

PRESS RELEASE

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A shifting project of Post-Growth Economics given a ERC-Synergy for Spanish and swiss Researchers

The European Research Council (ERC) is funding an ambitious SYNERGY research-action project about how North and South societies can manage economic, political and social transitions to and in a Post-Growth era. This 6-years and €10 millions project, “Post-Growth Deal” (REAL), lead by three scientists - two from ICTA-UAB in Barcelona and one from UNIL in Lausanne, aims to bring both radically new paradigms in ecological economics and therefore new practical developments on the ground.

In short:

“It’s the first time that a project of such scale and scope is granted on the topic of post-growth, it is an opportunity that carries significant responsibility.” **(Giorgio Kallis, ICTA-UAB)**

“The goal is a convergence between the global North and South, and within countries, to a sufficient use level of resource” **(Jason Hickel, ICTA-UAB)**

“This project is nothing short of revolutionary and gives us what we think is the best chance to explore the transformative ideas necessary to protect humanity from the intertwined crises of the coming decades: to reorient our economies away from risky growth dependence, and towards human flourishing.” **(Julia Steinberger, IGD, UNIL).**

More:

To reduce emissions fast enough to meet the Paris targets, and to reverse other ecological pressures, high-income economies will need to dramatically reduce their use of energy and material resources. But sufficient reductions may be difficult to achieve if countries continue to pursue economic growth - ever-increasing levels of industrial production - as a primary objective.

Scientists increasingly recognize the need to explore post-growth pathways. Recent calls for post-growth transition have been discussed in major reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN panel on biodiversity (IPBES), and the European Environment Agency. But the existing knowledge base cannot yet meet this demand. The REAL project will advance the science so that post-growth pathways can be fully described and successfully implemented.

The ERC has awarded a highly competitive, six-year €9.9 million Synergy Grant to three scientists who will lead the REAL project. The grant is one of the most prestigious awards for advanced research in Europe.

The team consists of two scientists in Catalonia, Spain and one in Lausanne, Switzerland: Prof. Giorgos Kallis at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (ICTA-UAB), Prof. Jason Hickel at ICTA-UAB and the department of anthropology of the same University, and Prof. Julia Steinberger at the Institute of Geography and Sustainability of the University of Lausanne (IGD-UNIL).

To get a sufficient range of skills that no single researcher or team presently possesses, the following expertise are brought together: modelling of provisioning systems (Julia Steinberger), political economy and North-South relations (Jason Hickel), and the politics of socio-environmental transformations (Giorgos Kallis).

The three awarded scientists propose also a new trans-disciplinary '5Ps of post-growth' science, grounded in resource/energy modelling, political-economy and socio-political analysis with the last prospect to identify practical steps to bring Post-Growth Deals to life, working with four representative communities to co-produce knowledge and action on the ground.

With this funding, the scientists will join their respective expertise to explore "how can dramatic reductions in energy and resource use be achieved, while at the same time ending poverty and ensuring decent lives for all". They aspire to propose new models of politics, policies and provisioning systems in a post-growth direction, and engage with questions of development in the global South. The goal here, explains Jason Hickel, economic anthropologist at ICTA-UAB, is "convergence between the global North and South, and within countries, to a level of resource use that is sufficient for high human development and compatible with planetary boundaries".

The "Post-growth Deal" refers to the need for a new political and institutional compact between government and citizens equivalent to that of the New Deal, or the welfare state, but now geared around the security of wellbeing in an era of prolonged economic stagnation and unfolding climate breakdown. Realizing such a 'Deal', requires new research, new data, and new models that the REAL project intends to develop.

"It's the first time that a project of such scale and scope is granted on the topic of post-growth", says Giorgos Kallis, environmental scientist at ICTA-UAB. "This is a recognition and validation of the efforts many isolated researchers have made for years - against mainstream opposition, and with little institutional or financial support. It is an opportunity that carries significant responsibility". Kallis emphasized also the importance of synergy: "Every time the three of us meet, we feel like the different pieces of a puzzle coming together. This is a truly inter-disciplinary project. We hope to set a new paradigm for how to approach questions of planetary importance."

"This project is nothing short of revolutionary," said Julia Steinberger, an ecological economist at the University of Lausanne. "It gives us what we think is the best chance to explore the transformative ideas necessary to protect humanity from the intertwined crises of the coming decades: to reorient our economies away from risky growth dependence, and towards human flourishing."

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