

RELISE

DEGROWTH AS MEDIATION BETWEEN ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY[1]

O DECRESCIMENTO COMO MEDIAÇÃO ENTRE ECONOMIA E SUSTENTABILIDADE

Herisson Jones Brandão Araújo[2]

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the factual viability of economic degrowth theory, advocated by Serge Latouche, as mediation so that the world experiences an economy parted from the unlimited growth and observant to sustainability. To do this, it deconstructs the common sense that involves economic logic and it shows that the planetary reality needs to be considered within the development ideals. Its justification lies in the relevance of reflection about the subject in the academic field, so that it can be widespread and it influences all those who have a power portion, even minimum, to promote a break with the capitalist market paradigm, that, fallaciously, disseminates the unlimited growth as beneficial to the global well-being. The specific objectives are achieved on the article development, which has three topics: economic growth and environmental preservation; planetary boundaries as invitations to degrowth; and economic degrowth in view of sustainability. The methodology used includes legal, documental and bibliographic researches, exploratory nature, explanatory character and qualitative analysis.

Keywords: growth, degrowth, economy, nature, sustainability.

RESUMO

A presente pesquisa investiga a viabilidade fática da teoria do decrescimento econômico, preconizada por Serge Latouche, como intermédio para que o mundo experimente uma economia apartada do crescimento ilimitado e cumpridora da sustentabilidade. Para isso, desconstrói o senso comum que envolve a lógica econômica e mostra que a realidade planetária precisa ser considerada dentro dos ideais de desenvolvimento. Sua justificativa encontra-se na relevância da reflexão acerca do assunto no campo acadêmico, para que seja mais difundido e influencie a todos aqueles que tenham uma parcela de poder,

[1] Received on 08/11/2025. Accepted on 27/11/2025. DOI: doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23864030
[2] Universidade de Fortaleza. herissonjones@hotmail.com



mínima que seja, de promover uma ruptura com o paradigma capitalista de mercado, que difunde, falaciosamente, o crescimento ilimitado como benéfico ao bem-estar global. Os objetivos específicos são alcançados no desenvolvimento do artigo, que conta com três tópicos: crescimento econômico e preservação ambiental; limites planetários como convites ao decrescimento; e decrescimento econômico em vista da sustentabilidade. A metodologia utilizada abrange pesquisas legais, documentais e bibliográficas, de natureza exploratória, caráter explicativo e análise qualitativa.

Palavras-chave: crescimento, decrescimento, economia, natureza, sustentabilidade.

INTRODUCTION

Planet Earth has been facing an unprecedented ecological crisis, caused and aggravated daily by hegemonic capitalist interests, which instrumentalize Economics to spread the idea of unlimited growth as a means of achieving social well-being and promoting the satisfaction of human needs. However, the natural resources that can satisfy them are not inexhaustible, which makes them scarce.

The pursuit of unlimited growth and profit at any cost already exceeds the limits the planet can withstand. Excessive consumption fills much of the Earth's surface with waste and generates environmental degradation and pollution. This demonstrates the urgency of actually achieving sustainability, rather than merely using it as advertising for companies seeking to look good to consumers.

The idea of an economy dissociated from excessive growth as a path toward sustainability provides the starting point for this research to investigate the practical nuances of economic degrowth theory. This investigation is justified because this idea breaks with the postulates of the dominant capitalist ideology and has the potential to influence those within society who can act as agents of change in a seemingly consolidated scenario.

To this end, the first section establishes a relationship between environmental preservation and economic growth, the second shows that studies on planetary limits lead to the discussion of degrowth, and the third, in turn,



identifies the contributions of economic degrowth theory toward achieving sustainability. Surveys of legislation, documents, and bibliographic works constitute the methodology adopted, which is explanatory, explicative, and qualitative.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

From the 1960s onward, environmental protection began to gain greater prominence, as awareness of the finiteness of natural resources at that time alerted humanity that caring for the environment is necessary to sustain the lives of present and future generations. The world began to experience something of a reality check, as the ecological alarm had sounded (LEFF, 2010).

This was a period in which the idea of development was based on increasing the number of goods available for consumption and the standard of living, which created an opening for consumerism to gain ground in society. An aggravating factor in this process was that the excessive consumerism established did nothing to mitigate hunger or poverty but, on the contrary, increased inequalities between rich and poor.

Serious environmental, economic, and social problems arose from this, which led to the first world conference on the environment being held in Stockholm in 1972. As the years passed, other conferences on the subject took place, namely: in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, in Johannesburg in 2002, and once again in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Sustainability can thus be seen as a current issue.

According to Leff (2011), sustainability represents a normative guideline for reconstructing the economic order, as a requirement for the continuity of human life and a means of achieving more consistent development, even calling the foundations of production into question. It must therefore rest on three foundations: environmental, social, and economic.



Among these three dimensions, the environmental dimension highlights the relevance of protecting the environment and, consequently, of Environmental Law, whose primary purpose is to help the planet survive, together with every form of life found on it. The social dimension is based on the pursuit of improved living conditions for society, with a reduction in harmful disparities. The economic dimension, in turn, must also be achieved, and it is the focus of the reflections presented in this article.

According to Leff (2010, p. 37), “with the environmental crisis, economics is compelled to assume its responsibility for increasing ecological degradation and the scarcity of natural resources.” Thus, the economic dimension considered here is one that pursues development that promotes a better life for people while generating the least possible environmental impact.

However, what can be observed is that Economics tends to mislead thought through an imagined correctness of the premises adopted to achieve its goals, which always revolve around profit and, for this reason, are also always intended to be exceeded. As a major driver of market competition, it generates an increase in production and consumption relations, in the purported desire to meet needs and guarantee well-being, which brings about a mentality that dominates society.

This perspective exhausts Planet Earth and generates inequalities because it disregards the planet's systemic and interactive nature, insofar as it uses natural resources without, on the other hand, caring about the waste produced and discarded into the environment. Thus, conventional economic notions and practices have transformed valuable natural resources into worthless waste; in other words, raw materials and energy resources are increasingly converted into exhaustible commodities.

Economic growth stems not only from technical development but also from the natural resources exploited, which are usually excluded from the



calculations of the capitalist logic of unlimited growth. It is true that development transforms the world, but not always in the best way, since what nature took a long time to build is consumed in a short period. In this regard, Gina Pompeu and Victor Pompeu (2022, p. 24) highlight:

> The analysis of human well-being versus the cathedrals of consumption, the formation of positive social capital to replace individualism, and the establishment of goals to maintain a stable planet and prevent actions that lead to planetary instability are some of the choices to be outlined.

Indeed, part of the production regarded as development relies on the exploitation of fossil fuels, with a high potential for pollution and planetary degradation, thus generating more harm than benefits. To overcome misguided economic perspectives that disregard nature, it is necessary to understand it as a participant in any path aimed at development. Therefore, economic growth must be aligned with environmental preservation.

Nature sends alarming signals of global warming, and scientists affirm the urgency of ecologically balanced human practices, given the distortion of technological progress by economic agents. To make matters worse, these agents believe that leaving the market free is the solution to environmental problems arising from a developmentalist approach deeply tied to profit and commodification.

It is unreasonable to dissociate global warming from the way human beings perceive and relate to the world, insofar as they seek to exercise control over their own lives and everything around them. After so many years of environmental degradation, nature reacts, and the effects of human greed and excesses begin to be perceived. Balancing human activity and environmental protection proves challenging in contemporary times, and this has been the primary intention pursued in international agreements, with a view to harmonizing human coexistence and needs with the biosphere and its limits.



However, thus far, such coexistence has not been harmonious, and what can be observed is a scenario of destruction within an environmental crisis never seen before, in which incentives for capitalist production and consumption compromise the safety and continuity of life. It is therefore urgent to curb the imbalance in the relationship between the satisfaction of human needs and the finiteness of the Earth's capacities through a conception of development that rejects excessive economic growth, so that the planet can be inhabited by present and future generations. In this regard, Gina Pompeu and Victor Pompeu (2022, p. 25) state:

> Certainly, the transnational, extractivist capitalist regime must be reconsidered beyond a homogenizing perspective of a system that enhances economic growth and progress; it must be studied cautiously, and the side effects of using and destroying nature must be observed. These discussions of economic growth, in the absence of human development and with consequent environmental degradation, must be present in the various forms of the reality of the capitalist system.

Among international agreements, the Paris Agreement proposed containing global warming below 2.0º Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This limit established by the agreement, in the current context that is averse to limits, appears unlikely to be adequately implemented, reinforcing the importance of conceiving new paths for humanity, which suffers amid the dangerous increase in greenhouse gas concentrations resulting from the continuous growth of economic exploitation.

Although the idea that human needs are unlimited and that scarcity exists naturally and universally is part of economic thought, the response industrial times provide to this issue is, paradoxically, even greater growth. However, many of these needs, for which solutions are sought, are created by economic agents themselves, which only demonstrates how inefficient the mentality of profit and unlimited growth is and, moreover, how perverse it can be, since it relies on increasing social inequalities. In this regard, Gina Pompeu and Victor Pompeu (2022, p. 18) argue:



> The anthropocentric perspective, grounded in capitalist reason, encouraged the opening of markets and economic globalization and proposed generating employment and income to free human beings from the chains of scarcity and ignorance, but it was unable to overcome income concentration and revitalize the rights of fraternity, diffuse and transindividual rights.

Indeed, the economic theory that there are no limits that cannot be overcome is called into question insofar as so many poor people can still be seen amid so many rich people. In fact, most of the population faces increasingly pronounced limits, since there are insufficient resources for everyone. It is an illusion to think that economic activity can satisfy the entire range of needs, an illusion encouraged by the excessive desire to produce and consume. The hegemonic logic of profit thus recognizes scarcity but uses it to justify the relentless pursuit of growth at any cost.

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES AS AN INVITATION TO DEGROWTH

Planet Earth is humanity's common home, but the unreasonable increase in production and consumption practices, exceeding its limits, causes environmental externalities that demonstrate the urgency of breaking with the paradigm of social organization linked to excessive economic growth. The dangerous collision between the pursuit of economic growth and planetary boundaries also demonstrates that the biosphere's regenerative capacity can no longer keep pace with the extent to which it is exploited, since its raw materials have been transformed into waste before nature can turn them back into resources.

In the current context, at a time when measures to contain global warming and climate change have not produced the expected effects, a greater understanding is emerging of the limits to growth and the relevance of calling for a reduction in the pace of development. These changes in the Earth's



temperature, together with human interference in environmental balance, even mark the beginning of a geological era called the Anthropocene.

For Gina Pompeu and Alessandro Gouveia (2022, p. 440), this human capacity to affect life on the planet "would result from a culture of civilization that excludes life, converts everything into commodities, and turns people into consumers." The authors continue (2022, p. 441), arguing that "the anthropocentric model has proved less efficient than expected in containing the advance of the climate emergency and needs to be revised."

Given the clear unsustainability of global economic processes, space opens up for considering the feasibility of degrowth, to confront capitalist injustices and propose a truly sustainable alternative lifestyle, recognizing that the traditional economic mentality endangers life on Planet Earth. Thus, "the paradigm of exponential growth must be abandoned in favor of a more balanced one" (POMPEU; POMPEU, 2022, p. 23).

The invitation to degrowth is not simply a criticism of the current economic system but rather a theory supported by strong arguments and embodied in strategic political action, with the aim of encouraging the entire global society to combat the harms of unlimited economic growth. Indeed, according to Gina Pompeu and Alessandro Gouveia (2022, p. 447-448):

> Development viewed from an exclusively economic perspective no longer serves as a useful parameter for assessing how prosperous a given nation or locality is; after all, society's depletion of the environment brings it closer to barbarity than to civility. The idea of measuring human development by the money or wealth produced is unequal, since not everyone always has the same opportunity to develop their abilities.

To better analyze the planet's ecological conditions, the Stockholm Resilience Centre in Sweden developed research that culminated in the presentation, in 2009, of the so-called planetary boundaries *(planetary boundaries)*, which, once known, help enable human development and prosperity while respecting environmental sustainability. The establishment of



these boundaries considers nature's regenerative potential, such that exceeding them increases the risks of severe or irreversible environmental changes (STEFFEN; RICHARDSON, ROCKSTRÖM; Et. al, 2015).

A study newly published in 2023 in the journal Nature, led by Swedish scientist Johan Rockström, revised and expanded the aforementioned research, which he had also previously led. This recent study, conducted within the group called the *Earth Comission*, condensed planetary boundaries into eight categories, concerning: 1) climate; 2) preservation of areas with natural ecosystems; 3) functional integrity of ecosystems; 4) surface water; 5) groundwater; 6) the amount of nitrogen in water and soil; 7) the amount of phosphorus in water and soil; and 8) aerosol pollution. For each of these categories, percentages of acceptable changes within the boundaries were established, with the warning that seven of them had already been crossed (ROCKSTRÖM; GUPTA; QIN, Et. al, 2023).

This study, whose title can be translated as safe and just Earth system boundaries, adds other aspects to the definition of planetary boundaries by incorporating equity and environmental justice into the calculations and, by way of conclusion, indicating that the planet's future chances of salvation are even more restricted when these new elements are considered. The update aims to improve the weaknesses of the previous research and enable the most vulnerable population, especially those living in the Southern Hemisphere, to also benefit from development safely and justly (ROCKSTRÖM; GUPTA; QIN, Et. al, 2023).

The only planetary boundary that had not yet been completely exceeded was climate, when considered as a whole, because the researchers understood that warming of 1.5º Celsius above pre-industrial levels, although having consequences, is tolerable for the planet and the inhabitants of developed countries but would cause significant harm to the most vulnerable population. The



study in question estimates that, upon reaching such a temperature, 200 million people would be harmed by it, and 500 million people would suffer in the long term from rising sea levels. For this reason, the scholars considered it fair to limit global warming to 1.0º Celsius above pre-industrial levels, a boundary that has already been exceeded, since the planet is currently 1.2º Celsius warmer (ROCKSTRÖM; GUPTA; QIN, Et. al, 2023). In other words, if the element of environmental justice is considered, the climate planetary boundary has also already been exceeded.

Kate Raworth (2009) also points to boundaries within which humanity must remain on Earth through the allegory of a donut, representing five spaces, namely: the empty inner space refers to what humanity is critically deprived of; the inner edge is the social foundation; the doughnut itself is the safe and just space available to humanity; the outer edge concerns the ecological ceiling; and everything exceeding this boundary degrades the planet, so human beings must meet their basic needs within the space equivalent to the dough of the doughnut. Thus, the ecological boundaries represented by its edges are barriers that keep human life viable and cannot be crossed without disrupting planetary balance.

The image of the donut demonstrates that a balanced growth paradigm must emerge in place of unlimited growth. Indeed, once the ecological ceiling is exceeded because of excessive production and consumption, the balance between economic growth and human development is disrupted. In this regard, Kate Raworth (2019, p. 107) maintains:

> Instead of accepting increasing inequality as a law of economic development, something inevitable that must be endured, twenty-first-century economists will view it as an error of economic design and seek to create economies that are far more distributive of the value they generate. Instead of focusing primarily on income redistribution, their goal will also be to redistribute wealth—especially wealth derived from control over land, money creation, enterprise, technology, and knowledge. And instead of focusing only on market and state solutions, they will also harness the power of the commons. It is a fundamental shift in perspective, and it is already being implemented.



This issue of planetary boundaries demonstrates that Planet Earth, despite its vastness, is unique and integrated, which is why it must be observed systematically and quantitatively regarding the relationships among its aspects, so that planetary balance can remain stable. Furthermore, it reveals that unlimited economic growth must no longer be accepted and that the emergence of an economic paradigm whose goal is to reconcile the maintenance of human life with the planet's potential to provide its natural resources is essential.

Regarding boundaries, it is appropriate, finally, to emphasize the importance of Law as a mechanism for countering free-market capitalism and its excessive desire to expand its domains in order to grow infinitely. However, according to the understanding expressed by Herman Benjamin (2021, p. 562), from an ecological perspective, what has been observed is the prominence of what he calls the Theatrical State, as follows:

> Unfortunately, the State does not always combine legislative and implementation activities with equal emphasis. It is common for public authorities to legislate not to enforce but simply to appease social dissatisfaction without resolving it. This is the theatrical State, one that, when regulating environmental protection, maintains a vacuum between law and implementation. A public authority that, in the cold letter of the legal text, does not mind blustering but easily and quickly becomes subdued in the face of the difficulties of political-administrative reality and powerful economic interests, precisely those most responsible for environmental degradation. State theatricality is the hallmark of this separation between law and implementation, between the written rule and the rule in practice. The result is an incomplete Environmental Public Order.

If the Legal Sciences do not make efforts to impose limits, extinction awaits humanity. This reflection must be undertaken, especially in a context in which the global warming limit imposed by the countries participating in the Paris Agreement is 2.0º Celsius, in contradiction with the idea of environmental justice upheld in the latest study concerning planetary boundaries.



ECONOMIC DEGROWTH TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

Despite the previously identified harms of unlimited growth, global economic agents approach the problem with a stance of continuous exploitation of the planet under the pretext of achieving an unattainable state of well-being. Thus, economic growth along these lines is primarily responsible for environmental degradation, which is why capitalist guidelines cannot determine society's direction.

Within the topic of development, Economics, because it is supposedly neutral knowledge, is regarded as natural, unquestionable, and beyond value judgments, suggesting that political decisions are indisputable and that the economic aspect of sustainable development is a constant. For Carducci (2014), this idea is pernicious and mistaken, since it is impossible for the scientific character of economics to be replicated in exact and precise formulas when placed within a given reality. Furthermore, according to Carducci (2020, p. 96-97):

> On the one hand, the world economy is currently governed by global financial markets that produce or burn wealth (in an amount far greater than the financial reserves of individual States) independently of States' material decisions and, above all, much faster than the time required for political decisions. The market, in brief, is now faster than States, and this temporal dysfunction inexorably not only conditions and captures public decisionmakers but also instantly frightens public opinion and private decisionmakers.

To combat this economic hegemony, inattentive to planetary boundaries, the conception of degrowth emerges, endeavoring to change the course that the planet's history has followed and to renew the way human beings relate to nature in the face of a mentality that seeks only growth for growth's sake. This is the main goal of degrowth: “to strongly emphasize abandoning the objective of unlimited growth.” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 4).

The foremost exponent of degrowth theory is the French economist and philosopher Serge Latouche, for whom degrowth should not be associated with



a symmetrical opposition to growth, that is, negative growth (LATOUCHE, 2009). In fact, its intention branches into two aims: raising awareness of the ecological crisis and criticizing development (LATOUCHE, 2012). For him, “the alternative is indeed: degrowth or barbarism!” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 5). His criticism rests on his belief that “development is neither lasting nor sustainable” but is, in fact, “a toxic word, whatever adjective it is dressed in” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 8-9). Regarding economic degrowth theory, Marcus Mauricius Holanda (2021, p. 229) states:

> One of the main concerns of degrowth theory lies precisely in trying to create strategies in response to unlimited growth and consumer society. Economic growth alone brings neither happiness nor the leveling of inequalities; instead, what can be observed is an infinite cycle of production-consumption-disposal, thus constituting one of the dilemmas for sustainability.

In this vein, degrowth is linked to the idea that less can be better, with an emphasis not strictly on less but also on different, since, in a society that embraces it, everything will indeed be different, from the use of energy sources to human relationships and even relationships with other beings in nature. Degrowth therefore intends to break with a model of society addicted to growth, which requires decolonizing the imaginary to establish an awareness that protecting nature can be a central value (DEMARIA; LATOUCHE, 2019).

It is also important to emphasize that degrowth is not an economic definition, although it operates in the macroeconomic sphere. It goes further, as it concerns better use of energy and raw materials while considering nature's limits and the biosphere's regenerative potential. In this way, it challenges society's imaginary to free itself from ideas instilled by the market, particularly those generating pollution. For Latouche (2009, p. 18), society is encouraged to be consumerist, as follows:

> Three ingredients are necessary for consumer society to continue its diabolical round: advertising, which creates the desire to consume; credit, which provides the means; and the accelerated and planned



> obsolescence of products, which renews the need for them. These three driving forces of growth society are true “incitements to crime”.

Degrowth also seeks to redistribute wealth equally between North and South and between present and future generations (DEMARIA; LATOUCHE, 2019). It can thus be seen that degrowth is not simply an alternative but a set of alternatives to economic totalitarianism, which, while victimizing people, turns them into its agents by colonizing their imaginaries. Latouche (2009, p. 37) even calls this deception into which people fall the “phenomenon of satisfied majorities, manifested in the middle classes' shift from solidarity to individual selfishness.”

Indeed, the coloniality currently endured by the society of unlimited growth is the cause of the profound crisis facing humanity, overcoming which presupposes political-cultural renewal. Thus, the ideal of degrowth does not merely embody an abstract theory but a political platform for building convivial, autonomous, and frugal societies in the North and South (LATOUCHE, 2009). In this regard, Leff (2010, p. 58) also points out:

> The commitment to degrowth is not merely a critical and reactive morality; resistance to an oppressive, destructive, unequal, and unjust power; a manifestation of alternative beliefs, tastes, and lifestyles. Degrowth is not mere disbelief, but an awareness of a process established at the heart of the civilizational process that threatens the life of the living planet and the quality of human life. The call for degrowth must not be a rhetorical discourse that gives wings to criticism of the unsustainability of the prevailing economic model but must be rooted in solid theoretical argumentation and a political strategy.

There is no doubt that the unrestrained expropriation of natural resources, gas emissions, and waste generation, if they continue at current levels, will aggravate the multiple crises facing the planet, demonstrating the error of the developmentalist model based on profit and the burning of fossil fuels. Although these crises are disguised by those who seek to mitigate their ecological-social costs, such costs exist and are often shifted to other places and people, especially future generations (KALLIS; PAULSON; D’ALISA, 2020).



The context is one of a difficult reality in which the end of capitalism or even the end of the world can be imagined, but not the end of growth. International agreements on climate change, such as the Paris Agreement, will be ineffective if this reality is not challenged through degrowth that can be implemented in the most diverse spheres, from the most ordinary aspects of everyday life to Law and social institutions.

Indeed, in these times of crisis, it is extremely relevant for decoloniality to permeate Politics and Law so that degrowth can be better operationalized. In this way, society would certainly enjoy greater environmental stability, with respected limits on pollutant emissions, and there would indeed be well-being, not because of wealth but because of the predominance of equality and simplicity (KALLIS, 2011).

To build a degrowth society, Latouche (2009, p. 42) presents what he calls the “virtuous circle of serene degrowth,” corresponding to the “systematic and ambitious articulation of eight interdependent changes that reinforce one another and can trigger a process of serene, convivial, and sustainable degrowth.” For the author, these changes can be synthesized “in a ‘virtuous circle’ of eight ‘Rs’: re-evaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, redistribute, relocalize, reduce, reuse, recycle.”

Re-evaluating concerns the values upon which societies rest, generally individualistic, immoral, selfish, pecuniary, and competitive. Re-evaluation must revolve around the values that should prevail compared with today's dominant values, if these can even be called values. It calls for reclaiming the values of truth, a sense of justice, responsibility, democracy, differences, solidarity, and spiritual life (LATOUCHE, 2009).

Economics converts nature's abundance into scarcity insofar as it appropriates natural resources and commodifies them. In this field, reconceptualizing refers to redefining and/or rescaling certain concepts tainted



by capitalist logic, such as wealth and poverty, as well as scarcity and abundance. The profit mentality distorts these concepts, which must return to their origins (LATOUCHE, 2009).

Restructuring concerns adapting the productive apparatus and social relations to achieve the aforementioned change in values. “This restructuring will be all the more radical the more the systemic character of dominant values is shaken” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 46-47).

Redistributing encompasses “the distribution of wealth and access to natural heritage, both between North and South and within each society, among classes, generations, and individuals.” This redistribution has two positive effects on reducing consumption, one direct and the other indirect. The first works by “reducing the power and means of the global consumer class and, more particularly, those of the oligarchy of major predators.” The second works by “reducing the incitement to conspicuous consumption” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 47).

Regarding relocalizing, it “means producing locally, insofar as essential, the products intended to meet the population's needs, in local businesses.” Only essential capital and goods should be moved. Even politics, culture, and the meaning of life should also be tied to the local territory (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 49).

Reducing means seeking to decrease the impact on the biosphere, excessive consumption, waste, health risks, mass tourism, and working time. Latouche explains that mass tourism must be reduced because the tourism industry has created “a commercial consumption that destroys the environment, culture, and social fabric of destination countries.” He further explains that the “reduction of working time is an essential element in the policy of combating unemployment,” involving “certainly distributing work so that all those who wish to can have a job” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 49-54).



Finally, reusing and recycling specifically promote the reduction of waste, in opposition to planned obsolescence, and the recycling of waste that may not have been directly reused. Ultimately, after presenting each of the eight Rs, Latouche concludes that “what is lacking are incentives for businesses and consumers to take the virtuous path” (LATOUCHE, 2009, p. 54-58).

By applying these eight Rs, degrowth encourages and supports cooperative forms of production and consumption, with due attention to complementing and renewing large public arrangements, as well as enabling private property to be used in a more ecological way. Indeed, it does not intend merely to introduce a replacement within monoculture but to explore arrangements different from the current ones, which are addicted to unlimited growth.

Degrowth recognizes the importance of technological innovation in production, particularly innovation that does not depend on fossil fuels and prioritizes renewable energy sources. Therefore, it strategically supports the development of vital production processes from resilient and adaptive perspectives in the face of historical and environmental obstacles that harm contemporary society (KALLIS; PAULSON; D’ALISA, 2020).

In the opinion of Marcus Mauricius Holanda (2021), companies should consider possible environmental interferences that cause planetary damage, as well as incorporate environmental potential as a guide for development within the limitations of natural resources, since an ecologically balanced environment is relevant to all stakeholders. Thus, nature and ecological boundaries should occupy a central position in dealings aimed at finding solutions.

In contrast, on the part of the capitalist system, anything suggesting a change in the course of growth will be seen as a threat to economies and their associated political configurations, which is why the degrowth project is rejected



and denied despite its robust scientific foundations, which demonstrate how the externalities of excessive growth affect the planet and its inhabitants.

This denialist stance can be observed because economic agents do not want global geopolitics to cease being subject to their premises and driven by their interests. This explains why discourses in favor of independence from fossil fuels and their related harms are regarded as opposed to development, with the aim of concealing the inequalities present in the system.

Even if unlimited growth were sustainable from an economic, social, or ecological perspective, it would be unable to truly provide a fulfilling lifestyle, as is claimed. Precisely for this reason, degrowth aims to provide guidance to socioeconomies and help establish lifestyles truly permeated by pleasure, health, and satisfaction. If the economy itself is also permeated by these aspects, it can be said to contribute to achieving true sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The necessary changes in the dynamics of environmental exploitation began to gain greater prominence from the 1960s onward, when the notion of the finiteness of natural resources moved closer to common sense. This notion also gave rise to the awareness that unlimited growth makes the continuity of life on Earth unviable.

From that time onward, environmental, social, and economic problems began to be more clearly recognized, especially in their relationships with sustainability. In this context, conferences on the environment were organized, which were extremely important for discussing all dimensions of sustainability.

The economic dimension was the focus of the research outlined in this article. This dimension aims to conceive an economy committed to providing a good quality of life for human beings and reducing environmental impacts by respecting planetary boundaries. Through an examination of economic degrowth



theory, advocated by Serge Latouche, it proved suitable as an instrument for achieving the appropriate guidelines of the economic dimension in question.

The pinnacle of degrowth theory is what Latouche himself calls the virtuous circle of serene degrowth, which refers to the relevance of observing the practices of re-evaluating, reconceptualizing, restructuring, redistributing, relocalizing, reducing, reusing, and recycling. In synthesis, degrowth points toward a reassessment of values so that humanity no longer submits to excessive and greedy growth and, as it evolves, seeks a happy and fulfilling life with the benefits of everyday simplicity.

Supported by the aforementioned theoretical framework, questions and deconstructions are proposed concerning paradigms linked to pollution and the accumulation of wealth, which are instilled in the collective imaginary as paths to purported well-being. It is necessary to break with the economy of unlimited growth and its entire developmentalist ideology spread throughout the world.

Therefore, it is possible to use the driving guidelines of degrowth theory to achieve a less aggressive global economy that is more inclined toward preserving terrestrial ecosystems. This will not occur in the short term but gradually, as Law, Politics, and, consequently, society as a whole embrace and commit to what today seems a utopia but which, if realized, can mediate the actual achievement of the economic dimension of sustainability.



REFERENCES

BENJAMIN, A. H. Laudatu si, ecologização da justiça social e o juiz planetário. *Revista estudos institucionais*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 7, n. 2, p. 560-570, mai./ago. 2021.

DEMARIA, F.; LATOUCHE, S. Degrowth. *In:* KOTARI, A.; SALLEH, A.; ESCOBAR, A.; Et. al. *Pluriverse*: a post-development dictionary. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. p. 148-151.

CARDUCCI, M. Il “quadrilátero dello sviluppo” e i postulati “perniciosi” per il futuro del costituzionalismo. In: POMPEU, G. V. M.; CARDUCCI, M.; SÁNCHEZ, M. R. *Direito constitucional nas relações econômicas*: entre o crescimento econômico e o desenvolvimento humano. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Lumen Juris, 2014. p. 177-202.

CARDUCCI, M. The premises of a “constitutional ecology”. *Veredas do direito*, Belo Horizonte, v. 17, n. 37, p. 83-104, jan./abr. 2020b.

HOLANDA, M. M. *A teoria do decrescimento e sua aplicação no constitucionalismo brasileiro para o alcance da sustentabilidade*. Curitiba: CRV, 2021.

KALLIS, G. In defense of degrowth. *Ecological economics*, Elsevier, v. 5, n. 70, p. 873-880, mar. 2011.

KALLIS, G.; PAULSON, S.; D’ALISA, G. *The case for degrowth*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.



LATOUCHE, S. *O desafio do decrescimento*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 2012.

LATOUCHE, S. *Pequeno tratado de decrescimento sereno*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009.

LEFF, E. *Discursos sustentáveis*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.

LEFF, E. *Saber ambiental*: sustentabilidade, racionalidade, complexidade e poder. 8.ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2011.

POMPEU, G. V. M.; GOUVEIA, A. S. O escopo do ministério público diante da urgência climática e o deflorestamento da Amazônia. *Revista de direito econômico e socioambiental*, Curitiba, v. 13, n. 2, p. 432-463, mai./ago. 2022.

POMPEU, G. V. M.; POMPEU, V. M. Dignidade humana e os direitos da natureza: do antropocentrismo ao ecocentrismo. *In*: POMPEU, G. V. M.; HOLANDA, M. M.; POMPEU, R. *Primavera silenciosa revisitada*: uma homenagem a Rachel Carson. Porto Alegre: Fundação Fênix, 2022. p. 15-37.

RAWORTH, Kate. *Economia donut*: uma alternativa ao crescimento a qualquer custo. Rio de Janeiro: Zhar, 2019.

ROCKSTRÖM, J.; GUPTA, J.; QIN, D.; Et. al. Safe and just earth system boundaries. *Nature*, New York, v. 619, n. 6, p. 102-111, jul. 2023.



STEFFEN, W.; RICHARDSON, K.; ROCKSTRÖM, J.; Et. al. Planetary boundaries: guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science,* Washington, v. 347, n. 6223, p. 736-746, fev. 2015.