented in the degrowth literature, and
  - To develop the idea that degrowth is not merely “old –isms in new guises” but has the potential of combining traditional and late-modern elements of society-space relationships in a new and non-deterministic way.

## 2 Society-space relationships

- How societies are constituted and stabilised is also to do with space.
- How do people handle their being in space?
- Society-space relationships offer an alternative way of analysing societal change.
- For example, traditional vs. late-modern society-space relationships

Society-space relationships in degrowth societies?

local ecological democracy

**local** ecological democracy

# **local ecological democracy**

“The prospect offered is that in which the local is not a closed microcosm, but a linkage in a network of horizontal, virtuous and solidarity relations, aiming to experiment with practices of democratic reinforcement ... it is about laboratories of critical analysis and self-government for the defence of the common good” (Latouche 2007, n.p.).



local **ecological** democracy

# local **ecological** democracy

“natural regions where livestock, plants, animals, water and men form a unique and harmonious whole” (Panikkar 1995 quoted in Latouche 2006)

local ecological **democracy**

# local ecological **democracy**

“a municipality of municipalities, a ‘town of towns’ or even a ‘town of villages’, or in other words an ecopolis, meaning a polycentric or multipolar network ... a complex set of local territorial systems” (Latouche 2009, 44)

# local ecological **democracy**

“a redefinition of politics, a return to the word's original Greek meaning as the management of the community or *polis* by means of direct face-to-face assemblies of the people in the formulation of public policy and based on an ethics of complementarity and solidarity” (Bookchin 1991, n.p.)

local + ecological + democracy

## 4 Conclusion and further research

- Degrowth is fundamentally about society-space relationships and their reconfiguration.
- Degrowth is not merely “old –isms in new guises” but has the potential of combining traditional and late-modern elements of society-space relationships in a new and non-deterministic way.
- Proposing society-space relationships as an alternative way of analysing societal change.

## 4 Conclusion and further research

- What would a possible amalgam of traditional and modern geographies look like when implemented in practice?
- When does small cease being beautiful?
- To what extent does the *universal* aspiration of “a good life for everyone” run counter to the highly *localized* forms of societal organization?
- Could an analysis of society-space relationships in the degrowth debate help advance a geographical debate on theoretical framework regarding possible combinations of traditional and late-modern elements in a non-deterministic way?



Thank you for your attention

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