



Climate camp &
Degrowth Summer
School 2019 in Leipzig
land/Pödelwitz

2-8th August 2019

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The 5th Degrowth Summer School was hosted from the 4th to the 8th of August, 2019 at the Klimacamp Leipziger Land, Pödelwitz, Germany. This year the Summer School aimed to support the resistance of the people from the threatened village of Pödelwitz, as well as the

resistance of people all over the world whose villages and livelihoods are threatened by the consequences of climate change and the hunger for resources of growth-oriented economic and social systems. I had the privilege to be part of the Summer school supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Sustainable Climate department.

I did not have a clear understanding of what Degrowth is about and how it relates to climate change and energy. I saw them as two separate entities only to realise that degrowth is rooted in every sphere of our lives, and that it plays a huge role in how we will deal with the impacts of climate change now and in the future. Degrowth is a political, economic, and social movement based on ecological economics, anti-

consumerist and anti-capitalist ideas. It is also considered an essential economic strategy responding to the limits-to-growth dilemma.

Degrowth is an ideology with a purpose and plan established in the global north (developed countries) with a strategy to extend into the global south (developing countries). Politicians seem to be sceptical about the degrowth ideology because it aims to create an environment of equal economic prosperity due to the high levels of inequality and quality of life in developing countries as reflected on their GDPs.

It is critical to reflect on what the degrowth means for developing countries in a context where the global north is still exploiting the global south through extraction of mineral and natural resources. For example, in South Africa giant coal producers are actually non-South African companies. We have to consider the historical context of the global north, and also how do we now change the alternative when the main alternative has always been an idea of capitalism and development that leads to industrialisation. We therefore, have to reverse and shift the mind set to develop in a sustainable way and be mindful of the impacts on environment. These international coal companies are extracting resources, taking profits, and causing environmental damage without even empowering the communities where they mine. Africa is still trying to catch up with capitalism, industrialisation and high youth unemployment. Most of these companies do not invest in rehabilitation programmes to rehabilitate the land they mine and as a result they leave sink holes and eroded land that cannot be developed into anything else. On a lighter note, through degrowth programmes and projects we can find positive changes to ensure good quality good life for all and creating better working conditions in the economy and for the environment.

As the workshops continued and the more I interacted with other international and local participants, I understood that the continuous use of infinite resources in a finite world is not sustainable. It leads to social, ecological injustice and accelerates climate change.



Degrowth's purpose is to interrogate growth and capitalism from radical, ecological and social perspectives. It does this to determine and put measures in place for extreme extraction of resources especially coal produced into energy to meet capitalist profits at the expense of social exploitation and injustice of the poor.



The climate camp gave us a space to connect, discuss and discover the problems and challenges of the climate justice movement and to find and realize alternatives and solutions together with many other people. There were workshops and panel discussions that covered a range of topics of which the ones I attended gave me a deeper understanding of how resistance is growing in regions where climate destruction and resource extraction takes place.

Over the years, we have seen more and more people getting displaced and losing their livelihoods globally due to consequences of climate change and capitalism. The global south has always been at the receiving end of the worst climate crisis and its consequences. Natural disasters have negatively impacted on the population in countries like; Bangladash, Mozambique, Malawi and other South American countries. One of the delegates emphasised that degrowth is more of an academic and abstract concept. Thus, in order to see how effective degrowth programmes and projects are after implementation there has to be certain practical measures put in place. Since we cannot be really sure how effective it can be especially in local context. The question then arises on how can degrowth be used to fight against climate change while there are still ecological issues that have not been addressed in the first place?



FES International Delegate

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The 20 delegates who attended the camp were representatives from different countries in the continent; Middel East, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. All of us were involved in various diciplines such as, working in environmental sciences, climate change activism, trade unions and initiatives on climate change awareness. It was so amazing to be surrounded by such intelligent leaders who are bringing change in their respective communities through their own organisations.

We went on a tour of at a small mine village situated near the camp in Pödelwits. Felix Wittmann, gave us the introduction of the camp structure, program and political framework. We got to learn more about the village during the tour. Germany is famous for renewable energy, but it has been dependent on coal burning for a very long time. This has led to villages being moved or destroyed for coal mines. This has been the case for Pödelwits, a small village that is threatened and likely to disappear due to coal mining. Climate justice movements together with the people from Pödelwits came together to discuss, elaborate, seek and realize alternatives and solutions on different topics of solidarity with threatened villages from all over the globe.

Being part of the Degrowth Summer School has been an experience of a lifetime, I have formed friendships and mostly I appreciated the platform of having robust discussions and marvelling at the intelligence of all the participants at the camp. I would like to thank FES South Africa for nominating me to be part of this superb programme. This has been a wonderful opportunity for me and I will forever be grateful.