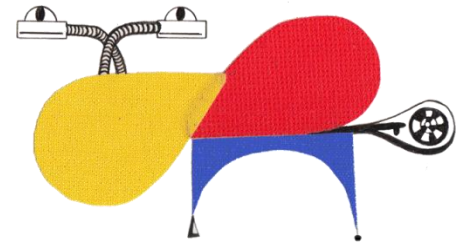


# COMMUNITY AND DEGROWTH

*Edited by the “Community and Degrowth”  
working group of the Degrowth Association –  
Italy*

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# 1. Introduction

*The systemic crisis confronting the planet is reducing the opportunity for radical changes in the prevailing socio-economic model, subject to the imperative of **infinite market growth**.*

*Degrowth is the only alternative horizon. A first step is necessary to define the institutional framework and the actors capable of facilitating this change.*

*We propose a **federalist local-global institutional framework** to support policies, techniques and cultures to achieve a proper reduced territorial scale.*

*This framework is represented by **territorial Communities of citizens** who, inhabiting the same territory, realize the democratic principle of self-government and interconnect different territorial scales, according to the ethical-political principles of **subsidiarity and mutuality** (cooperation).*

# 1. Introduction

Just to be clear:

**Subsidiarity:** the principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level, or closest to where they will have their effect.

## 2. Degrowth actions

### 2.1 Community as a basic building block

There is still no shared vision of the causes of the crisis and, above all, of the solution. This can be a **transformative and confederal territorial communitarianism**.

The solution concerns: limitation, autonomy, sobriety, local production, control over technology, re-enchantment of the world, cultural differences, respect for otherness, and finally cooperation and mutuality (cooperation) in solving global problems that override the local-territorial scale.

## 2. Degrowth actions

The proposal is metapolitical in nature, being both political and cultural, based on a pluriverse or democracy of cultures, which departs from the current paradigm that reduces the political to a common conception of the world where the choice is between right and left (mostly neo-liberal in present days).

The concepts expressed from the perspective of **transformative and confederated territorial communities** progressively evolve from desirable, chosen values to necessary conditions of existence that allow local communities to create institutions that are completely different from the current ones.

This choice presents itself as concrete hope against chaos or authoritarian regression.

## 2. Degrowth actions

### 2.2 Four concepts of the Confederated Transformative Territorial Community

**Territory and Community:** They define the place and the people who inhabit it, as well as the ancient and new cultural aspects.

**Transformativity:** The cultural awareness of the current crisis is necessary for the change and emergence of institutions that do not fall back into the errors of modernity (productivism, depersonalization, whose realization are industrialism, bureaucracy and capitalism).

**Confederative:** It conveys the idea of respect for otherness and for the necessity of the existence of other territorial communities. This is a way to avoid the "US-centric" ethnocentrism for the benefit of an "ALLO-centric" vision:

## 2. Degrowth actions

### 2.3 The transformative axes of change

AXES	MODERN	PRE MODERN	SOLUTION
<b>Place</b>	global prevails	local prevails	local and global coexist and are interconnected
<b>Management</b>	dependence	autonomy	bottom-up subsidiarity and allocentric vision (i.e. open to the other)
<b>Culture</b>	universal	specific	universal respect for the Earth and the Community; universal concept of responsibility; specific lifestyle
<b>Institution dimension</b>	big	small	small: at local scale big: representing the communities at the supraterritorial level
<b>Relationship</b>	impersonal	personal	personal

# 3. From local to global

## 3.1 A third way

**Transformative Territorial Communities** are necessary for the coherence of the degrowth proposal, and that is the federal or confederal set-up. Multiple levels of territorial representation are the solution, but it may not be clear how and when such a connection between the local and the planetary should be established. Possible options are:

- **From federation to communities:** A confederal model that distinguishes local from planetary scale issues, and distributes responsibilities on the basis of subsidiarity competencies, could be proposed as a kind of planetary democracy.
- **From communities to federation:** according to this hypothesis, community formation would occur as an act of distrust towards higher institutions and as a response in terms of autonomy by territories that no longer feel represented or feel harmed by globalization. Community formation would then be autonomous and independent, and the emergence of a federal and confederal instance would come later.



# 3. From local to global

## 3.1 A third way

The two models have drawbacks, of course. The first could be seen as a top-down form of administration that reduces communities to districts to be managed, while the second could fall into a sovereigntist regression that leaves no room for dialogue between territorial communities

While we are aware of these two risks, we have deliberately chosen to take the riskier third way of synchronicity between the local and the global, in order to open a discussion about the possible political actions that the degrowth movement needs to elaborate and make public.

# 3. From local to global

## 3.2 The political design

**The political design** we advance must be analyzed and compared with other alternative projects.

Our proposal must create a framework, an **institutional container** that is an alternative to the existing ones, inviting each of the 8 billion people of humanity to realize it all levels through democratic methods. According to Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997):

*"... democracy can only come about through an immense movement of the world's population capable of challenging all the institutional meanings, norms, and values that dominate the current system [...] and undertaking a profound psychological and anthropological transformation...."*

# 3. From local to global

## 3.4 The institutional design

This proposal takes the form of a utopian but realistic political project, to change the present hegemonic global system of imperative growth, based on the participation of each citizen, synchronously:

- in the formation of **transformative territorial communities** capable of self-governance
- in the formation of a **multilevel horizontal federation** of the same territorial communities.

Four institutional levels must be identified:

- - the community,
- - the bioregional federation,
- - the continental federation,
- - the world/planet federation (or another term).

# 4. Experiences

## 4.1 In search of territorial communities

We report the initial results of a pilot survey that was launched this spring and is still ongoing. It had two main objectives:

- to assess which of the **current experiences** in Italy are characterized by the adoption of a vision of a **transformative confederated territorial community** such as the one previously described;
- to strengthen the collaboration between the territorial nodes of the Degrowth Association.

Tab. n°1: List of experiences involved by the empirical survey

N°	DENOMINATION	PLACE
1	Gaia terra	Flambruzzo di Rivignano (UD) – Friuli Venezia Giulia
2	Neighborhood committee “Straccis”	Gorizia – Friuli Venezia Giulia
3	Neighborhood Le Piagge	Firenze – Toscana
4	Energy Community Cormons	Cormons – Friuli Venezia Giulia
5	Family Center KAIROS	Benevento - Campania
6	Collective Domain Clavais	Ovaro Municipality – fraz. Clavais – Friuli Venezia Giulia
7	“Ass. for the cultivation of buckwheat and traditional alpine cereals”	Teglio – Valtellina – Lombardia
8	Genius loci 5.0 - The regenerative revolution of the super smart territory	Tuscia Viterbese - Lazio
9	Products of the Territory - network of producers, consumers and agro-ecological associations in the Maremma region	Maremma meridionale (Grosseto, Scansano, Manciano, Monte Amiata) - Toscana
10	Rio Selva Farm	Preganziol – Veneto
11	Alto Livenza River Contract Assembly	Sacile – Friuli Venezia Giulia / Veneto
12	Community gardens group	Flaibano, Rive d’Arcano – Friuli Venezia Giulia
13	Pan dal DES Bakery	Udine – Friuli Venezia Giulia

## 4. Experiences

Just to show one:

**Denomination:** Products of the territory - network of producers, consumers and agro-ecological associations in the Maremma region.

**Place:** Maremma meridionale (Grosseto, Scansano, Manciano, Monte Amiata) – Toscana.

## 4. Conclusions

The impression that emerges from these experiences is that the political project is primarily delegated to current institutional actors. Awareness of alternative political management based on degrowth is needed;

The **transformative territorial community** proposes the exit from the dominant socio-economic paradigm. That concept is supported by theoretical references but needs further conceptual insights and operational tools and experiences, i.e. research, development and demonstrations (pilot studies) and awareness (schools, university courses, even social media, ecc.). The Degrowth Association could become active by promoting proposals and strengthening alliances;

No Degrowth Society will be able to take shape without the **confederation of local communities**; not only with the support of the Italian Association, but also with any other national or supranational reality that proposes the transition to a Degrowth society.

## More details in the proceedings

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