

Abstract Individual Paper for the 6th International Conference on Degrowth for ecological sustainability and social equity

### **Common Good-Oriented Companies: Exploring Corporate Values, Characteristics and Practices That Are Proposed as Triggers for a Development Towards Degrowth**

The degrowth debate has so far largely neglected the role of companies in a socio-economic transformation towards degrowth. The limitation of the company's size is just one possible way in which it can contribute to a reduction in economic growth, which is one aim of degrowth. At present, little is known about the corporate characteristics that could support a development towards degrowth. We are not aware of any empirical studies that provide information on which values should guide a company's development in order to promote both a societal and an intra-company development in the direction of degrowth. Addressing this research gap, we conducted interviews with eleven small and middle sized companies which have joined the Economy for the Common Good (ECG). The ECG is a social movement which identifies the common good as the purpose of economic activity. Our analysis of the interviews was guided by Latouche's (2009) eight 'R's which, he claims, should trigger a transformation towards degrowth: re-evaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, redistribute, relocalize, reduce, re-use and recycle. Latouche calls for a societal reorientation concerning values such as cooperation, democracy and diversity. He expects this shift in values to lead to a transformation of production structures and modes, and of the conceptual understanding of prosperity. Restructuring, in turn, is intended to accompany a redistribution of prosperity and access to natural goods. Among the companies we studied, we observed a change in values in line with Latouche's claim and the aims of degrowth. In their management practices, the companies are guided by values such as fairness, cooperation, diversity, independence, democracy, transparency, and ecological sustainability. This is exemplified by democratic ownership and decision-making structures, cooperative trade relations, a preference for local suppliers and the redistribution of surpluses. Furthermore, for these companies, profits are of reduced significance as an indicator of success. Nevertheless, most companies in our sample do still consider further company growth to be necessary. More research is therefore needed to explore the extent to which the companies' compliance with Latouche's strategies for a development towards degrowth is, in fact, contributing to a societal transition towards degrowth.