



Commentary

Post-Growth in the Global South? Some Reflections from India and Bhutan

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Post-growth
Degrowth
Agrowth
Steady-state economics
Post-development
India
Bhutan
Global South

ABSTRACT

The critique of growth is one of the defining features of ecological economics. Yet ecological economists have had relatively little to say about “post-growth” in the global South. In this article, we propose a new definition of post-growth as the combined application and theorization of degrowth, agrowth, steady-state economics and post-development. We then discuss – with special reference to India – seven ways of thinking about post-growth in the global South. Starting with the basic observation that the current patterns of growth-fueled “development” are ecologically, socially and financially unsustainable, we argue that serious post-growth thinking can only be world-systemic and rooted in class analyses. We then point out that the “GDP growth against poverty” connection is debatable and we instead argue, normatively, that an effective post-growth program should focus on fulfilled needs and on wealth redistribution. Against the idea that growth-critical approaches have their origin in industrialized countries, we show that many post-growth ideas have non-Western roots and a substantial number of potential contemporary allies in the global South. Discussing the example of Bhutan, we suggest that preliminary elements of a post-growth program are not as utopian as it might sound.

“There could be development without growth.”

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1975: 364)

1. Introduction

Herman Daly (1991: 149) repeatedly remarked that “the starting point in development economics should be the ‘impossibility theorem’”, namely that a Western-style high mass consumption economy for a world of 7.5 billion people is simply impossible. Any catch-up theory is out of question. We need something else, both in the global North and South. We need something that goes beyond economies centered on GDP growth.

Ecological economists have been quick to understand this and the “post-growth” research area has become one of the major contributions of ecological economics.¹ It is also a key element distinguishing (heterodox) ecological economics from (neoclassical) environmental economics. However, growth-critical approaches have remained so far quite fragmented and Western-centric, with few discussions about their applicability to the global South (but see Xue et al., 2012; Boillat et al., 2012; Hollender, 2015; Gerber and Raina, 2018). This Commentary

provides a brief overview of the debates and a new definition of post-growth. It then discusses seven ways of envisioning post-growth for the global South, with special reference to India and Bhutan.

One first measure for moving “beyond growth” in the global South and North consists in abolishing GDP and replacing it with better indicators for guiding an economy's production and consumption – we call this approach “post-GDP” (van den Bergh, 2009). This move is endorsed by many conventional economists (e.g. Stiglitz et al., 2009). A second measure, more radical but essential, consists not only in seeking better indicators but also alternatives to the current global model of Western-type growth-driven societies – we call this approach “post-growth” (Gerber and Raina, 2018). Post-growth, for us, is the combined application and theorization of the four major growth-critical currents of degrowth, agrowth, steady-state economics and post-development.

Degrowth promotes a “civilizational change” towards a society with a smaller metabolism, but more importantly, towards a society with a metabolism that has a different structure and serves new functions (D'Alisa et al., 2014). These new structure and functions are aimed at enhancing localised, democratic and equitable economies, where material accumulation is no longer a leading social value. Sharing, simplicity, conviviality, care and the commons are central features of such

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¹ In July 2010, John Gowdy, then President of the International Society for Ecological Economics, wrote that “ecological economists have [...] taken the lead in developing new theories and new policy approaches including examining the possibilities for degrowth (Martinez-Alier, Pascual, Kallis), developing biophysical economic models (Hall, Giampietro, Mayumi), and critically understanding long-run social evolution (Fischer-Kowalski). It is this body of work, I believe, that will distinguish ecological economics in the future” (Gowdy, 2010: 3).

a society. *Agrowth*, for its part, is agnostic about growth: welfare and sustainable targets should be carefully defined and whether these targets require growth in market-based exchanges is irrelevant. Jeroen van den Bergh (2011:6) – who developed the notion – wrote that “agrowth reflects indifference [to growth] in the sense that one realizes GDP growth is perhaps good in some periods or for some countries in a certain development stage, but that ‘growth no matter what’ is not a wise aim”.²

Steady-state economics promotes non-growing societies based on a stable material and energy throughput (Daly, 1991). Herman Daly – the main proponent of this approach over the past four decades – has designed a number of steady-state policies mainly targeted at industrialized countries (Daly, 2012). Finally, *post-development* argues that the concept and practice of “development” fundamentally reflects capitalist and Western hegemony over the rest of the world and should be abandoned (Escobar, 1995; Kothari et al., 2018). We identify three main post-development orientations that are relevant to post-growth, namely (i) culturally-specific conceptions of the “good life” (e.g. *Buen Vivir*, *Ubuntu*, *Swaraj*, *Kyosei* or *Tri Hita Karana*), (ii) various forms of solidarity or community economies (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013), and (iii) post-extractivism which calls for a societal change away from economies dependent/guided by extractive industries (Gudynas, 2013).

All these four major currents of post-growth reject GDP as a useful indicator and all of them aim at enhancing human wellbeing and ecological conditions through questioning growth-addicted economies. While these currents have been sometimes seen as divergent, they can also be regarded as complementary. In this Commentary, we argue that all four are valid in specific contexts and at particular moments, both in the global South and North. But before developing this idea into more detail (Section 3) and providing a case study (Section 4), we will briefly review the debates on post-growth in the global South.

2. Brief Review of the Debates on Post-Growth in the Global South

The idea that post-growth is currently only relevant to the global North is shared by many ecological economists (e.g. Victor, 2008; Jackson, 2009). This view is already palpable in Georgescu-Roegen (1975: 378) – an early proponent of the modern notion of degrowth – and it is expressed most clearly by Daly (1991: 148):

“It is absolutely a waste of time as well as morally backward to preach steady-state doctrines to underdeveloped countries before the overdeveloped countries have taken any measure to reduce [...] the growth of their per-capita resource consumption. [...] That does not mean, however, that the underdeveloped countries can be left out of consideration. For one thing, the underdeveloped countries are not ever going to develop [...] unless the overdeveloped countries moderate their demands on world resources and absorption capacities. [...] In addition, underdeveloped countries will have to revise their expectations downward regarding their own growth”.

As we will see in the next sections, these views can be qualified. A common assumption held by many ecological economists is that income and wellbeing are linked at low income levels but that after a certain threshold they start to diverge (Layard, 2005). This important result of “happiness economics” has often been mobilized by post-growth advocates. Regrettably, however, it has also contributed to deter any exploration of post-growth ideas for the global South.

This is unfortunate because an approach to development that focuses on income growth omits many other crucial factors for wellbeing. Large-scale studies on low-income groups in developing countries are only beginning to substantiate this point. Reyes-García et al. (2016), for

² While van den Bergh (2011) seems reluctant to endorse a radical critique of growth-based economies, it should be noted that his approach is far from apologetic about the direction and nature of current growth patterns (e.g. van den Bergh, 2009: 126).

example, analyzed a sample of 6973 rural low-income households in 23 developing countries and found that their overall levels of subjective wellbeing resemble levels found in other global samples with higher income. In addition, their findings suggest that income is one factor among others (e.g. relationships, autonomy, etc.) in leading to more wellbeing. Furthermore, the authors found that the association between income and wellbeing diminishes once they controlled for income comparisons – to oneself in the past (adaptation) and to others (social comparison). They even found that the effects of social comparison might be larger than the effects of absolute income. These and similar findings explain why low-income people – also in the global South – may not generally get “happier” as their societies get richer but also more unequal. Some post-growth theorists have thus criticized subjective wellbeing studies and have instead promoted a return to need-based approaches for guiding development policies (Koch et al., 2017).

In the long run, Dietz and O’Neill (2013) argued that every country should evolve towards a steady state at their maximum sustainable size. The latter can be assessed based on biophysical indicators related to the capacity of ecosystems to regenerate resources and assimilate wastes. With this in mind, every country or sector can thus be classified as experiencing “desirable growth”, “undesirable growth”, “desirable degrowth” or “undesirable degrowth”. The problem with such a roadmap, however, is that it tends to equate “degrowth” with “less material consumption” while everything else remains the same. Degrowth and post-development proponents have always emphasized the necessity to reorganize our economies in very different ways of living and thinking. Latouche (2004: 5), for example, one of the main advocates of degrowth and post-development in the French-speaking world, wrote that:

“Degrowth must apply to the South as much as to the North if there is to be any chance to stop Southern societies from rushing up the blind alley of growth economics. Where there is still time, they should aim not for development but for disentanglement – removing the obstacles that prevent them from developing differently. [...] If the South is to attempt to create non-growth societies, it must rethink and re-localise. Southern countries need to escape from their economic and cultural dependence on the North and rediscover their own histories – interrupted by colonialism, development and globalisation – to establish distinct indigenous cultural identities”.

Along the same line, the final declaration of the first degrowth international conference, held in 2008 in Paris, advocated for a combination of degrowth in the global North and post-development in the global South (see also D’Alisa et al., 2014). However, from an eco-Marxist perspective, Foster (2011: 30, his emphasis) has been reluctant to endorse such an approach:

“Lacking an adequate theory of imperialism, and failing to address the vast chasm of inequality separating the richest from the poorest nations, Latouche [...] reduces the whole immense problem of underdevelopment to one of cultural autonomy and subjection to a Westernized growth fetish. [...] It is clear that many countries in the South with very low per capita incomes cannot afford *degrowth* but could use a kind of *sustainable development*, directed at real needs such as access to water, food, health care, education, etc. This requires a radical shift in social structure away from the relations of production of capitalism/imperialism”.

These different positions on the possibility of post-growth in developing countries – mostly coming from West European or North American scholars – typically clash on their understanding of post-growth/degrowth. Moreover, the extent to which the global South needs to focus on growth in order to “develop” (or, similarly, the degree to which income is really linked to wellbeing) is an area of contention, together with the question of the compatibility of post-growth with capitalism. In the next two sections, we will discuss seven propositions and a case study – Bhutan – with the aim of enhancing coherence and clarity in these debates.

3. Seven Ways of Thinking about Post-Growth in the Global South

Some of our seven ways of envisioning post-growth in the global South are more analytical and some are more normative; many make special reference to India, but we believe they could all be relevant elsewhere. Our hope is that these propositions could foster future research in this emerging field.

3.1. Current Growth Patterns in the Global South Are Unsustainable – Ecologically, Socially and Financially

This is the starting point for rethinking growth in the global South – together with Daly's impossibility theorem. Many examples could be given. Since the early 1990s, the Indian economy recorded some of the most important growth rates in the world, peaking at 10.3% in 2010. We have been invited to take this as great news – but the social and environmental costs have been colossal (Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012). The capacity of nature to sustain humans has declined sharply over the last three decades (CSE, 2016). Pollution, cancer and lifestyle diseases are on a sharp rise (Ghosh, 2015). What is more, India's growth is largely – and increasingly so – based on credit, that is, on the “virtual” level of the economy. Growing debts, from households to the national level, have not only further disconnected the economy from its ecological base, they have also become a powerful tool for attacking the welfare state and for further promoting pro-growth policies at any cost. The significance of the dependence on credit is nowhere better symbolized than in India's modernizing agriculture: since 1995, about 300,000 farmers have taken their lives, largely as a consequence of debts for acquiring expensive inputs and new technologies within unfavorable terms of trade (Bhaduri, 2009). This is the largest recorded suicide wave in human history. There is a dark side to growth; it is massive, rising, unnecessary, and still largely underestimated.

3.2. Post-growth Thinking Must Be World-systemic and Perceptive to Social Classes

In a world-system characterized by a division of labor between and within countries (Wallerstein, 2004), different groups of peoples have different interests, values and metabolic patterns. Accordingly, serious post-growth thinking cannot be limited to national boundaries and take populations as aggregated wholes. A world-systemic and class-based perspective is necessary and more fruitful than a literal “global North” vs. “global South” opposition. Robinson (2004), for instance, argued that the modern world-system is administrated by a single global ruling class who tends to share similar lifestyles and consumption patterns. In view of that, it appears that the degrowth critique is applicable to the global middle and upper classes regardless of their geographical location – an idea also defended by Demaria et al. (2013: 200) who wrote that “Justice requires a degrowth of the living standards of the rich classes of the North and South”. This would not only leave some environmental space for an agrowth approach to the global subaltern classes (more below) but also stop the ecological debt that a limited number of industries – not just the “global North” – historically owe to the rest of the world (Warlenius et al., 2015).

3.3. The Statement “Growth Is Needed to Overcome Poverty” Is Debatable

This argument is classically used against anyone questioning growth in the global South. While we will be unable to provide an in-depth review of this complex question, we would like to emphasize that this causal relationship is not straightforward. What does “more growth” really mean for lower classes, materially but also existentially? Does it really mean more quality jobs? As we have seen above, studies on subjective wellbeing in developing countries are beginning to complicate this simplistic causality. More integrated research is needed.

In India, pro-growth policies have often been counter-productive.

First of all, growth has helped the rich rather than the poor: while middle and upper classes have been able to enjoy western levels of overconsumption, nearly 80% of the Indian population continues to live on 20 Rupees a day or less (Sengupta, 2007) and the poorer half of the population owns a mere 4.1% of the national wealth (Agarwal, 2016). India was ranked 123rd in terms of Human Development Index in 1991; in 2014 – despite high growth rates – it had slipped to the 135th place. Second, growth has largely been jobless. India's high growth rates have failed to translate into more jobs, especially in the countryside (Bhaduri, 2009; Patnaik, 2011). Third, far from eliminating poverty, growth relies on it: India's growth has been possible only “thanks” to the poor offering cheap arms and land. “[India's] pattern of dazzling economic growth [...] has been propelled by a powerful reinforcing mechanism through which inequality drives growth and growth fuels further inequality” (Walker, 2008: 561). Finally, growth has created a large amount of new poverties: pro-growth policies have undermined meaningful local activities, fostered accumulation by dispossession and contamination, and destroyed the livelihood of people formerly directly dependent on ecosystems (Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012).

3.4. The Policy Focus on Growth Must Be Replaced by a Focus on Fulfilled Needs

In the global South, the real target of public policies should be the satisfaction of basic needs for all rather than the pursuit of growth per se. For the sections of the population lacking basic needs satisfaction, we argue that an agrowth approach is appropriate. Agrowth assumes that whether the economy grows in monetary exchanges is irrelevant; what matters is whether democratically-defined and socio-ecologically sustainable targets are met. Of course, these targets must be the object of a careful collective reflection: what are our “true” needs? True needs for whom? How can we distinguish true needs from market propaganda or “false consciousness”? These are fundamental questions in post-development theory. They should be addressed within the greatest political, economic and cultural autonomy possible.

Our proposal to use an agrowth approach to the disadvantaged social groups represents an extension of the original meaning of agrowth which was initially intended for rich countries only (van den Bergh, 2011). To us, agrowth calls for a new focus on the concrete effects of public policies rather than on an abstract faith in GDP growth. Agrowth is thus in agreement with a substantive approach to the economy – favored by many ecological economists – which starts from human needs and socio-ecological conditions, rather than from prices and axiomatic conformity, as in a formal approach to economics (Gerber and Scheidel, 2017). If agrowth is not interpreted in the light of substantive economics, it loses its significance and becomes largely identical to the now well-known critique of GDP. However, in agreement with the original meaning of agrowth, we also emphasize that post-growth is not always about producing or consuming less: some activities will have to grow in a post-growth society (e.g. cooperatives, gardens, community-based organizations) while other will have to decline (e.g. polluting firms, extractivism, the advertising industry), the ultimate goal being to find a global sustainable steady state.

3.5. Many Key Problems Are More About Unequal Distribution than About the Lack of Growth

The satisfaction of basic needs for all does not necessarily require a general increase in wealth but a better distribution thereof. Instead of this, we are witnessing the opposite phenomenon: wealth concentration in fewer hands. Already in the 1970s, Celso Furtado (quoted in Daly, 1991: 148) noted that “higher rates of growth, far from reducing underdevelopment, tend to worsen it, in the sense of tending to increase social inequalities”. In India, the richest 1% owns 58.4% of the country's wealth, a proportion that increases year by year (Credit Suisse, 2016). Similar figures and tendencies can be observed in other

countries. In order for a redistribution of this scale to have any chance of success, a massive political weakening of the ruling classes seems necessary, which would imply “a radical shift in social structure away from the relations of production of capitalism/imperialism” (Foster, 2011: 30).

3.6. Post-Growth Ideas Can Be Endorsed by Various Social Movements in the Global South

It is sometimes said that post-growth politics can have no supporters in the global South. In reality, we argue that growth-critical ideas are a common denominator to various social movements. The *first* one, as Martínez-Alier (2012) pointed out, is the global environmental justice movement which literally fights the negative impacts of growth, namely displacements, pollutions, ecosystem destructions, land grabbing, extractivism, etc. Akbulut et al. (forthcoming) highlighted further the affinity and complementarity between the small degrowth movements in some rich societies and the large environmental justice movement in the developing world. *Second*, various indigenous movements defending non-Western ways of life are potential allies too: “Those millions for whom development has meant only poverty and exclusion are left with a mixture of lost traditions and unaffordable modernity” (Latouche, 2004: 2). *Third*, peasant and artisan movements could realize how post-growth may match some of their interests and values (Gerber and Steppacher, 2017). *Finally*, socialist, feminist, and progressive spiritual movements may become allies too. In sum, the outcomes of the many resistances to growth-driven modernization can be reactionary as well as egalitarian and sustainable – but our conviction is that post-growth ideas can provide a useful platform for rethinking social change along progressive lines.

3.7. Post-Growth Thinking Is Not an Invention of the North

It would be a mistake to assume that post-growth thinkers have only been Europeans and North Americans. In India, for example, “post-growth” ideas have deep roots in Gandhian thought (which itself draws on older philosophies). But besides Gandhi, three great Indian “post-growth” theorists were Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889–1968) and J.C. Kumarappa (1892–1960). The last two were economists. In 1924, Tagore wrote that:

“Most of us who try to deal with the problem of poverty think only of a more intensive effort of production. We forget that it brings about a greater exhaustion of materials as well as of humanity. It gives to the few excessive opportunities for profit at the cost of the many. It is food which nourishes, not money; it is fullness of life which makes one happy, not fullness of purse. Multiplying material wealth alone intensifies the inequality between those who have and those who have not, and it inflicts so deep a wound on the social system that the whole body eventually bleeds to death” (Tagore, 1961: 320).

Mukerjee, for his part, was an institutional economist who wrote on a wide variety of topics, including, very prominently, on “social ecology” and “ecological economics” (using the terms in the modern sense as early as 1942). During the early days of industrialization, Mukerjee charted a path radically different from that followed in the West and sought to rebuild the village economy with the selective help of new technologies. He wrote that humans have no option but “to some extent imitate Nature’s extraordinarily slow methods” (Mukerjee, 1938: 306).

Kumarappa, a rural economist trained at Columbia University, developed the notion of the “economy of permanence” (Kumarappa, 1946). He studied and promoted peasant- and artisan-based economies and was an early supporter of localism. Like Gandhi, Kumarappa denounced the impacts of industrialization: “There can be no industrialization without predation”; “Under the economic system of

[industrial societies] we find that [...] a large supply of goods is produced irrespective of demand, and then a demand is artificially created for goods by means of clever advertisements” (Kumarappa, 1938: 27–28). Kumarappa’s “Gandhian economics” were a source of inspiration for several of the forefathers of post-growth, including Ivan Illich and E.F. Schumacher.

In the next section, we will briefly examine whether Bhutan’s development model, sometimes cited as an example of post-growth, can provide evidence for how alternative theories of growth can be applied.

4. Post-growth in Bhutan?

Being a latecomer to macro-level processes of development, Bhutan is well-known for trying to avoid – despite a tight dependency on the Indian economy – the negative consequences of globalisation.³ Among many other initiatives, the government of Bhutan has invited prominent ecological economists favorable to post-growth ideas⁴ to provide advice on how to strengthen its “new development paradigm” (RGoB, 2013). In a world dominated by nations seeking to boost their GDP growth, is Bhutan the only exception? Yes and no.

No, because Bhutan’s GDP has been growing at a fast rate over the past three decades, largely through a series of peaks following important hydroelectric projects (Mitra and Jeong, 2017). Almost one half of Bhutan’s GDP is produced by the private sector, including farmers, while the rest comes from state-run corporations. Standard financial indicators are used by businesses in Bhutan as elsewhere. At the same time, however, the country has also put in place a number of original policies limiting GDP growth and seeking to enhance wellbeing and sustainability. One can cite: free education and healthcare for all; severe restrictions on foreign investments; no WTO membership; no outdoor advertising; heavy taxes on car imports; severe limits on mass tourism (and ban on alpinism); limits on mining; half of the country under protected areas; constitutional 60% of forest cover; declared willingness to shift to 100% organic agriculture.

Bhutan has also launched a new concept which may be reminiscent of post-growth: Gross National Happiness (GNH). The concept was coined in 1972 when the fourth King of Bhutan replied to a journalist: “We are not concerned about Gross National Product; we care about Gross National Happiness”. However, it is only later, during the turbulent period of the 1990s,⁵ that the Bhutanese GNH began to be formulated with precision. Today, GNH remains a contested notion. It encompasses different interpretations, more or less radical. For some Bhutanese, GNH is a loosely-defined “green growth” and a brand name to fit every occasion. For others, GNH is synonymous with the GNH Index, a new holistic indicator which should replace GDP in guiding development policies (Ura et al., 2012) – a position which bears similarities with agrowth. And still for others, GNH is not just a new indicator but also a philosophy of social flourishing integrating exterior and interior needs and seeking sufficiency with respect to economic growth once basic needs have been met by all (RGoB, 2013) – a position that parallels the idea of a steady state and of post-development. While the current administration is more favorable to GDP than the previous one, Bhutan’s policies remain the outcome of these different positions at

³ The data for this section mostly come from the research one of us did (J.-F. G.) while teaching development economics for one year at Sherubtse College (Royal University of Bhutan).

⁴ They include R. Costanza, H. Daly, J. Farley, T. Jackson, D. Korten, M. Max-Neef, W. Rees, J. Schor, V. Shiva, J.G. Speth, P. Victor and M. Wackernagel.

⁵ On one hand, Bhutan’s internal situation was extremely tense. The Ngalop ruling elites were dealing very poorly with the country’s other linguistic and cultural groups, which led to a violent crisis and the establishment of refugee camps in Nepal. On the other hand, the country’s external situation was tense too. Its debts to India were swelling while India had turned neoliberal. As the government feared the negative impacts of neoliberal policies, there was an urgent need for an alternative discourse. So the GNH was developed, partly as a resistance to neoliberalism and partly, possibly, as an attempt to alleviate many internal wounds.

play.

The GNH Index, as a new macroeconomic indicator, covers nine domains⁶ measured with 33 fine-tuned indicators. It has been used so far in one pre-survey (2006) and three full surveys across the country (2008, 2010, 2015). Its purpose is to measure wellbeing holistically in order to assess its evolution and guide decision-making accordingly. Concretely, a GNH Policy Screening Tool has been implemented to help the GNH Commission – a powerful committee orchestrating the economy's planning process and chaired by the Prime Minister – in assessing policies and projects for their impacts on 22 variables reflecting the nine domains of the Index. This screening tool plays a significant role in decision-making, like in Bhutan's rejection of WTO membership or in the country's decision to limit mining activities (Hayden, 2015).

Interestingly, the GNH Index includes a sufficiency threshold for each indicator. These thresholds are benchmarks of how much is enough for a “good life” and are based on international or national standards, normative judgements, or the outcome of participatory meetings. Anyone experiencing sufficiency in 6 or more of the 9 domains is considered “to have sufficient conditions for happiness”. By these criteria, 41% of Bhutanese were happy in 2010 and 43.4% in 2015. These thresholds could offer a valuable basis for establishing a steady state at a sustainable level of material throughput.

An example of solidarity or community economies (categorized above as post-development) could be the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI), launched in 2010 in a neglected rural area of the country by a progressive lama, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. The SJI was intended as a bottom-up and need-based initiative expandable to the entire country, irrespective of GDP growth rates and not linked to foreign NGOs. It aims at establishing food sovereignty and self-sufficiency based on organic agriculture, protecting the environment (hence an ambitious “zero waste” campaign), strengthening communities and fostering citizen involvement in decision-making (Green-Tracewicz and Landry, 2015).

More research is needed to establish the appropriateness and feasibility of applying post-growth policies in Bhutan. Our purpose, here, was simply to suggest that the example of Bhutan – with all its limitations – shows that elements of a post-growth program are not as utopian and far away as they might sound.

5. Conclusion

This Commentary makes three main claims. *First*, we suggest that “post-growth” is the combined theorization and application of degrowth, agrowth, steady-state economics and post-development – each one of these four notions having its own context of validity. *Second*, we argue that defined in this sense, post-growth is very much relevant to the global South. While the degrowth critique applies to the global middle and upper classes, irrespective of their location, an agrowth approach focusing on democratically defined targets applies to the global poor. At the world's level, a sustainable steady state remains the ultimate objective, within a post-development framework that fosters the political, economic and cultural autonomy needed to counter the world's current rapid westernization. *Third*, we put forth seven ways to think post-growth in the global South. Such an approach may sound utopian, but a number of major crises (e.g. climatic, environmental, social, financial) may not be too far away and may force us to seriously think about alternatives, in line with elements of Bhutan's development model.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Degrowth India Initiative, Federico Demaria, Alex

Jensen, Tshotsho and Gopal Krishna. Two anonymous reviewers are gratefully acknowledged. All shortcomings are ours.

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⁶ I.e., living standards, education, health, environment, community vitality, time-use, psychological wellbeing, good governance, and cultural resilience and promotion.

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