



## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Economic degrowth and sustainable green growth represent distinct yet interrelated approaches in the pursuit of transitioning towards a more environmentally conscious and socially equitable model of sustainable development. Both approaches aim to redefine the existing paradigm of perpetual growth, advocating for increased efficiency in the utilization of natural resources and the establishment of social justice and equality. The concept of degrowth initially surfaced as a proactive reaction to the complex economic and environmental dilemmas that arose during the initial years of the 1970s. The concept of “post-capitalism” was first coined and popularized by the influential Austrian-French social theorist André Gorz during the transformative decade of the 1970s. The concept of “degrowth” is deeply rooted in the French term “la décroissance” and the Italian term “la decrescita,” both of which eloquently evoke the image of a river slowly and steadily retracting to its customary water levels after experiencing a prolonged period of inundation. The evolution and development of the Environmental Movement in the 1970s can be traced back to the emergence of a comprehensive and in-depth analysis that served as a fundamental and critical assessment of the relentless and unrelenting pursuit of continuous and never-ending economic growth. This analysis brought to the forefront a wide range and diverse array of environmental and social consequences that were intricately linked and interconnected with this pursuit. During the initial years within the first ten years of the twenty-first century, the notion of degrowth started to acquire considerable traction as a complex and diverse social and scholarly phenomenon [1].

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## Conceptual and referential approach

This significant surge in interest was largely fueled by mounting apprehensions and concerns regarding the escalating challenges posed by climate change, as well as the depletion of essential natural resources that are crucial for sustaining life on our planet. For a more complete and deeper understanding, we will delve into the conceptual framework of the three terms: Degrowth, Green Growth and Sustainable Innovation:

1. **Degrowth:** Sustainable Degrowth promotes a systematic and intentional contraction of economic size as a crucial approach to successfully tackle the environmental, social, and economic challenges confronting contemporary civilization. It underscores the need of substantially reducing the consumption and production of commodities and services to maintain life within the ecological boundaries of Earth. This novel approach challenges the established belief that continuous economic development is essential for societal well-being, advocating for a shift towards more sustainable, fair, and equitable living patterns [2].
2. **Green Growth:** The idea of “Green Growth,” on the other hand, is an attempt to find a middle ground between the pursuit of economic growth and the preservation and protection of the environment with a sense of equilibrium. Its primary emphasis is on making investments in cutting-edge technology and putting into practice environmentally responsible methods that help to lessen the effect that human activities have on the environment while simultaneously fostering sustainable economic development. With the primary goal of decoupling economic growth from negative impacts on the environment, this strategic approach actively promotes research and development in key sectors such as clean energy, the optimization of energy consumption, and the promotion of environmentally friendly agricultural practices. This is the primary objective of this approach [3].
3. **Sustainable Innovation:** Both the promotion of economic degrowth and the promotion of green and sustainable growth over the long run need the deployment of environmentally friendly activities and the application of sustainable innovations and practices. It entails the ongoing production of innovative and environmentally friendly goods and services, as well as the development of disruptive business models that have a beneficial influence on the community as a whole and the environment. Some examples that are pertinent include significant advancements in renewable energy technologies, innovative circular economy practices that aim to effectively minimize waste generated, and the implementation of sustainable urban planning strategies that promote balanced and environmentally friendly development. These are just some of the examples that are relevant [4].

## 2. CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORLD

The United Nations advocates for and facilitates the execution of sustainable innovation via various projects, programs, and frameworks for international cooperation. The United Nations (UN) does not explicitly endorse economic degrowth; nonetheless, it strongly emphasizes the need to foster long-term sustainable development and the necessity of reassessing traditional economic paradigms and institutions.

### 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

It is common practice to refer to SDGs as the Global Goals for Development. The UN created the SDGs in 2015 with the intention of putting an end to poverty, safeguarding the environment, and fostering peace and prosperity [5].

The SDGs address a wide range of issues and challenges facing humanity, providing a comprehensive and specific framework for the advancement of sustainability globally. These objectives encompass objectives that are associated with the promotion of responsible consumption and production, the mitigation of climate change through climate action, and the promotion of innovation in a variety of sectors to facilitate sustainable and equitable development [6].

### Voluntary National Review (VNRs)

VNRs, which stand for voluntary national reviews, are an essential component of the monitoring and evaluation procedures that are carried out in accordance with UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The member states conduct these exhaustive assessments on a regular basis with the intention of evaluating, analyzing, and reporting in detail their progress and development toward attaining the ambitious Goals for Sustainable Development. These reviews aim to achieve SDGs.

The primary goals of virtual network relationships (VNRs) are to support and encourage the exchange of experiences that are enriching and meaningful amongst people who come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. This is done with the intention of facilitating reciprocal learning and the development of strong collaborative networks. During the process of putting the Sustainable Development Goals into action, many nations discuss with one another their successes, difficulties, and experiences that they have gained. Strengthening and improving public policies and government institutions: National Voluntary Reports contribute significantly to strengthening and improving national policies and institutional frameworks with the aim of more effectively supporting sustainable development [7].

For any endeavor to be successful, it is essential to successfully mobilize the support of a wide variety of varied stakeholders. To achieve outcomes that are sustainable over the long term, it is necessary to include a diverse group of players and to encourage cooperation between those entities. During this process, it is essential to take into consideration the establishment of strategic alliances and the encouragement of active community engagement. They actively promote the engagement of a broad variety of stakeholders, including members of civil society, members of the commercial sector, and academics, in the process of putting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into action [8].

VNRs, which are also known as optional National Reports, are processes that are optional and are directed and organized by the nations themselves. This ensures that each review is produced separately and is tailored to the particularities and special needs of the country that is responsible for carrying it out. Every year, the various nations of the world get together in a systematic manner at the International Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the Highest Level. This forum serves as an extremely important global platform for a variety of nations to discuss their progress and challenges in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, as well as to work closely together in the pursuit of exploring possible innovative solutions and joint strategies that are beneficial to humanity [9].

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