

Music, *Ecologies* *and Degrowth.*

A Few Paths to Explore

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ABSTRACT

The climate crisis compels us to rethink the future. It is important to do so with the knowledge that environmental problems are *also* social problems (social inequality) and mental problems (increase in mental disorders). We can, therefore, broaden the notion of ecology by thinking in terms of ‘three ecological registers’:¹ the environmental, the social, and the mental. Rethinking the future requires a theory capable of working across these three registers. The concept of ‘degrowth’, which is developing into an important paradigm,² proposes such a theory. As a means of attaining a post-growth society (rather than as an end in itself), degrowth poses the question of limits.³ This requires a questioning of the dominant model of the *homo economicus* in order to promote other values: care, sharing, autonomy, or free time. Art is one of these values. We will deal here with a general introduction to these questions and with two musical examples: the first, taken from orchestral music, is Dmitri Kourliandski; the other, dealing with musical technology, is Agostino Di Scipio.

Keywords: three ecological registers, degrowth, art as a post-growth value, Dmitri Kourliandski, Agostino Di Scipio

THE THREE ECOLOGIES AND DEGROWTH

The Three Ecologies

Over the last few years, we have witnessed the birth of environmental art or ‘environmental aesthetic’⁴ that some have even termed ‘anthropocenart’.⁵ Musicians and musicologists – with the notable exception of the pioneers of acoustic ecology – have been slower to take this ecological turn, perhaps because music seems to require more equipment (an aspect crucial to this issue) or because the mimetic relationship with what we continue to call nature (though today we talk more readily of ‘the living world’) has persisted, preventing material links from being formed. An awareness of the environment is nevertheless now emerging,

and it is doing much to inspire the work of sound artists, all sorts of field recordists, and authors of outdoor sound installations. This ecological turn in art needs to rise to the challenge of environmental ecology. The climate disruption will see us enter an era of global catastrophes caused by increasingly extreme climate-related events: floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, fires, etc. We are also becoming aware of the erosion of biodiversity, which is bringing us close to the sixth mass extinction (the fifth one saw the disappearance of the dinosaurs). There is no need to be an expert in theories of collapsology and disaster, still less a survivalist, to be acutely worried and to crave to act.

It has become common to talk of the Anthropocene when discussing this era of global catastrophes. However, more and more thinkers and militants believe that the term Anthropocene, although useful under its primary definition (i.e. as a new geological era in which the influence of humans will have a significant impact on the history of the earth)⁶ is ambiguous in social and political terms. Not all humans have the same carbon footprint: what common measure could be applied to Vladimir Putin or Benjamin Netanyahu who destroy lives, cities, hospitals, schools, etc. with a lot of energy (and carbon footprint), and to a Palestinian, Ukrainian or Russian small farmer? In fact, the environmental crisis is *also* a socio-political crisis. Environmental disasters abolish the dichotomy between nature and culture: ‘Environmental crisis is the natural erupting into the social (our environmental problems are social problems) and the social making its mark on the natural (some of the activities linked to our social lives, especially since the industrial revolution, are damaging nature),’ explain Catherine Larrère and Raphaël Larrère.⁷ In poor countries, the struggle for economic and social wellbeing often takes into account the defence of the ecosystems of the living world.

When we talk about several dominations, or about social ecology in the same terms as environmental ecology, we highlight the fact that the *oikos* (‘eco’) in the word ecology is complex and involves many interlocking layers. We can, thus, also evoke a *mental ecology*, to refer to the close

1 Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies* (Paris, 1989). Quoted after: Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, tr. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London, 2000).

2 Federico Demaria, *The case for Degrowth* (Cambridge, 2020).

3 Giorgos Kallis, *Limits. Why Malthus was wrong and why environmentalists should care* (Palo Alto, 2019).

4 Nathalie Blanc, *Vers une esthétique environnementale* (Paris, 2008).

5 Paul Ardennes, *Un art écologique. Création plasticienne et anthropocène* (Lormont, 2019), 263.

6 Paul J. Crutzen, ‘Geology of mankind’, *Nature*, 415/23 (2002).

7 Catherine Larrère and Raphaël Larrère, *Penser et agir avec la nature. Une enquête philosophique* (Paris, 2015), 6; my translation.

links between the environmental crisis and the problems people are currently experiencing in terms of their feelings or their way of existing in the world. Here we might recall the visionary theory of Félix Guattari in *The Three Ecologies*:

The Earth is undergoing a period of intense techno-scientific transformations. If no remedy is found, the ecological disequilibrium this has generated will ultimately threaten the continuation of life on the planet's surface. Alongside these upheavals, human modes of life, both individual and collective, are progressively deteriorating. Kinship networks tend to be reduced to a bare minimum; domestic life is being poisoned by the gangrene of mass-media consumption [...] It is the relationship between subjectivity and its exteriority – be it social, animal, vegetable or Cosmic – that is compromised in this way, in a sort of general movement of implosion and regressive infantilization. [...] We need then an ethico-political articulation – which I call *ecosophy* – between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity).⁸

Degrowth

The notion of degrowth (or post-growth) is very interesting because it may offer a solution to ecological crises in their three dimensions: environmental, social, and mental. Clashes over degrowth sweep aside well-meaning ideas of sustainability or sustainable development which, 'in their forty years of existence [...] have not succeeded in overturning the prevailing tendency towards the degradation of the natural environment [...] Nor have they enabled the promotion of equal sharing of wealth on Earth'.⁹ While sustainable development transforms fundamental issues into technical issues, degrowth re-politicises these issues and poses the question of choice. Hence the immense hostility with which it is met by orthodox economists, who work for the neo-liberal economy and thus proclaim the certainty that *There is no Alternative* (TINA).

Less is more: that is the precept of degrowth. However, it is not a case of straightforward reduction, but of qualitative transformation: 'The objective is not to make an elephant leaner, but to turn an elephant into a snail'¹⁰. 'Happy restraint' – another precept of degrowth – perhaps implies a low 'standard of living' according

to the criteria of the devotees of growth, but it also creates free time, desire and energy for a large number of things currently neglected by the majority of our fellow citizens, such as artistic practice, personal and social life, solidarity, etc.¹¹ In a society where degrowth occurs, art could play a major role and regain the socially important position it held in ancient and traditional societies. It is about decreasing in order to flourish.

Thinking around degrowth focuses on the fulfilment of values other than productivism. It stresses the impossibility of perpetual growth, 'and the necessity of creating a *bioeconomy*, to conceive of the economy as existing within the biosphere'.¹² 'Decolonising the imaginary' in order to be free from the false rationality of the *homo oeconomicus* and 'economist totalitarianism': this is the aim of degrowth according to Serge Latouche.¹³ Degrowth economists are critical of the use of GDP (gross domestic product) as an indicator of success: 'Calculating a nation's overall health according to its GDP makes about as much sense as evaluating the quality of a piece of music solely by counting the number of notes it contains'.¹⁴ These economists take inspiration from philosophies such as that of the South American *buen vivir*.¹⁵ They call for a different economy, one of solidarity and shared resources, a non-market economy. Another central value of degrowth is care, because 'working to lessen the vulnerability of others allows everybody to experience their own vulnerability and reflect on its characteristics'.¹⁶ One final value, a vital one, is that of autonomy: 'We can conceive of the path leading to degrowth as a path aimed at restoring autonomy as well as a process of liberation from dependence on alienating and heteronomous systems'.¹⁷

⁸ Guattari, 27–28.

⁹ Dominique Bourg and Augustin Fragnière, 'Conférences internationales: l'invention du développement durable', in Dominique Bourg and Augustin Fragnière, eds, *La pensée écologique. Une anthologie* (Paris, 2014), 349.

¹⁰ Giacomo D'Alisa, Federico Demaria and Giorgos Kallis, eds, *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era* (London, 2015), 4.

¹¹ Alexander Samuel, 'Simplicity', in D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis, *Degrowth*, 134.

¹² Serge Latouche, *Le pari de la décroissance* (Paris, 2006), 24; my translation.

¹³ Latouche, *Le pari*, 24.

¹⁴ Richard Heinberg, *The End of Growth. Adapting to Our New Economic Reality* (Canada, 2011), 40.

¹⁵ Eduardo Gudynas, 'Buen vivir', in *Degrowth*, 201–204.

¹⁶ Giacomo D'Alisa, Marco Deriu and Federico Demaria, 'Care', in D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis, *Degrowth*, 65.

¹⁷ Marco Deriu, 'Autonomy', in D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis, *Degrowth*, 57.

MUSIC AND DEGROWTH: DMITRI KOURLIANDSKI

Arts, Music and Degrowth

In the visual arts, the issue of degrowth is already being discussed with some acuity. Artists are turning their backs not only on the follies of the art market but also on institutional art, and they are reconnecting with art as autoproduction. Similarly, at least since the time of *arte povera*, a number of artists who do not completely reject the conventional art circulation have also been militant in the cause of degrowth.

In music and sound art, degrowth as such remains relatively unexplored, but people are beginning to reflect on it.¹⁸ The first question arising in such reflections is: at what level is degrowth applicable? Is it at the level of sound material, of resulting sound, or rather – of what musicians call technique (of composition or of performance)? If that were so, John Cage's *4'33"* would be a perfect model of degrowth! Or even Webern's *Symphony*, Op. 21, which, compared to Romantic or post-Romantic symphonies, is extremely short and has the orchestra playing pared-back material, more like chamber music.

However, in these examples degrowth can only ever be a semblance. Does the American minimalism of the mid-1960s to the 1970s, as exemplified by Steve Reich in *Violin Phase* or *Music for Eighteen Musicians*, represent an art of degrowth? First of all, although it is minimalistic on one level, that of composition technique (few notes; simple, repeated rhythmic motifs; phasing, etc.), the music places considerable technical demands on the instrumentalists. Furthermore, this musical tendency developed as a reaction to the more austere music of the 1950s (such as *4'33"*) and it is more a symptom of the expansion of a consumerist, pleasure-seeking society, which is the very opposite of the concept of degrowth.

¹⁸ Cf. Salgado Carmen Pardo, Roberto Barbanti, Kostas Paparrigopoulos and Makis Solomos, eds, *Art i decreixement / Arte y decrecimiento / Art et décroissance* (Girona, 2016); Makis Solomos, *Exploring the Ecologies of Music and Sound. Environmental, Mental and Social Ecologies in Music, Sound Art and Artivisms*, tr. Jennifer Higgins (London, 2023), chapter 10.

An Example

Dmitri Kourliandski possibly offers an example of degrowth represented by traditional musical means, namely, those of an orchestra. The catalogue of this Russian exile in Paris includes many pieces for orchestra. Dmitri Kourliandski is well-known for composing a kind of minimal, conceptual music, with an element of noise. As an example, I have selected of a piece titled *Maps of Non-Existent Cities. Stockholm*. This 2010 composition is the first in a cycle of variously scored 'maps of non-existent cities'. This piece gave the cycle only its title. The other works are open forms with graphic notation, while *Stockholm* is classically notated and fully determined. In fact, this work represents what Dmitri Kourliandski himself considers (as he told me in an interview) his first way of composing.

During that period, he pursued a keen interest in kinetic sculptures and in the Soviet constructivist tradition. He was interested in 'mechanical processes and how these mechanical processes produce a dramaturgy'.¹⁹

The scores consist of highly reduced, precisely prescribed 'gesture factories' and a kind of development – but not really a development, rather a chain – so that, at the end, you can see the whole process. Owing to this mechanisation of processes, what is important is not so much the musical flow itself as its perception by the listener; this is where the dramaturgy of the piece derives from.²⁰

To compose the piece, Dmitri Kourliandski explored all the wealth of the instruments' performance techniques and their relationship to history. We know that it is more difficult to get orchestral musicians to perform in many different 'playing modes'. For this reason, he later began composing open works, even with audience participation, which makes it easier to open up the orchestra. At the time of the *Stockholm* piece, he was still working with a strict score and the musicians' gestures, conceived of as a kind of small-scale mechanism.

Shortly before the end of the piece, we hear the 'complete object', with all its sound material: see **figure 1**. What comes before it is, to use a visual metaphor, like being in the dark at first and then gradually beginning to discern details. In fact, as Dmitri Kourliandski explains, 'everything is there from the start, but its perception proceeds step by step. Thus the whole musical process consists of listening to different aspects

¹⁹ Dmitri Kourliandski, 'Interview conducted by Makis Solomos' (unpublished, October 2024).

²⁰ Kourliandski, 'Interview'.

Maps of non-existent cities. Stockholm.

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Figure 1. Dmitri Kourliandski: *Stockholm*: score, p. 40.

**Maps of non-existent cities.
Stockholm**

for orchestra Dmitri Kourliandski

♩ = 108

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Figure 2. Dmitri Kourliandski: *Stockholm*: score, p. 1.

of the object, and then, towards the end, listening to the object in its entirety.' This is why the process is not a 'development' but a 'path to wholeness'.²¹

Figure 2 shows the first page of the score, where we have attained a partial view of the object.

It will now become clear why I selected this example of orchestral music and orchestration. It was because of the question of 'development'. Even if musicians understand 'development', in the tradition of German organicism, as processes that take the growth of a plant as their model, the idea of 'development' is not foreign to what we understand by economic 'development', to the industrial and post-industrial societies, in which productivism and growth culminate in the economic sense of the term. What we find here is music that rejects development. I asked Dimitri Kourliandski to comment on the idea that 'less is more' and that we could try to 'do less with more'. He said:

I am really interested in this idea. Right from the start, I've been thinking about the idea of degrowth. When I start composing, it's not a *tabula rasa* operation. In fact, everything is there, everything is already there, the whole history of humanity, the whole history of music. It's all there: the music already composed, the music yet to be composed, the music that will never be composed... It's all there on the blank page. My work is thus like the work of an archaeologist: it's all about removing unnecessary things. The *tabula rasa* comes at the end. The process consists in uncovering the initial idea.²²

MUSIC, TECHNOLOGY AND DEGROWTH: AGOSTINO DI SCIPIO

Music and Technology

We saw an example of possible degrowth (or better, of applying the 'less-is-more' principle) using traditional musical means. Naturally, the question of degrowth is most pressing when it comes to technology, because it then touches on the production system of society itself. Music was one of the first arts to engage with various forms of new technology as natural extensions of what musicians call technique. The founders of electroacoustic music (Varèse, Schaeffer and Henry, Stockhausen, Xenakis, etc.) exploited new technologies in order to develop a new kind of music and to 'naturalise' technology, transforming it into technique (still in the musical sense). The same occurred in popular music, with full

integration of amplification, electric guitar, and effects created in the studio.

This trend seems to have changed in the last few decades, though. Technology is no longer always used for musical ends, and instead it tends to serve productivist expansion within digital capitalism. The most striking change in the musical-technological sphere of mass consumerism is that there is inversely proportional development: the more the technology grows, the more music seems to disappear. We are heading towards a world in which the market will focus on a multitude of highly technological objects and online tools that, in order to sell better, will be able to play music. In the sphere of contemporary music and musical research, we are also witnessing a very fast growth in technology that does not have a specifically musical aim. Technologies are frequently developed for their own sake, and musical works simply serve to legitimise their existence. There are even some new technologies, developed at great expense, which are still seeking composers and musical works in which they can be 'applied'. This is the case, for instance, with the spatialisation technique known as Wave Field Synthesis (WFS).

This is probably the reason why many musicians have moved towards a more restrained use of technology, sometimes lo-fi or self-produced, using cheap equipment and allowing the musicians to rediscover their autonomy in the truest sense of the word (i.e. autonomy of means of production).

Do It Yourself and Hacking

A major trend that can be viewed as part of a move towards degrowth involves artists belonging to the Do It Yourself, hacking and/or Makers movements, even though none of these musicians has used the term degrowth (as yet). Do It Yourself, DIY, is a well-known concept which, in musical terms, has been employed by a long line of artists. The term hacking, in the context of capitalist law, is still associated in most people's minds with cyber attacks, but it is also used to mean DIY in the sense of adapting objects away from their original use or extending the scope of their original use. The term is thus linked to musicians and sound artists who hack electronic devices to make cheap instruments, to modify the original purpose of machines, or to reverse the gradual obsolescence of software. The Makers movement places a new value on artisanal production, building bridges between electronic or robotic equipment and ancient

²¹ Kourliandski, 'Interview'.

²² Kourliandski.

skills such as woodwork and metalwork. This includes many new musical and sound practices.

The birthplace of DIY is usually said to have been America: 'At the end of World War Two, [...] in Western Europe] there were institutions fostering electronic music. They had studios, whereas America had nothing like that. When John Cage [...] worked with electronic sounds, he had to do it with little things on a record player, while in Europe Karlheinz Stockhausen had a studio,' explains Nicolas Collins.²³ Although this vision is a little exaggerated (America did build electronic music studios, which operated within universities), it reflects the reality of DIY music pioneers such as Cage and David Tudor, as well as the musicians of the Sonic Arts Union collective (Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier, and Gordon Mumma). David Tudor's *Rainforest* sums up this approach.²⁴ Version IV of this piece is an electroacoustic environment conceived by David Tudor and produced by the group Composers Inside Electronics'.

In recent years, the book *Handmade Electronic Music. The Art of Hardware Hacking* by Nicolas Collins²⁵ has become a key reference. Collins is a composer, improviser and performer working in the tradition of North American experimental musicians (he was the pupil of Alvin Lucier and collaborated with David Tudor). He began experimenting with DIY and hacking early in his career. His early pieces, clearly influenced by Lucier, explore the use of the loudspeaker as one stage in musical production rather than the final point. He does the same with resonance and feedback. In the 1980s, he performed in New York with musicians such as John Zorn, and tried to fuse improvisation techniques with electronic production. He then moved to Europe, where he explored interactions between musicians playing electronics. Back in America by 1999 and teaching at the SAIC (The School of the Art Institute of Chicago), he collected materials for his book, because 'encouraged by [his] students, [he] rediscovered [his] roots in intuitive circuitry'.²⁶

²³ Nicolas Collins, 'Nicolas Collins', *Music Makers Hacklab_DF* (México, 2015); my translation.

²⁴ Boris Allenou, *L'apport du mouvement Do It Yourself dans la création musicale: l'exemple de Rainforest*, master's thesis, University Paris 8, 2017.

²⁵ Nicolas Collins, *Handmade Electronic Music. The art of hardware hacking* (New York, 2006; 3rd edition, New York, 2020).

²⁶ Nicolas Collins, 'About Me', 2014, <https://www.nicolascollins.com/texts/narrativebio.pdf>, accessed 15 Sept. 2025.

Collins' book does not 'theorise' hacking. Like others working in the same field, Collins prefers to focus on practice, although he does occasionally weave theoretical thinking into his reflections, such as in his collection of writings published in French.²⁷ This book describes how to produce and/or modify different electronic circuits (contact microphones, oscillators, mixing desks, etc.) quickly and cheaply in order to make music. For instance:

The easiest way to turn the disc into a contact mike is to solder it to an old guitar cable – otherwise, use any shielded cable that's lying around. It is best to use shielded cable to keep the noise at an acceptable level, and keep it less than three meters in length for the same reason. Cut the plug at one end if necessary and strip the cable as in the figure. Solder the cable shield (outer conductor) to the electrical wire attached to the metal edge of the piezoelectric disc – then solder the inner conductor to the wire coming from the crystal, as shown in figure (if you reverse these two connections, the mike will buzz). Solder a 6.35mm mono plug on the other end, if using a stripped cable.²⁸

Economy of means

Let me finish with an example concerning another method of optimising technology, not with DIY and hacking, but by applying the philosophy known as 'economy of means'. I refer here to the work of the Italian composer Agostino Di Scipio, an artist well-known in the domains of electronics, live electronics, and sound installations. The expression 'economy of means' is used by Di Scipio himself. Here is a quotation from a recent article:

The prevailing economism considers ecology in terms of technological development and planning. Yet, technologies urgently need to be viewed from a relational and ecological perspective. The paradigm must be reversed: instead of approaching the environment and ecology in economic and technocratic terms, the economy and technology need to be considered through a relational and ecological consciousness. [...]

Whilst economic growth and technological opulence have forged the dogma of "indefinite" progress without definition, end, or goal, artists can act in other ways: they can appropriate their means of action, their workplaces, and reshape them according to an economy of means that is at once moderate and appropriate. [...]

More desirable than an indefinite development of technological competencies is the capacity to discern a necessary balance, a harmony between means and ends, a harmony always relative

²⁷ Nicolas Collins, *Micro Analyses* (Paris, 2015).

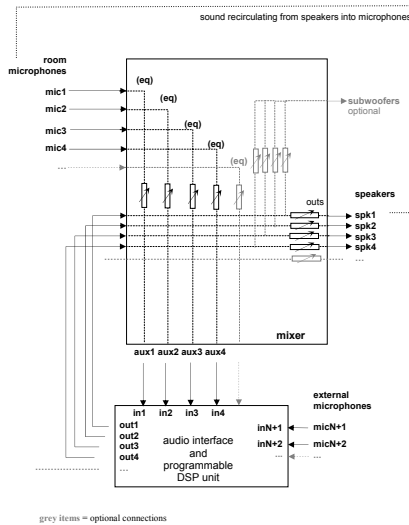
²⁸ Collins, *Micro Analyses*, 128.

INSTRUCTIONS

Technical Setup

- 4 or more condenser microphones (large membrane, cardioid or omni), to be placed in the room
- 2 or more condenser microphones (large membrane, cardioid or omni), to be placed outside the room (either open or closed spaces)
- 4 or more full-range loudspeakers (possibly full-range active studio monitors); one or more subwoofers should be added if available loudspeakers are far from being "full-range"
- mixer : minimum 4 mic inputs, 4 auxiliary sends, 4 independent group outputs (+ group output to subwoofers, if added)
- programmable real-time digital-signal-processing unit (computer + digital audio conversion interface)
- lighting system = as many spotlights as microphones and loudspeakers

Main Audio Connections



Microphones

In the space where the performance takes place (hall or court) find different locations for the four microphones, such that they can cause audio feedback tones (Larsen effect) when loudspeakers are on and gain levels are accordingly adjusted. Choose locations not too close to the speakers, either inside or outside the area circumscribed by the speakers. Possibly, microphones should stand higher than the loudspeaker cones. All distances between microphones and speakers should be different, in order to maximize the chance for different feedback conditions (different Larsen frequencies). On the mixer, the microphone signals are not routed to the speakers directly, but through the DSP unit.

Outside the performance place, find any two or more locations for the external microphones, possible in an area that people attending the performance have to walk through, as they reach the performance place. These could be routed directly to the audio interface, as illustrated on the left (you may bridge them through the mixer, in case you need preamplification or equing).

Loudspeakers

Full-range studio monitors are preferred. If not available, use one or more subwoofers. Any combination of the four output signals can be sent to the subwoofer(s) in use.

Loudspeakers are lifted at man's average height (or higher) and placed close to (different) walls, possibly with the cones facing the walls. If available, wall surfaces made of different material (concrete, wood, glass, curtains) should be preferred.

Use more than four loudspeakers in case that seems convenient (e.g. in large spaces).

Mixer

Analog mixer, allowing level controls over the main audio connections (as illustrated on the left) and allowing easy access to parametric equalization over the individual input signals. In performance situations, it is recommended to explore equing options in order to bias the feedback loops (supporting, preventing and changing Larsen tones and other resonant feedback loops).

When presenting this work as an installation, ideally one could get rid of the mixer and route the mics directly into the audio interface pre-amplified and phantom-powered inputs, and connect the audio interface outs directly to loudspeakers. As you prepare the installation, you adjust input and output levels to find a satisfying balance, but of course you can't count on the equing options in order to bias the feedback loop (still you can experiment with the particular position of mics and speakers in the space, maximizing acoustical differences among them; also, you could eventually rely on the "acoustical shadows" introduced by body of the people visiting the installation, if the spatial arrangement of the equipment allows visitors to walk around).

Figure 3. Agostino Di Scipio: *Audible Ecocystemics 4. Étude du silence*; instructions.

to a specific framework of action, to a given situation, that is in relation to changing but real material contexts. [...].²⁹

Agostino Di Scipio use complex technological equipment, but he fully exploits its capacities. He also includes instructions in all his scores on how people can recreate his systems using open-source software (such as Pure Data) based on non-proprietary development. **Figure 3** shows the instructions for *Audible Ecocystemics 4. Étude du silence* (2019), for solo electronics, with feedback with ambiance (acoustic space, also outdoors and with audience).

PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

It is difficult to sum up such a broad topic. I have provided examples, but with this kind of practise what is obviously important is not only the result but

also the process, that is, the environmental, social and mental makeup of what we call music (or sound art). It would therefore be important to witness the musical performances or sound art that I have referred to in order to assess them.

I would like to conclude by returning to the very idea of degrowth. Among criticisms of this concept, one is particularly frequent: namely, that it has an impoverishing effect and is synonymous with austerity. More generally, while the concept might be welcome in the countries of the Global South (as 'bricolage', or DIY, or 'système D' as it is called in French, with the 'D' standing not for 'degrowth' but for 'débrouille', meaning 'getting by'), in the countries of the Global North it is considered as only good for those who have failed in some way. The works of economists specialising in degrowth demonstrate that the opposite is true. Degrowth must first be applied in rich countries if we want to save our planet. But how can people be convinced of this? A specialist in cultural economy claims that

despite the long existence of oppositional or ecological art, most of the conventional ideas of creativity, aesthetics and cultural

²⁹ Agostino Di Scipio, 'Technology and Economy of Means', in Roberto Barbanti, Isabelle Ginot, Makis Solomos and Cécile Sorin, eds, *Arts, Ecologies, Transitions. Constructing a Common Vocabulary* (London, 2024).

production that underpin the creative economy remain premised on an array of ideas rooted in enlightenment, liberal and modernist notions of innovation, progress and growth, strongly enabled by carbon and resource-rich economies, and activated by autonomous individuals who have tended to prioritize the pursuit of personal “creative freedoms” over other social priorities.³⁰

The economist concludes that ‘[t]o any given artist or cultural producer, taken at face value, degrowth might simply appear as a kind of hair-shirted asceticism or exercise in joylessness’. This is the key: Not to confuse the frugality encouraged by post-growth society with some sort of involuntary austerity or asceticism. In the arts, emerging practices tending in this direction show that such a distinction is perfectly feasible. Values such as care, sharing, or autonomy, which are introduced by degrowth, as a means to achieve a post-growth society and not as an end in itself, are in fact very close to the traditional values of what we call art. There is no ‘degrowth music’. It is the *means* of music-making that need to be envisioned in terms of degrowth. *It is about decreasing in order to flourish.*

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³⁰ Michael Banks, ed., *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy* (Cham, 2020), 11–23.

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