

Reinterpreting Degrowth: Addressing Historical Inequalities and Sustainable Development in the Global South with a Special focus on Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

As the concept of degrowth gains traction as a response to escalating ecological crises, its applicability to the Global South presents complex challenges. Historically, the Global North has been the primary driver of industrialization, economic expansion, and environmental degradation, disproportionately contributing to global issues like climate change and resource depletion. In contrast, the Global South, with its rich traditions of self-sufficiency, faces severe developmental challenges, including poverty and inequality, exacerbated by colonial legacies and economic dependency. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in postcolonial theory, to explore the dynamics between the Global North and South. Through a case study of Sri Lanka, the research examines how degrowth principles can be reinterpreted to meet the specific needs and aspirations of the Global South. The methodological approach is informed by ecological economics and political ecology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability and social equity. The study proposes a tailored approach to degrowth in Sri Lanka, leveraging the country's historical and cultural strengths in sustainable living and community-based resource management. It advocates for the integration of degrowth-oriented policies into national development plans, emphasizing renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-friendly tourism. Additionally, it highlights the importance of engaging local communities in the degrowth dialogue, ensuring that traditional knowledge systems are incorporated into sustainable development strategies. By reimagining degrowth within the unique socio-economic context of Sri Lanka, this paper argues that the country can pursue a development path that addresses both ecological concerns and the well-being of its people. The study also examines broader issues of global inequality, historical injustices, and the portrayal of the Global South in Western media, aiming to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Keywords- Global Degrowth, Global South, Global North, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Degrowth has gained traction as a potential solution to the ecological crises facing the planet. Advancing for the reduction in material consumption and production, degrowth seeks to create a sustainable and equitable world. However, the application of degrowth principles in the Global South presents challenges. Historically, the Global North has played a significant role in ecological and economical degradation. At the same time the Global South, despite its rich history of self-sufficiency, now faces severe development challenges, poverty, and inequality (Hickel, What does degrowth mean? A few points of Clarification, 2020). This paper aims to explore the dynamics between the North and South focusing on how degrowth principles can be reinterpreted to address the specific needs and aspirations of the Global South with a particular emphasis on Sri Lanka.

In relevant to the implementation of the concept of degrowth in Sri Lanka focuses on adapting degrowth principles to fit Sri Lanka's historical and cultural strengths in sustainable living and community-based resource management. Secondly, the study advocates for the integration of degrowth-oriented policies into national development plans, emphasizing renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-friendly tourism. These initiatives aim to create economic opportunities that reduce dependence on material consumption, fostering a development model that aligns with both ecological sustainability and long-term economic resilience. In

addition, engaging local communities in the degrowth dialogue ensuring their traditional knowledge and voices systems are incorporated into sustainable development strategies. Finally, the promotion of education and awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of degrowth focusing on the long-term sustainability and quality of life improvements for all Sri Lankans. Through tailoring degrowth principles to Sri Lanka's unique socio-economic landscape the country can pursue a sustainable development path that addresses both ecological concerns and wellbeing of the community.

Historically, the Global North has been the pioneer of industrialization and economic expansion, often at the expense of the Global South. The Global North refers to the world's most economically developed, industrialized and affluent countries. The nations are often characterized by advanced technological infrastructure, high standards of living and strong political influence on the global stage. The Global North typically includes countries in North America, Western Europe, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The Global North holds significant economic and political power in international institutions, trade agreements and global governance. The Global South refers to less economically developed often lower income countries who are characterized by higher levels of poverty, economic inequality and limited access to resources. The Global South includes countries in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and much of Asia. The divide is mostly influenced through wealth and inequality, global power dynamics and cultural and social differences (Odeh, 2010).

The North's industrial activities have led to significant environmental degradation and resource depletion contributing disproportionately to global ecological problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution (Champions of environmental health and justice, 2020). For instance the average person in a high income country emits more than 30 times as much as those in low income countries and it is found that more than 80% of the world's emissions are produced by the top half of the world population both high and upper middle income countries (Ritchie, 2023). Additionally, countries in the Global North consume about 80% of the world's resources, despite their smaller population size (UNEP, 2016). Meanwhile the Global South which encompasses regions in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia faces heavy consequences of these actions, including environmental destruction, economic dependency, and social inequalities. Despite its rich natural resources and cultural heritage, the South has been subjected to practices, of colonialism and developmental challenges imposed by the North.

In addition, the Western media displays the Global South as a region of poverty, instability, and underdevelopment. This narrative overlooks the resilience, knowledge system and sustainable principles of the community in the Global South. This paper seeks to explore how degrowth principles can be reinterpreted and adapted to address the specific needs and aspirations of the Global South. It aims to examine the historical injustices and ongoing global inequalities, created, and perpetuated by the Global North. By focusing on Africa, Asia and Latin American populations, the study is highlighting the unique challenges, opportunities and threats faced by these communities and sustainable lessons for a better future (Tabara & David, 2013).

This study aims to understand how development injustices have impacted various social groups globally and to propose strategies for achieving ecological justice. Additionally, it will explore how the principles of global degrowth have influenced the globalization process, examining both the challenges and opportunities for creating a more equitable and sustainable world.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the applicability of degrowth principles in the Global South, with a particular focus on Sri Lanka. The research is anchored in postcolonial theory, which serves as a critical lens for understanding the historical and ongoing power imbalances between the Global North and South. By utilizing a case study methodology, the research delves deeply into how degrowth principles can be adapted to fit Sri Lanka's specific socio-economic, cultural, and environmental context.

The methodological framework is further informed by ecological economics and political ecology, which highlight the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability and social equity. These perspectives are essential for assessing the potential of degrowth to address both ecological crises and the developmental

challenges that countries in the Global South, like Sri Lanka, face. The study integrates data from various sources, including policy documents, academic literature, and interviews with key stakeholders, to provide a comprehensive analysis of how degrowth-oriented strategies can be effectively implemented in Sri Lanka.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Principles of degrowth

Degrowth argues the necessity to transform daily practices to respect the limited earth on which humankind rely to exist. Degrowth aims to reframe and recreate economies that respect earth's limits to achieve socio-political equity and ecological sustainability (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024).

Degrowth revolutionized as a theoretical concept in the late twentieth century which resulted from overconsumption, overproduction and inappropriate production and consumption. Degrowth has always pointed to growth and growth economies as the source of inequities and unsustainability. Degrowth is anti-capitalist (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024). Degrowth is a broad and critical movement that challenges traditional notions of economic growth, advocating for a rethinking of progress in ways that prioritize environmental sustainability, social well-being, and equity. Degrowth critiques and incorporate aspects of doughnut economics and circular economics (Savini, Post-Growth, Degrowth, the Doughnut, and Circular Economy: A Short Guide for Policymaker, 2023). Degrowth is highly critical of green growth and new green deals in as much as transforming to renewable energies within growth economies implies massive environmental exploitation (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024).

The core principles of degrowth are namely reduced production and consumption, prioritization of well-being, localizing economies, sharing and collaboration and finally decolonizing the growth imaginary (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024).

Reducing Production and Consumption

Degrowth argues that the current economic model which relies on constant growth is unsustainable. It advocates for a decrease in resource extraction and consumption to achieve ecological balance and social equity. Degrowth could be understood, through means of tourism in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's tourism industry has boomed bringing in revenue but also straining the resources and environment contributing to pollution. Degrowth suggests a shift towards more sustainable, low impact tourism that supports local communities and further preserves natural beauty. In addition, the tea and apparel industries are crucial for Sri Lanka's economy, however degrowth does not advocate complete abandonment, but focuses on responsible production. This could involve organic farming practices for tea, fair trade certification for garments, and a shift towards higher quality, longer lasting clothing (Dock, 2023).

Prioritizing self-sufficiency and local production

Degrowth puts wellbeing, both social and ecological, at the centre of economic decision making. It challenges the idea that economic growth always results in a better quality of life. Sri Lanka relies heavily on imported food. Degrowth encourages local food production through community gardens, supporting small farmers and reducing reliance on industrial agriculture. Degrowth promotes initiatives like tool libraries, repair cafes, and local exchange systems. This reduces unnecessary consumption of new goods and fosters sense of community (Dock, 2023).

Localization Economies

Degrowth encourages shortening supply chains and supporting local businesses and production. This reduces the reliance on global trade and transportation which can have negative environmental impacts. Sri Lanka's heavy reliance on imports has contributed to its economic struggles. Degrowth's focus on local economies could encourage supporting domestic businesses and production. This could create jobs, reduce dependence on volatile global markets and strengthen local communities (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024).

Sharing and Collaboration

The movement emphasizes cooperation over competition, sharing resources, skills and knowledge can help create a more equitable and sustainable society. Degrowth emphasizes sharing resources and skills. In Sri Lanka, this could involve initiatives like community gardens, skill sharing workshops and bartering systems which could foster cooperation and resilience during challenging times. According to, (Piyumali & Balasooriya, 2023) cooperatives significantly increase women's income levels and economic independence, providing them with diversified income sources and greater financial stability. This aligns with degrowth principles that emphasize cooperation over competition, fostering economic resilience. Women who are members of cooperatives have improved access to resources such as credit, land, and technology, which can be seen as a practical application of the degrowth emphasis on sharing resources. These cooperatives help women overcome traditional barriers, enhancing their productivity and entrepreneurial capabilities. Participation in cooperatives leads to skill development and capacity building among women, which resonates with the degrowth movement's focus on skill-sharing to combat gender inequality and provide a pathway for inclusive development.

The benefits of Degrowth for Developing Countries such as Sri Lanka

Degrowth a concept advocating for planned reduction in consumption and production, could offer some potential benefits to Sri Lanka, but it is important to consider them alongside potential drawbacks. The potential benefits can be namely environmental sustainability, reduced inequality and stronger communities.

Environmental sustainability

Sri Lanka faces challenges like deforestation and pollution. As per Global Forest Watch, in 2023 it lost 11.5 kha of natural forest, equivalent to 4.64 Mt of Carbon Dioxide (Global Forest Watch, 2023). Degrowth could help reduce pressure on natural resources, promoting sustainable practices and protecting the ecosystem. The Global South often bears the brunt of environmental damage caused by resource extraction practices feeding the consumption of the Global North (Masterom, 2022).

Sub Saharan Africa, like Sri Lanka, contributes minimally to global emissions but suffers significantly from climate impacts. Similarly, Sri Lanka has a high disparity between contribution and impact. The per capita carbon emission comparison between Africa and North America can be used to draw parallels with Sri Lanka's lower emission but high vulnerability to climate impact (Asian Development Bank, 2020)

In Sub Saharan Africa, a significant portion of the population lacks access to electricity and relies on traditional fuels, Sri Lanka faces similar issues especially in rural areas, where reliance on firewood contributes to deforestation and air pollution. Addressing energy poverty in a climate constrained space is crucial for Sri Lanka, emphasizing the need for sustainable energy solutions to improve the quality of life while not exacerbating environmental degradation (Jayasinghe, Selvanathan, & Selvanathan, 2021)

The argument that economic growth has helped rich countries to build resilience against climate impacts, such as Netherland's flood defences compared with Bangladesh's vulnerability can be applied to Sri Lanka. Sustainable economic growth is necessary to improve infrastructure and adaptive capacities in Sri Lanka. Degrowth critiques highlight the impact of neoliberal economic policies promoting global inequalities which can be linked to Sri Lanka's struggles with the adverse effects of global economic practices on its local environment and economy (Institute of Policy Studies, 2018).

Green growth offers a framework for Sri Lanka to achieve economic development while addressing environmental challenges. Technological innovation, green investment and sustainable policies can help decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. International initiatives like green climate fund and the Adaption fund provides examples of how Sri Lanka can seek financial and technical support for climate adaption and mitigation efforts (Global Green Growth Institute, 2021)

Reduced Inequalities

Degrowth promotes the redistribution of wealth and resources from the Global North to the Global South. This

can help to address global inequalities, ensuring that basic needs in lower income countries are met and that these countries can develop sustainably without following the exploitative patterns of growth seen in high income countries. Through reduction of economic growth of wealth nations, degrowth aims to decrease the global economic disparities. The idea is that if rich countries consume less, resources can be freed up for poorer countries allowing them to improve their living conditions without increasing global ecological footprint (Radkowsch & Strunk, 2023).

Economic Independence and Self Sufficiency

Degrowth encourages lower income countries to break free from their economic dependence on high income nations. This involves shifting away from export-oriented economies towards more localized, self-sufficient economic systems. This can enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability to global market fluctuations (Martinez).

Degrowth offers an alternative development model that doesn't rely on continuous economic growth. This model emphasizes sustainability, equity and well being over mere GDP growth and it encourages the Global South to pursue development paths that are more in harmony with their ecological and social contexts (GIZ; PEGNET, 2021).

Reduction of Exploitative practices

Degrowth seeks to end the exploitative extraction of resources from the Global South by high income countries. By reducing demand for raw materials in the Global North, degrowth can help to preserve the natural resources of lower income countries and promote more sustainable and equitable use of these resources. Degrowth supports fairer global trade practices. This includes reducing trade barriers imposed by rich countries which often disadvantage producers in the global south. More equitable trade can help ensure that producers in lower income countries receive fair compensation for their goods and services (Hickel, What does degrowth mean? A few points of Clarrification, 2020).

Enhanced Social and Economic Conditions

Degrowth advocates for strengthening social security schemes and labour rights in low income earning countries and prioritizing wellbeing and social justice, degrowth policies can help create more stable and fair societies, where people have the support and security they need to thrive. Degrowth promotes non capitalist economic initiatives, such as cooperatives and community-based enterprises. These initiatives can provide alternative means of economic organizations that are more equitable and sustainable, offering people in the global south more control over their economic destinies (Buchs & Koch, 2019).

Industrialization and Modernization

Developing countries are in various stages of industrialization and modernization. Degrowth emphasis on reducing industrial output may conflict with these countries' goals of building robust industrial sectors and technological advancements. Economic growth fuels innovation and infrastructure development. A degrowth model might limit technological progress and the development of critical infrastructure, hindering long term development goals (Khmara & Kronenberg, 2020).

Social and Cultural Factors

In many developing countries, economic growth is closely tied to national pride and cultural aspirations. Degrowth advocates for strengthening social security schemes and labour rights in lower income countries. By prioritizing wellbeing and social justice, degrowth policies can help create more stable and fair societies, where people can support and security they need to thrive. Degrowth promotes non capitalist economic initiatives, such as cooperatives and community-based enterprises. These initiatives can provide alternative means of economic organization that are more equitable and sustainable, offering people of global South to enhance their quality of life (Strunk, 2023).

Structural Reform of Global Economy

Degrowth calls upon the structural reform of the global political economy to address the unequivocal power relations between global south and north. This includes restructuring the international monetary system and cancelling the debt of the global south which can relieve financial burdens and allow the countries to invest in sustainable development. Degrowth fosters international solidarity by advocating for transfer of resources, technology and financial support from rich to poor countries. This global cooperation is crucial for achieving a fair and sustainable world where all states can thrive together (Parrique, 2019).

Challenges of Degrowth approach for developing countries

Economic Stability and Growth Dependency

Developing countries often rely on economic growth to achieve better quality of life, reducing poverty and improving infrastructure. The degrowth movement may advocate for reduced economic activity and may hinder these efforts. Sri Lanka and other developing states are more susceptible to economic instability. A degrowth approach could exacerbate issues like unemployment, fiscal crises and reduced income leading to social unrest and economic hardship (Fyock, 2022).

Dependence on Foreign Aid and Debt

Many developing countries rely on foreign aid and loans. Degrowth could affect their ability to service debt, potentially leading to financial crises and increased dependency on international financial institutions. Developing economies depend on FDI (Foreign Direct Investments) for development. A degrowth approach might deter foreign investors, leading to reduced capital inflows and stunted economic progress (UNCTAD, 2023).

Industrial and Technological Development

Developing countries are in various stages of industrialization and modernization and degrowth emphasis on reducing industrial output may conflict with these countries' goals of building robust industrial sectors and technological advancements. Economic growth fuels innovation and infrastructure development. A degrowth model might limit technological progress and the development of critical infrastructure, hindering long term development goals (Durand, Hofferberth, & Schemelzer, 2024).

Social and Cultural Factors

In many developing countries, economic growth is closely tied to national pride and cultural aspirations (Hanushek, 2013). The idea of degrowth might be culturally and socially unappealing as it contradicts the prevalent narrative of progress and development. Developing nations are increasingly adopting consumer cultures like those in the Global North. Advocating for reducing consumption might face resistance from populations aspiring to higher living standards (Dock, 2023).

Global Power Dynamics

There is a perception that degrowth might primarily benefit the Global North by preserving its resources while limiting the development of the Global South. This could reinforce existing global inequalities and power imbalances. Degrowth could be viewed as a form of neocolonialism where developed countries impose ecological and economic limits on developing nations restricting their growth and sovereignty (Barlow, et al., 2022).

DISCUSSION

Addressing Historical Injustices and Current Inequalities

One of the strongest key takeaways from degrowth is the flawed metric of GDP, and how obsession with growth

minimizes the importance of less traditional metrics such as inequality and sustainability. Degrowth emphasizes the need to redefine wellbeing beyond purely economic measures like GDP. It encourages societies to prioritize measures such as quality of life, social connection, and ecological sustainability. Degrowth is not a negation of growth but a reorientation of its meaning and implications, challenging the conventional notion of growth as merely economic expansion. Instead, it serves as a foundation for redefining growth as responsible consumption and production aspiring for an equitable and more sustainable future (McCloskey, 2020).

Due to the categorization of the countries across the world as Global South and Global North the concept of degrowth has become more than merely an economic or ecological concept but rather a struggle between power. Reinterpreting degrowth principles to align with the specific needs and aspirations of the global south is crucial as a profound rethinking of both economic and social paradigms rooted in an understanding of historical injustices and ongoing inequality. Traditional degrowth often conceptualized in the context of powerful Global North nations emphasizing in reduction of consumption and production and downsizing economies to mitigate environmental impact. However, applying these principles in the Global South where economic growth is often focused on alleviating poverty and improving living standards, requires a more nuanced approach (Strunk,2023; Hickel,2022).

This perspective underscores the importance of addressing historical injustices and imbalances in the pursuit of sustainable development. For the Global South, and specifically for Sri Lanka, degrowth principles offer a path to rethink development priorities, focusing on creating a society that values sustainability and equity over mere economic expansion (Strunk, 2023).

Any degrowth strategy must include reparative justice measures such as debt cancellation, fair trade practices and technology transfer to rectify the imbalances and provide the Global South with the means of pursuing sustainable development on its own terms. Degrowth of the South should prioritize social equity, community resilience and local autonomy. This involves fostering economic systems that emphasize solid and local self-reliance rather than dependence on global markets. Community-based economies that integrate local knowledge and practices can be more sustainable and equitable, offering an alternative to the exploitative global economic structures (Kallis, 2015).

Environmental sustainability as a core tenet of degrowth must be pursued in a way that respects the ecological context and indigenous knowledge systems of the Global South unlike the industrialized growth models that have devastated many ecosystems. Sustainable development in these regions should emphasize the restoration and preservation of biodiversity. Policies to promote renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation of natural resources to create harmonious relationship between human, communities, and their environment (Iancu, 2024).

To achieve true sustainability a reinterpreted degrowth framework must prioritize a just transition for the Global South. This means dismantling the current system of unequal exchange, where the North consumes excessively while the South bears the brunt of environmental degradation. A globally redistributed tax on resource extraction, coupled with technology transfer and capacity building initiatives, can empower Southern nations to pursue equitable development pathways that decouple economic growth from ecological destruction. The transformation fosters resilient, self-sufficient communities that are less vulnerable to external shocks and better equipped to manage their own resources. Ultimately, a degrowth perspective for the South envisions a multilateral economic system that respects diverse cultures and biospheres, fostering a more just and sustainable future for all (Islar, Koch, Raphael, & Paulsson, 2024). To relate this degrowth framework to a Sri Lankan case study, consider examining Sri Lanka's tea industry as an example. The tea industry is a significant part of Sri Lanka's economy but has been historically shaped by colonial exploitation and unequal exchange patterns that persist today. Sri Lanka's tea industry, a legacy of colonial times, is a major export-oriented sector. However, the industry has faced numerous challenges, including environmental degradation, unfair labour practices, and vulnerability to global market fluctuations. The North benefits from consuming tea at relatively low costs, while the environmental and social costs are borne by Sri Lanka, particularly by smallholder farmers and plantation workers. A reinterpreted degrowth framework for Sri Lanka's tea industry would involve dismantling this system of unequal exchange. This could be achieved through fair trade practices that ensure farmers and workers receive fair compensation, and through debt relief measures for smallholders who are often trapped in cycles of poverty

due to volatile market prices and climate impacts. The introduction of a globally redistributed tax on resource extraction could fund initiatives that support the transition to more sustainable and equitable practices in the tea sector. For instance, technology transfer and capacity-building initiatives could help smallholder farmers adopt sustainable agricultural practices, reduce reliance on harmful pesticides, and improve productivity without further environmental degradation. By investing in community-based economies that emphasize local knowledge and practices, Sri Lanka could foster more resilient and self-sufficient tea-growing communities. These communities would be less dependent on global markets and better equipped to manage their own resources, reducing vulnerability to external economic shocks and climate change (Thasifah, Arachage, & Dissanayake, 2020).

The following initiatives in the Global South can embody the principles of reimagined degrowth, focusing on sustainability, social equity and local autonomy while addressing historical injustices and global inequality. Sri Lanka as a country in the tropical region, has an abundance of sunshine, wind and hydropower potential which actively pursues renewable energy sources. The Sri Lankan government has set a target of achieving a whopping 70% renewable energy contribution to its electricity generation by 2030 (Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, 2023). This ambitious target which focuses signifies a significant shift towards clean energy sources. Sri Lanka also further capitalizes on its strengths, prioritizing hydropower, solar and wind energy projects. The Sustainable Energy Authority is actively involved in developing a renewable energy resource development plan to guide large scale project implementation. By embracing renewables, Sri Lanka expects not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also generate new jobs in clean energy sectors. This aligns with Sri Lanka's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, ensuring that economic growth is pursued in harmony with environmental sustainability. (Asian Development Bank, 2017).

Exploring International Cooperation in Degrowth: Supporting Sustainable Development While Preventing Neocolonialism

International cooperation projects aim to support populations in developing countries or those affected by emerging situations, promoting the well-being of the Global South. However, it is crucial to realistically assess the implications and repercussions of these projects. Understanding the local context, including cultural elements and educational levels, is essential before implementation to ensure that the initiatives are effective and do not inadvertently cause harm (Paulo, 2014).

Sri Lanka's push for renewable energy is a commendable step towards environmental and economic sustainability. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the historical and ongoing challenges faced by developing nations in transitioning to clean energy. The current global energy often reflects historical power imbalances. According to the UNFCCC'S data on energy transition targets, developed nations are expected to achieve a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 20230 based on 1990 levels, while Sri Lanka as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions aims for a 70% reduction in emissions from the energy sector by 2030 compared to business as usual scenarios (Sri Lanka Ministry Of Environment, 2021). Developed nations, with their head start in industrialization, have contributed significantly to climate change yet possess greater resources and infrastructure for a renewable energy transition. This creates a situation where developing nations facing the brunt of climate impacts, often lack the financial and technological means to implement renewable solutions at the necessary scale. Transitioning to renewable energy should be done soon but most of the material extracted comes from the Global South. Issues like access to financing, fair trade practices for green technologies and knowledge transfer from developed nations are crucial considerations (Theiventhran, 2022).

A successful global shift to clean energy requires addressing these historical inequalities and creating a more equitable playing field. Continuous growth in the North means rising final energy demand which will in turn require rising levels of extractives, complicating matters further, decarbonization cannot be accomplished fast enough to respect Paris targets as long as energy use in the Global North remains high IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) models heavily rely on bioenergy with carbon capture and storage will make the process of degrowth much easier. But deploying BECCS (Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage) at scale would require land for biofuel plantation up to three times size of India (Theiventhran, 2022).

Degrowth pledges the reality of ecological debt and calls for an end to the colonial patterns of appropriation that

underpin Northern growth, to release the South from exploitation and a future of climate breakdown. Degrowth in other words, is a demand for decolonization. Southern countries should be free to organize their resources and labour around meeting human needs rather than around servicing Northern growth. Decolonization is a crucial precondition for successful development in the South (Hickel, What does degrowth mean? A few points of Clarification, 2020).

Exploring the Impact of Development Injustices on Social Groups and Proposing Strategies for Ecological Justice

Global carbon emissions are expected to rise, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities and contributing to their expansion. The link between environmental crises and social injustice is now widely accepted. The environmentalists, economist, scholars and scientists feel that time is running out for incremental approaches to prove effective and that there is an inescapable need for a radical, transformative change that combine sustainability and justice (Fox, 2022).

Environmental injustice can be expressed through lack of resources, unequal exposure to toxins and limited access to knowledge about unsustainable environmental practices which has severe impact on communities (Patnaik, Son, Feng, & Ade, 2020). The ecological processes which contribute the perfect storm of conditions can create ecological injustices. Integrating environment justice into applied ecology research is crucial for addressing resource access, pollution, and climate change impacts, but requires stronger collaboration with community stakeholders and researchers (Ritchie, 2023).

Marginalized communities, these groups are mainly indigenous and low-income populations, often bearing the brunt of development projects. They may be displaced from land to make dams, mines, and other infrastructure projects. Additionally, pollution from these projects can disproportionately affect their health and livelihood (Mendis, Thayaparan, Kaluarachchi, & Pathirage, 2023).

Focusing attention on Mannar wind farms and coastal communities, the establishment of the infrastructure has led to the displacement of coastal communities, primarily dependent on fishing. Loss of access to traditional fishing grounds and changes in marine ecosystems have severely impacted their livelihoods. Concerns have been raised about the potential impact of wind farms on marine biodiversity, including disruption to migratory patterns of birds and marine mammals. These impacts can further affect the livelihoods of coastal communities reliant on these ecosystems (Abeysinghe, 2024). Moving to the Southern Expressway development, this critically boosted connectivity and diversion of traffic in the coastal area but it adversely affected those dependent on tourism and local trade. The expressway has also raised concerns about coastal erosion and habitat destruction which has a devastating impact on the fishing community again (Karunathilaka, Devapriya, & Shanika, 2021).

Due to limited participation, communities often lack the ability to advocate for their rights and have their needs addressed. This absence of a strong voice can result in persistent inequality and hinder their efforts to achieve necessary changes. The loss of livelihoods, through development projects, the disruption of traditional ways of life particularly communities heavy reliant on natural resources (McCloskey, 2020). The loss of livelihoods caused by development projects often disrupts traditional ways of life, especially for communities heavily reliant on natural resources. Due to the lack of adequate alternative livelihood opportunities, the natural resources in the Puttalam Lagoon such as fish populations, seagrass beds, and mangroves are being severely overexploited. This overexploitation stems from several groups, including refugees from conflict-affected areas, fishermen restricted by national security measures, poor fishing communities using inefficient gear, youth fishing as a temporary measure, and prawn farmers converting mangroves into culture ponds. The resulting degradation includes increased pressure on fishery resources, destruction of seagrass beds and breeding grounds, frequent capture of juvenile fish, and water pollution from various sources. To address these issues, it is crucial to diversify livelihood strategies, implement poverty reduction programs, provide vocational training, extend housing policies to lagoon communities, and empower local populations in decision-making processes. By supporting alternative livelihoods and ensuring equitable resource access, it is possible to mitigate overexploitation and promote both ecological and socio-economic stability in these communities (Dayananda, 2004).

To achieve ecological justice, it is essential that community-cantered development projects involve affected

communities from the planning stage. Engaging these communities early on ensures their needs and concerns are adequately addressed, leading to more sustainable and equitable outcomes (Iancu, 2024).

An Environmental rigorous assessment should be undertaken to evaluate the potential environmental and social impacts of development projects. In addition to enhancing effectiveness it is crucial to incorporate more robust public participation, long term monitoring and comprehensive assessment of cumulative impacts (Momtaz & S, 2013). Mitigation strategies and community compensation plans should be developed if necessary. In addition, the rights of indigenous peoples to their land and resources must be upheld. This includes the right to free, prior and informed consent regarding development projects that may affect them. A relevant case study is the Colombo Port City Project in Sri Lanka. This large-scale development faced significant criticism due to its initial lack of comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments. The project led to concerns over the effects on local ecosystems and displacement of communities. In response to criticism, developers were required to enhance their environmental assessments, increase transparency, and better incorporate community feedback into their planning and mitigation strategies (Gunawansa, 2021).

Development projects should prioritize sustainable practices that minimize environmental harm and promote responsible resource use. This could involve renewable energy sources, energy measures and sustainable land management techniques. To ensure adherence to environmental and social safeguards, clear accountability mechanisms must be established to hold developers accountable for their actions. Transparency in decision making fosters trust and allows communities to hold developers accountable (Dock, 2023).

Assessing the Effects of Global Degrowth on Globalization

The concept of degrowth, while often met with resistance, offers a potential framework for addressing complex global challenges like transnational waste. The rapid industrialization and economic growth of China and India have undeniably contributed to their global economic prominence. However, these developments have also generated substantial amounts of waste, a portion of which has been exported to countries like Sri Lanka (SACEP and UN environment, 2018).

Sri Lanka, positioned as a developing nation as per (World Bank Group, 2024), has faced the brunt of this waste importation. The influx of plastic waste has overwhelmed the country's waste management infrastructure, leading to severe environmental and health consequences. This situation highlights the unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of globalization. While China and India have reaped the rewards of industrial growth, countries like Sri Lanka have borne the burden of their waste (Kwakwa & Mora, 2021).

A degrowth perspective would challenge this model of linear economic expansion. It would question the necessity of continuous growth in countries like China and India, especially when it comes at the expense of the environment and the well-being of other nations. By reducing the production and consumption of goods in these countries, the volume of waste generated would also decrease, mitigating the impact on countries like Sri Lanka (Kongshoj, 2023).

However, implementing degrowth in these economic powerhouses presents significant challenges. It requires a fundamental shift in economic and societal paradigms, which may face strong resistance from industries and consumers alike. Moreover, the potential economic consequences for these countries need to be carefully considered to avoid social unrest and geopolitical instability (Savini, Strategic planning for degrowth: What, who, how, 2024).

Therefore, while degrowth offers a potential solution to the transnational waste crisis, it is essential to approach this concept with a nuanced understanding of its complexities and potential implications. A balanced approach that combines degrowth principles with other strategies, such as waste reduction, recycling, and international cooperation, may be necessary to effectively address this global challenge (Hoehn, et al., 2021).

Degrowth is focused on reducing excess resource and energy consumption and vast ecological harm is mostly witnessed in the Global North, as the North is responsible for 92% of the global carbon dioxide emission and yet the South has been victimized and suffers majorly by climate change related damages. In addition, high -

countries rely large proportion of global resources from the rest of the world. Resource consumption in the Global North has an ecological impact that affects the South largely (Hickel, What does degrowth mean? A few points of Clarification, 2020).

As per (Radkowsch & Strunk, 2023) criticizes the contend that implementing degrowth in the Global North could have detrimental consequences for Global South economies. These economies often heavily rely on exporting primary commodities and manufactured goods to Northern markets. A decline in Northern demand for these products could lead to significant economic challenges and potential instability in the Global South (Parrique T. , 2017).

Exploring Sri Lanka's tea industry provides a concrete example of the potential negative repercussions of degrowth in the Global North on Global South economies. The country's economy is significantly reliant on tea exports primarily Western markets. A considerable portion of Sri Lanka's tea production is destined for the Global North such as the US, UK and European countries. A decline in the consumption of tea in these countries due to degrowth policies could lead to a substantial drop in demand for Sri Lankan tea. This would inevitably result in lower export earnings, affecting the livelihoods of tea farmers, factory workers and related industries. A downturn in the tea industry would have a ripple effect on the Sri Lankan economy (Agence Francaise de Development, 2024) .

Excess emissions and consumption in the Global North rely on modern terms of colonization and exploitation of the South's fair share of atmospheric commons and the plunder and destruction of the South's ecosystems. Through this perspective, degrowth in the North represents a process of decolonization in the South, to the extent that pressures the community in the South of atmospheric colonization and material extractives (Dock, 2023).

Despite the ecological harms of the South the North should continue to enhance production and consumption because it is critical for the South's development and is ultimately for South's own good. This argument echoes those often made during colonial times, asserting that the extraction and exploitation by colonizers were ultimately beneficial to the Global South. Nicholas Kristof touches on this notion in his New York Times column, "Three cheers for sweat shops" has argued even though the violation of children's and human rights it is quite the best way for the community in the South to get out of poverty, accordingly if the idealist believe to care about the poor and eradicate poverty, we should keep on consuming the products from the sweatshops (Olken, 2017).

Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH): A Case Study

Bhutan, a small Himalayan kingdom in Asia, introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the 1970s as a holistic approach to development, emphasizing the well-being of its citizens over the traditional metric of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GNH is based on four pillars: sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance. Bhutan's approach can offer critical lessons for Sri Lanka as it considers reinterpreting degrowth principles. Like Bhutan, Sri Lanka has a rich cultural heritage and a history of community-based resource management that can be leveraged to promote sustainable development. The GNH model's focus on balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation resonates with the degrowth principles that emphasize reducing material consumption while enhancing quality of life (Brooks, 2014).

GNH prioritizes development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This aligns with degrowth's emphasis on sustainable resource use and ecological balance. GNH recognizes the importance of cultural identity and heritage, which can be crucial for Sri Lanka, where traditional knowledge and practices play a significant role in community life. Bhutan's commitment to environmental protection, including maintaining at least 60% forest cover and being carbon negative, provides a model for Sri Lanka to integrate environmental sustainability into its national policies.

GNH measures success through the well-being and happiness of its citizens rather than economic output alone. This perspective could guide Sri Lanka in developing policies that prioritize human well-being over mere economic growth. While the GNH model is inspiring, its implementation in Sri Lanka would require careful consideration of the country's specific challenges, such as economic inequality, political instability, and the

legacy of colonialism. Adapting GNH principles would also necessitate strong governance, community engagement, and the integration of traditional knowledge systems into national policy frameworks.

The GNH model's success in Bhutan suggests that Sri Lanka could adopt a similar framework, focusing on sustainable development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. By doing so, Sri Lanka could reinterpret degrowth principles to create a development model that is not only ecologically sustainable but also culturally relevant and socially equitable. Bhutan's GNH model serves as a powerful case for reinterpreting degrowth in the Global South, particularly in Sri Lanka. By learning from Bhutan's experiences, Sri Lanka can pursue a development path that addresses historical inequalities, enhances well-being, and promotes sustainable development in line with its unique cultural and environmental context (Asian Development Bank, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Reinterpreting degrowth principles for the Global South, particularly in the context of historical injustices and ongoing inequalities, is essential for fostering sustainable and equitable development. The current global economic system, with its fixation on GDP and economic expansion, often overlooks critical factors like social equity, environmental sustainability, and community wellbeing. Degrowth offers an alternative framework that prioritizes these elements, challenging the traditional notions of growth.

For the Global South, degrowth should not mean a simple reduction in economic activity but rather a profound rethinking of development priorities. This involves adopting alternative metrics for progress, addressing historical injustices through reparative justice measures, and promoting sustainable development practices that are rooted in local knowledge and ecological contexts.

Furthermore, fostering local economies, ensuring social equity, enhancing international cooperation, and promoting ecological justice are crucial strategies. By incorporating these approaches, the Global South can mitigate the adverse effects of globalization, reduce dependence on exploitative global markets, and enhance community resilience and autonomy.

The transition to a degrowth paradigm also necessitates decolonizing development policies and practices. This means ending the exploitative extraction of resources and allowing Southern nations to manage their own development paths.

Ultimately, degrowth reinterpreted for the Global South envisions a future where development is not measured by economic expansion alone but by the sustainability, equity, and wellbeing of all communities. By embracing these principles, countries like Sri Lanka can lead the way in creating a more just and sustainable world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into sustainable development practices

First and foremost, this reimagined degrowth must be acknowledged and address the profound historical injustices such as colonialism and exploitation that have shaped social inequalities. These historical processes have systematically disadvantaged the Global South, leading to entrenched economic disparities that continue to persist. To rectify historical imbalances, it is crucial to advocate for debt cancellation, fair trade practices, and technology transfer from the Global North to the Global South. Additionally, recognizing and integrating indigenous knowledge systems into sustainable development practices is essential.

2. Implementing beyond GDP as the sole indicator of progress

Incorporate measures such as the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) or the Human Development Index (HDI), which factor in environmental health, social equity, and quality of life. Prioritize policies that enhance social connection, community resilience, and overall wellbeing rather than purely economic expansion.

3. Invest in renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydropower

For instance, Sri Lanka's target of 70% renewable energy by 2030 should be supported with appropriate policies and infrastructure. Implement policies promoting sustainable agricultural practices and conservation of natural resources, ensuring the restoration and preservation of biodiversity.

4. Encourage local production and consumption

Encourage the development of local, community-based economies that reduce dependence on global markets and promote self-reliance. Provide support and resources for small-scale, sustainable enterprises that can drive local development without extensive environmental impact.

5. Develop policies which ensure justice is served to marginalized communities

Develop policies that prioritize social equity, ensuring marginalized communities benefit from development projects. Involve local communities in the planning and implementation of development projects to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed.

6. Advocate fair trade practices and green entrepreneurship

Advocate for fair trade practices and the transfer of green technologies from the Global North to South. Implement a globally redistributed tax on resource extraction to fund sustainable development initiatives in the Global South.

7. Environmental Impact assessments

Conduct rigorous environmental impact assessments for all development projects, incorporating public participation and long-term monitoring. Develop and implement compensation plans for communities adversely affected by development projects.

8. Improve managing transnational waste

Enhance international cooperation to manage and reduce transnational waste, ensuring fair distribution of environmental burdens. Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns globally, reducing the ecological footprint of the Global North.

9. Invest in research to develop and implement sustainability

Invest in research to develop and implement sustainable practices tailored to the specific ecological and social contexts of the Global South. Promote environmental education to raise awareness about sustainable practices and the importance of ecological justice.

10. Implementing development policies to prevent exploitation

Ensure that development policies do not perpetuate colonial patterns of resource exploitation. Support the sovereignty of Global South countries in managing their resources and labour. Advocate for the cessation of exploitative practices that prioritize Northern consumption at the expense of Southern ecosystems and communities.

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