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Review of Timothée Parrique's *Slow Down or Die: The Economics of Degrowth*. Paris: Seuil, 2022, 320 pp.; New York: Europa Editions, 2025; London: Profile Books Ltd, 2025, 288 pp.

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Slow Down or Die: The Economics of Degrowth, written by Timothée Parrique, was first published in 2022 as *Ralentir ou périr: L'économie de la décroissance* by Éditions du Seuil. In 2025, it was released in English by Europa Editions and Profile Books Limited. Parrique is a French ecological economist and a researcher at the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland (Parrique 2025). Drawing on his doctoral research on the political economy of degrowth (Parrique 2025), the author provides an overview of degrowth's history and its economic foundations, accompanied by a manifesto for reevaluating the goals of economic life in light of ecological decline. The book unpacks the principles of degrowth as a transition path towards a post-growth economy.

To the best of our knowledge, we present here the first academic review in English. First, a summary is given, followed by an examination of the work's strengths and some critical reflections.

I. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

In *Slow Down or Die*, Parrique dismantles the myths surrounding both unlimited growth and degrowth, making a case for degrowth as a necessary transition. In the introduction, the author begins by framing our growth-driven economy as a weapon of mass destruction. The first chapter develops this critique by examining the origin and purpose of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), exposing its critical limitations, notably its instrumental use as a proxy for market expansion, and its failure to capture

either the full scope of economic activity or its effects on social relationships and the environment.

In the second chapter, Parrique argues that an absolute decoupling between economic growth and ecological limits remains elusive. First, relying solely on green growth or decarbonization incentives proves insufficient for achieving sustainability, as these measures cannot keep pace with the expanding footprint they generate. Second, market economics fail to account for the true environmental costs of innovation: new technologies invariably demand more time, effort, and resources than the marginal improvements they deliver. Intensifying economic activity, therefore, inevitably accelerates resource extraction, carbon emissions, and ecological depletion.

In the third and fourth chapters, the author expands on the social and political limits of the market economy, highlighting how those who produce see their lives reduced to commodities in a capitalist system that forgoes sleep for the pursuit of relentless production. This critique positions growth ideology as an existential threat, one whose outcome leads to ecocide. It thereby lays the groundwork for Parrique to advocate degrowth as a viable macroeconomic alternative. One that explicitly accounts for the existential, economic, and energetic dimensions of human needs, ensuring they are sufficiently met.

To understand this alternative, a subsequent section of the book, starting with chapter 5, traces the full development of the degrowth movement, from its grassroots origins in the May 1968 protests in France through the evolution of political ecology. Parrique spotlights the lasting intellectual contributions of key figures, such as André Gorz, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, who pioneered bioeconomics, and Serge Latouche, whose work on de-economization remains seminal. In doing so, Parrique highlights growth ideology and its colonization of our institutions and collective imagination (for example, the dominance of economism), and argues for prioritizing use-value of social and ecological dimensions over mere monetary quantification.

Building on this historical and intellectual foundation, chapters 6 and 7 advance a degrowth economy grounded in human and ecological well-being. Drawing on the work of Chilean ecological economist Manfred Max-Neef's (1992), better known as Barefoot Economics, and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Parrique redefines prosperity in a degrowth economy as one whose primary objective is the flourishing of social and psychological capabilities, while minimizing the environmental footprint of

human activity. In this vision, prosperity is measured not by purchasing power, but by the quality of human and environment relationships, ultimately defined by the quality of life itself. Accordingly, quality of life is determined by the quality of time spent and by engaging in meaningful work, thereby guaranteeing conviviality, justice, and sustainability within a preserved natural world.

In this framework, the principles of justice imply a redistribution of wealth toward the most deprived communities, guided by equity and a fair allocation of the carbon budget, to enable all populations to meet these fundamental needs and participate fully in social life. This redefinition of wealth means redistributing existing monetary resources based on real-world constraints: the time available, the energy accessible, and the materials required. In short, it prioritizes what we choose to have, grounded in tangible, ecological, and temporal realities rather than abstract economic growth.

This vision rests on three core principles: *decumulation*, by breaking away from relentless drive for capital accumulation; *decommodification*, shielding essential goods from market logics and commodification; and a *decolonization of imaginaries*, as in liberating collective thought from the growth imperative. Concretely, it involves combining sobriety and eco-efficiency, a degrowth strategy driven by economic slowdown. By deliberately reducing production, it reproduces the virtuous effects of a stagnant growth trajectory, shrinking the current economy while simultaneously 'greening' it. This gets operationalized through the 'avoid-shift-improve' approach proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Creutzig et al. 2022), by first avoiding unnecessary consumption, then substituting with less polluting products, or promoting eco-innovation when the first two options are not available. In summary, this framework functions as a deliberate and planned transitional framework to an economy of post-growth, where prosperity is founded on a sustainable metabolism of reasoned consumption and production, known as a stationary economy, responding to human needs as simply and as equitably as possible.

In terms of implementation, it is worth adding that this degrowth strategy would be applied to communities that already have sufficient resources, presumably the wealthiest, in order to reduce the ecological impact of the largest consumers. More precisely, it is a strategy of "disaccumulation through repair" (Parrique 2022, 253) where a selective sobriety leads to another form of abundance: that of social and ecological wealth,

shared proportionally according to the capabilities and responsibilities of national or individual communities. Accordingly, post-growth would require democratic planning for production and consumption, guided by ecological limits and social equity. This organization is structured around a collective stewardship of shared resources and a deliberate reduction in dependence on market forces. Thus, justice, cooperation, and human well-being become the foundations of prosperity and replace the pursuit of monetary expansion. The objective is to readjust production to favor social purpose enterprises and to reduce those whose social impact would be negative: prioritizing producers of necessary goods that pollute minimally—such as organic agriculture—over multinationals. Consequently, Parrique's degrowth framework envisions a radical reconfiguration of the economic landscape, where production systems are realigned to prioritize social purpose enterprises with minimal environmental harm.

The final section includes the last chapter and the conclusion. Here, Parrique seizes the opportunity to systematically address and challenge the twelve most common (mis)conceptions, namely controversies, promoted by intellectual and political figures against degrowth. Among these, he refutes claims that degrowth is inherently anti-innovation, runs counter to human nature, or is cause of dissensus, using evidence to show these claims are fallacies that perpetuate political inertia and mask our collective denial of life's finitude. His rhetorical approach reframes critiques into opportunities to advocate for degrowth as a fair reorientation rather than an economic regression. In the conclusion, Parrique offers an overview of real-world examples of ecosocial entrepreneurship and policy measures to move past GDP metrics and towards a post-growth economy. Overall, the author critiques capitalist reductionism in how resource use and activities are defined, equating better production with increased output and efficiency, while reducing human needs to a cost-benefit calculation over their satisfaction. To this end, his work redefines the anthropological purpose of economic exchange and invites readers to "desert capitalism" (Parrique 2022, 269) and embrace degrowth as a radically different economy. His model of degrowth is inspired by ecosocialism: thinking and planning a slow, frugal, and sufficient economy, with a concern for the contentment of social and ecological needs, social justice, and well-being, within the limits of planetary resources.

Ultimately, the author advocates for viewing degrowth as a positive and democratic pursuit, challenging ideas of austerity and despair with those of joy, human connection, and ecological well-being.

II. CRITIQUE

One of the book's notable strengths lies in Parrique's skill at storytelling. He writes to reach a wide audience of both curious and skeptical individuals. Using vivid metaphors set in everyday situations, he manages to unpack abstract concepts, for instance, by turning the GDP into a tensiometer to measure the economic activity, and by picturing growth as a snow globe that, once shaken, reveals the bustling activity of the monetary economy. Additionally, *Slow Down or Die*'s argumentation is grounded in both economic theory and ecological science, with references retrievable at the end of the book. This balance between clarity and reliability positions it as both a work of popular science and a well-read introduction to degrowth and post-growth.

One of the book's most compelling dimensions might be its ethical stance and political significance. By bridging ecological economics, political philosophy, and social movements, Parrique argues for a reconsideration of the fundamentals of economic science to address the most significant aspects of human life. In the current context of climate crisis and deepening social inequality, *Slow Down or Die* offers a timely contribution: it clarifies degrowth both as a positive and responsible project grounded in the real economics of living, while astutely turning the tables on its common portrayal as an economically irrational and socially irresponsible scheme. Moreover, the author advocates for the democratic and moral needs of our ecology, where degrowth foregrounds anthropological needs, justice, and sustainability. By placing ecological moral obligations at the heart of economics, Parrique proposes a normative shift toward ecological economics, in support of the book's broader thesis.

Overall, by framing growth in relation to degrowth, Parrique offers an accessible historical and taxonomic approach, which allows one to appreciate the economic fundamentals of human production within modern social organization. The narrative becomes effectively anchored both in mainstream economics—one often driven by utility and productivity and arguably detached from moral values—and one which considers degrowth not merely as an environmental fix, but as a moral and social alternative to craft sustainable policies that are resilient and equitable.

Nevertheless, while Parrique convinces us of the unsustainability of growth, the implementation of degrowth policies remains largely confined to a vision of frugal, just, and collaborative economic production,

rather than reflecting a comprehensive framework. In practice, this approach appears to sidestep the significant structural and institutional hurdles, leaving them unaddressed. Moreover, he gives little to no consideration to the geopolitical complexity of contemporary economic landscapes, the heterogeneity of social structures, and the wide spectrum of human needs and capabilities for adaptation. By overlooking these realities—including the complexities of geopolitics—and glossing over the institutional and structural intricacies involved, his proposals, such as reducing working hours, nationalizing services, or redirecting technological innovation toward social innovation, risk underestimating the scale of transformation required.

Rather, Parrique implies that it is the step-by-step weaving of individual and cumulative efforts that will translate and transcend diverse realities across diverse political, economic, and cultural landscapes. This limited roadmap to applicability is undermined by an evidentiary narrowness: his case studies, political examples, and illustrative narratives are overwhelmingly drawn from the French context. Whenever foreign ecosocial innovations are cited, they serve primarily as illustrations of possibility rather than as evidence of broader applicability, leaving unanswered the crucial question of how such models might be adapted across diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts.

As such, much in the same way that mainstream market economics imposes a universal imperative of compulsory growth as a roadmap to prosperity, degrowth is presented as a universal prescription for averting ecological collapse while enabling more joyful forms of living. The asymmetry between the Global North, largely responsible for ecological overshoot, and the Global South, where many still lack access to basic services, raises complex questions of equity that Parrique does acknowledge. Yet by largely overlooking variation, power dynamics, and cultural specificity, the book risks reproducing one of the limitations it seeks to challenge: the tendency to universalize a particular economic orientation across profoundly different contexts. Consequently, it falls short of demonstrating how degrowth might constitute a self-contained, context-sensitive, real-world economic blueprint for flourishing within planetary limits.

Lastly, for us, as occupational scientists concerned with how people organize and experience their everyday activities, this raises a more fundamental question: to what extent can an economic paradigm transcend the very economism it seeks to overcome? By framing degrowth as a radical ecological economic framework capable of meeting both human and

planetary needs, the book ultimately entrusts economics once again with the task of addressing both our needs and the current existential crisis. Our concern is that, in doing so, human and non-human needs may remain valued—and consequently reasoned, institutionalized, and measured—primarily in terms of their productivity, whether for use or exchange. Economics fosters the illusion that the organization and valuation of human activities are predetermined by the material constraints of accessing and managing resources. However, it is their socioeconomic rationalization that determines how we collectively construct purpose and meaning in the daily organization and occupation of time and space in the first place (Albuquerque and Albuquerque 2026). Therefore, the ambition to replace the imperative of growth with that of degrowth may leave insufficient room for asking whether flourishing within planetary limits requires not simply different economics, but a different way of organizing and valuing activities beyond the primacy of labor and production altogether.

III. CONCLUSION

Shaped by the urgent need to update debates about degrowth, *Slow Down or Die* makes a significant contribution to ecological economics and political thought, honoring the French legacy on this matter. The author introduces an alternative economic proposal that addresses anthropological needs, social justice, and ecological transition to a wide audience. For deeper insight, readers might consult the author's thesis (Parrique 2019) or his recently released second book—currently available only in French—*La Science de la Post-Croissance* (translatable as *The Science of Post-Growth*, Parrique 2026). The book is likely to further develop and update his vision of a roadmap toward sustainable degrowth, building on the central concerns of his scholarship.

Finally, we would be curious to hear Parrique's perspective on the carbon footprint of digital technologies and generative AI. His book and thesis were published before the full extent of the ecological costs associated with digital technologies and generative AI had become apparent. In this context, we believe that the book's call for radical degrowth is more relevant than ever and warrants renewed engagement.

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