

Beyond Traditional Perspectives on Economic Growth

John M. Jermier

University of South Florida, Tampa

Research Questions: Premises

- (A) At its root, la décroissance is best understood as a mindset or paradigm shift similar to atheism in that it involves rejecting or abandoning a religion--“abandonment of the **religion of economy, growth, progress and development**” (Serge Latouche, 2010, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, p. 519, emphasis added)

Research Questions: Premises

(B) The warrant for la décroissance is twofold—

Resource and CO2 limits render further economic growth unsustainable (Giorgos Kallis, 2011, *Ecological Economics*, p. 873); Environmental destruction continues beyond planetary boundaries that are safe for humanity (Johan Rockstrom et al., 2009, *Nature*, p. 472)

Economic growth has not measurably increased the moral growth or well-being of humans (e.g., Christian Kerschner, 2010, *Journal of Cleaner Production*)

Research Questions: Rhetorical

- How much longer will people believe that material prosperity and social recognition for consumerism lead to happiness--and structure their lives following this belief?

Research Questions: Philosophical

What is happiness?

Research Questions: Theoretical

- What is happiness—from the point of view of positivist science?
- State of well-being characterized by positive affect, ranging from contentment to intense joy—satisfaction with life, Edward Diener, 2000, *American Psychologist*)

Research Questions: Theoretical

- What causes happiness?
 - **Impact of economic prosperity on happiness?
 - **Set point theory?
 - **Other factors—Contexts: work, family and friends, community, environment?

Research Questions: Theoretical

- What are the consequences of happiness?
- Is it the ultimate end in itself?

Research Questions: Methodological

- **Are perspectives on degrowth value neutral?
Can they be? Should they be?
- According to critical theorists, no intellectual structure or position is value neutral.
 - Serge Latouche (2010), *Journal of Cleaner Production*, p. 519: la décroissance is a “political slogan with theoretical implications.”

Research Questions: Methodological

**What is the political content of degrowth perspectives?

Environmentalist, Anti-Consumerist, Anti-Capitalist

Research Questions: Methodological

**Degrowth is best studied at what level of aggregation?

**Degrowth is best studied as what content?

**Degrowth is best studied quantitatively or qualitatively as a process?

Research Questions: Methodological

**How best to study happiness? Quantitative or qualitative methods?

Edward Diener (2000), *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 5-item, Satisfaction With Life Scale