Research and Degrowth

URBAN POSTGROWTH POLITICS

DEEP DIVE - ONLINE COURSE

SYLLABUS

by Sara Bretschko



DEEP DIVES

ONLINE COURSES

The Deep Dive Online Courses offered by Research & Degrowth (R&Di) are an educational initiative designed to explore focused themes through the lens of Degrowth.

These high-intensity courses are created for those who seek more than an introduction: researchers, activists, professionals, and curious minds ready to engage critically with the challenges and possibilities of social-ecological transformation.

To join this course, you should have already attended a previous course on degrowth (such as “Intro to Degrowth” or the master course), or have read a full book on the subject, for example, Less Is More by Jason Hickel.

Each Deep Dive consists of five live online sessions of 2.5 hours each, totaling 12.5 hours with no more than 25 students.

We have been working hard to create this online course and are excited to be launching it to you.

We are looking forward to this educational journey together!



URBAN POSTGROWTH POLITICS

DEEP DIVE
online course
NOV/dec 2026

Research and Degrowth

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Contemporary cities are sites of struggle and possibility for postgrowth politics: while rent extraction, real estate speculation and privatisation of public space intensifies and makes the life of working class urban residents continuously harder to afford and enjoy, cities are also sites of resistance and experimentation with alternative modes of social provisioning and spatial organization.

This Deep Dive explores the history tying urban development to economic growth, alternative projects that challenge this hegemonic model, and goes on to introduce latest developments in the postgrowth agenda for cities, always placing it in a multiscalar context.

Critically, the Deep Dive will have a focus on situating cities and urban politics within a wider strategy for postgrowth transformation, and questions of building power, mobilizing and coalition-building within and outside existing institutions will run throughout the course.

It will be of interest for students and researchers of (urban) geography, planning, political science and sustainability science, as well as those working in municipal institutions or planning bodies, activists and campaigners.



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COURSE DETAILS

DATES: November 19th to December 17th

TIME: 16:00h to 18:30h (CET)

TIMELINE

Nov 19th: Why Do Cities Depend on Growth? The historical and political foundations of urban growth dependencies

Nov 26th: Challenging the Growth Machine: Radical Municipalism in Practice

Dec 3rd: Building a Postgrowth City: Policies, Care and Democratic Planning

Dec 10th: From Movements to Municipal Power. Political organising and strategies for institutional transformation

Dec 17nd: Beyond the City: Scaling Up Postgrowth Transformation. Bioregional strategies and the limits of municipal politics



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COST

250 EUROS

Payment via European Bank Transfer or Credit Card (2% fee).

Upon successfully completing the online course, all participants will receive an official certificate issued by Research & Degrowth International.

R&Di offers two scholarships per course.
To apply, please send your motivation letter to project@degrowth.org, explaining why you would like to join the course and why you are unable to afford the course fee.



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TEACHER



SARAH BRETSCHKO (THEY/SHE)

Sara is a PhD researcher in the REAL project at ICTA-UAB, working on radical municipalism, urban growth dependencies and postgrowth policy proposals and political strategy at the municipal scale.

Part of their research builds on collaborations with the city councils of Girona (Catalunya), Hernani (Euskal Herria) and Zagreb (Croatia). They are particularly interested in how to re-organize social reproduction beyond growth, with the municipal scale as an entry point.



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SESSION 1

DATE: November 19th

TIME: 15:40h

Why Do Cities Depend on Growth?

The historical and political foundations of urban growth dependencies

- Why cities matter for ecosocialist degrowth and the possibilities of political transformation at the municipal scale.
- The historical relationship between urban development and economic growth, from industrialisation to neoliberal austerity urbanism.
- Understanding the urban growth machine: growth coalitions, competing interests and structural dependencies.
- Identifying the political and institutional challenges of moving towards postgrowth cities.

READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS:

- Sevilla-Buitrago, A. (2022). Introduction: Planning as a Historical Project. In: Sevilla-Buitrago, A.: Against the Commons: A Radical History of Urban Planning. (pp. 1-30), University of Minnesota Press. (read pages 1-22)
- Rodgers, S. (2009). Urban Growth Machine. In: Kitchin R and Thrift N (eds) International Encyclopedia of Human Geography.

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SESSION 2

DATE: November 26th[th]

TIME:16:00h

Challenging the Growth Machine: Radical Municipalism in Practice

Political alternatives, municipalist movements and urban resistance

- The origins and evolution of radical municipalism as a political strategy for urban transformation.
- Different approaches to municipalism: platform municipalism, autonomist traditions, managed municipalism and other progressive urbanisms.
- Examining municipalist experiences and their achievements, contradictions and political limitations.
- The current landscape of radical municipalism and its potential for advancing postgrowth politics.

READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS:

- Roth, L., Russell, B., & Thompson, M. (2023). Politicising proximity: Radical municipalism as a strategy in crisis. Urban Studies, 60(11), 2009-2035.
- Toro, F., & Orozco, H. (2023). Towards variegated 'peripheral municipalisms': The experience of Valparaíso and Recoleta, Chile. Urban Studies, 60(11), 2307-2325.

*A list of additional readings on specific cases will be distributed in the session prior to this.

MANDATORY



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SESSION 3

DATE: December 3rd

TIME: 16:00h

Building a Postgrowth City: Policies, Care and Democratic Planning

Transforming essential services, urban space and municipal governance

- Exploring municipal policy proposals for degrowth and their implications for urban planning and governance.
- Democratic control and collective management of essential services and urban space.
- Rethinking urban priorities through care, social reproduction, anti-racism and anti-discriminatory approaches.
- Learning from ongoing postgrowth action research and municipal collaborations in Girona, Zagreb and Hernani.

READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS:

- Kaika, M., Varvarousis, A., Demaria, F., & March, H. (2023). Urbanizing degrowth: Five steps towards a Radical Spatial Degrowth Agenda for planning in the face of climate emergency. Urban Studies, 60(7), 1191-1211.
- Kussy, A., Palomera, D., & Silver, D. (2023). The caring city? A critical reflection on Barcelona's municipal experiments in care and the commons. Urban Studies, 60(11), 2036-2053.

MANDATORY



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SESSION 4

DATE: , December 10th

TIME: 16:00h (CET)

From Movements to Municipal Power

Political organising and strategies for institutional transformation

- Exploring political strategies for building collective power at the municipal scale.
- Understanding dual power, pre-revolutionary planning and popular protagonism as approaches to social transformation.
- Examining the relationships, tensions and possibilities between grassroots movements and municipal institutions.
- Learning from recent experiences of political organising and institutional change at the local level.

READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS:

- Thompson, M., & Nishat-Botero, Y. (2025). Postcapitalist planning and urban revolution. Competition & Change, 29(1), 101-120.
- Harnecker, M. (2007). Chapter 12, Local Governments: Signposts to an Alternative Path. (pp. 117-129). In: Harnecker, M.: Rebuilding the Left, Zed Press.

*A list of additional readings on specific cases will be distributed in the session prior to this.

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SESSION 5

DATE: December 17th

TIME: 16:00h (CET)

Beyond the City: Scaling Up Postgrowth Transformation

Bioregional strategies and the limits of municipal politics

- Understanding planetary urbanisation and the political, ecological and economic relationships between urban and non-urban territories.
- Examining the geographical, institutional and structural limits of postgrowth politics at the municipal scale.
- Exploring bioregional approaches and their potential for reorganising social and ecological relations beyond administrative boundaries.
- Connecting municipalist strategies with wider ecosocialist transformation and cooperative geopolitical relations.

READINGS PRIOR TO CLASS

- Waldenberger, J., & Savini, F. (2025). Bioregionalism and degrowth: addressing the urban-other divide. Planning Theory & Practice, 26(3), 402-419.
- Arboleda, M. (2016) In the Nature of the Non-City: Expanded Infrastructural Networks and the Political Ecology of Planetary Urbanisation. Antipode, 48:233–251.

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CONTACT

If you have questions about the “Deep Dives” Online Course feel free to contact us on:

Email: project@degrowth.org / fede.arcuri@degrowth.org
What’s app Lorenzo : +39 3466963151

COORDINATORS



Lorenzo Lonardi is a project coordinator at Research and Degrowth with a master’s degree in Political Ecology, Degrowth, and Environmental Justice from ICTA-UAB. He is passionate about promoting degrowth ideas and creating accessible educational programs. As the coordinator of the “Introduction to Degrowth” online course and the “Deep Dives ” online courses, Lorenzo focuses on organizing and delivering a program that supports learning and collaboration around sustainable and just alternatives to growth-focused economics.



Federico Arcuri s a project coordinator at Research and Degrowth. He is also an alumnus of the master's in Political Ecology at ICTA-UAB, with a thesis on a "Post-growth deal for Italy". He is interested in environmental conflicts, post-growth policy and geopolitics, especially with respect to EU-China relations. He co-organized the last two editions of the Degrowth Summer School, coordinating the bike caravan weeks and facilitating counter-cartography workshops.



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WE ARE

RESEARCH & DEGROWTH INTERNATIONAL

Research & Degrowth is a think-and-act-tank dedicated to the radical transformation of our economies and societies through research, advocacy, education, training and events around degrowth.

For more than fifteen years, R&Di has successfully organized summer schools and university master's programs focused on degrowth.

The online course represents a new educational format to reach out to a broader audience.

Upon successfully completing the online course, all participants will receive an official certificate issued by R&Di.



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