

29 September 2021 – Email to Oxford University  
Humility and Oxford U. can help the UK show worthy leadership at COP26

**From:** Barbara Williams [<mailto:bbwilliams>]

**Sent:** 29 September 2021 11:14

**To:** 'myles.allen@physics.ox.ac.uk' <[myles.allen@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:myles.allen@physics.ox.ac.uk)>;  
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<[friederike.otto@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:friederike.otto@ouce.ox.ac.uk)>

**Cc:** 'HUNTINGDON POPULATION MATTERS' <...>; 'cambridgeconservationforum@gmail.com'  
<[cambridgeconservationforum@gmail.com](mailto:cambridgeconservationforum@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Humility and Oxford U. can help the UK show worthy leadership at COP26

Dear Friends from Oxford University,

For over a year I have been working to steer humanity on a peaceful path towards rapid and ethical Degrowth with regards to all three of the [I = PAT](#) drivers. This journey has involved sharing ideas with the organisation Population Matters of which David Attenborough is patron. John Davies, from the Huntingdon branch of Population Matters also participates in a Think Tank for the Conservative party. John is currently seeking advice on how we can successfully manoeuvre from a coercive consumer culture to one that is focussed on rapid and ethical IPAT Degrowth. I have forwarded some relevant emails below.

The transition from Growth to Degrowth principles challenges the very core of our coercive consumer culture. I perceive an opportunity for our two major Universities to lead the way in the humility that will be required on the part of the entire UK population if this turnabout is to be achieved quickly and peacefully. If Oxford and Cambridge Universities do as I suggest, I believe this may inspire worthy leadership from the UK government at COP26. I am suggesting the following:

- Oxford & Cambridge Universities to unite and Declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Their declaration to be accompanied with an apology for not having raised awareness sooner about the dangers of pursuing economic growth in the face of escalating [ecological overshoot](#). Suggesting that the UK need to include ecological overshoot within the basic skills curriculum.
- Oxford & Cambridge Universities to promote and support the idea of a [UN United Aspiration](#) to formerly recognise and address the issue of ecological overshoot. Furthermore to challenge any UN Sustainable Development Goals which fail to recognise the ecological limits of our planet.
- Put in place within your own Universities Emergency measures to reassess the value of all University subjects in the face of rapidly escalating Climate and Ecological collapse, involving all staff and students in a process of envisioning how the Degrowth culture might look.
- Suggest that the UK create an emergency cross-party government to focus on the implementation of Degrowth objectives, rapidly and comprehensively.
- Suggest that the UK pardon all Climate protestors facing judicial punishment and offer a public apology to the world for pursuing economic growth in the face of escalating [ecological overshoot](#) for many decades, thereby injuring our collective prospects to thrive in the future.

I do hope that you will consider these suggestions seriously, because all the while we continue to pursue growth economics we are oiling the already slippery slope of escalating climate and ecological collapse.

Yours Sincerely  
Barbara Williams

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**From:** HUNTINGDON POPULATION MATTERS [<mailto:.....@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** 28 September 2021 16:07

**To:** Barbara Williams <[bbwilliams](mailto:bbwilliams)>

**Subject:** Re: How to achieve Degrowth

hello Barbara,

thank you for such a full and very nicely worded reply.

Rather busy to give a full response but again thanks for your time and being willing to engage in some detail.

Pity it does not happen in other places it needs to.

all best

JD

On Mon, Sep 27, 2021 at 10:27 PM 'Barbara Williams' via Population Discussion <[population-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion@googlegroups.com)> wrote:

Dear John,

These are my own ideas on how to achieve rapid, voluntary and ethical Degrowth on all IPAT drivers, whilst causing minimum suffering, and increasing enjoyment and fun all round:

1. Any Degrowth will be impossible without the buy-in of the public. We currently need very significant and rapid Degrowth on all three aspects of the IPAT drivers. Therefore we first need to get the public awareness raised to a sufficiently high level that they will be willing to see massive changes to their lifestyles in order to give us all a slither of a chance for reasonable longevity. I highly recommend that the UK government kick this off with a public apology for not informing school-kids about ecological overshoot as part of basic skills education. Make it clear that right now is not a good time to have children because our future is extremely insecure, everyone needs to realise that we are in the deep-deep trouble for ignoring the science about ecological overshoot. I think you will find that people will rise to the challenge willingly. Most people are experiencing serious climate anxiety nowadays, that will soon dissipate once we start to really address the root problem which is growth economics.
2. Ask Schools and Universities to halt the usual curriculum, and instead get the staff at all levels to work with the children on envisioning a new society and analysing what is wrong with our current ways and values.
3. Reassure public that finance will be made available for essentials, i.e. food and fuel for everyone
4. Ask the more affluent organisations and individuals to be generous and buy into government bonds to facilitate step 3, explain that there is no point sitting on capital it is liable to be worthless very soon if we don't turn this oil-tanker around very soon.
5. Reconsider all our priorities. Start the process of identifying and winding down every non-essential activity and commodity which is currently going on. All those made redundant in this process need to be immediately employed in the process of envisioning a new localised society that does not require all the travelling that we mistakenly assume is unavoidable. Anyone with counselling, teaching, marketing or entertainment skills will be very useful in this process. We all need to learn how to enjoy ourselves whilst minimising our consumption, I feel sure there will be many who will enjoy this far more than the job that they are doing at the moment. The job of envisioning and developing our new society needs to involve as many different people as possible, it needs to be an organic process, not dictated or prescriptive, and it needs to include plenty of social fun activities to relieve the

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anxiety of realising how injured our planet has become. It needs to be motivated by the desire to regenerate our eco-systems, and restore soil-health, and recover from the mental damage inflicted by decades of coercive consumerism. A bit like the 'reconditioning' for Germans prisoners of war to make them understand how badly they went wrong with the way that they treated the Jews. For this is how we have been treating the third world countries for decades, we have been causing shorter life-expectancy for millions of people just by living our modern techno-industrial lifestyle. I suspect that many Germans in WWII were just as unaware and convinced they were in the right as we have been.

6. Halt all new building and expansion programmes, use spare hotel capacity and ocean liners to accommodate those who need housing until we succeed in shrinking our population numbers into the existing housing.
7. We need to rethink our public services, altered priorities needed here, and a more helpful attitude to death and illness is needed, several ideas are available in my book [Saving Us From Ourselves - Poems For Parliament](#)

It requires a full-blown socio-political paradigm shift to be achieved. The public would be willing given adequate information and leadership. I feel a cross-party government is key, to ensure all political parties are supporting the change in direction, for none represent Degrowth of this magnitude at the moment. I would love to get Oxford University involved, I have emailed Prof Myles Allen, Prof Sam Fankhauser, Dr Friedericke Otto but no response. If HMG really wish to show leadership at COP26 this is the way to go. I am happy to help all I can, I am full of ideas. There is tremendous momentum in Malawi, just from a one day event. The latest message from Blessings:

We are thinking big now and reach to more people and many places. We first of all accepted the Degrowth and then looked at our people how they can embrace that too. If you look at the chiefs eshiii, they were just happy and they could give testimonies about even the wrangles among families because of overpopulation.

If an impoverished country like Malawi can embrace Degrowth, it will be shameful if the UK cannot emulate their lead.

Much love  
B

**From:** [population-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion@googlegroups.com) [mailto:[population-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion@googlegroups.com)]  
**On Behalf Of** HUNTINGDON POPULATION MATTERS  
**Sent:** 27 September 2021 19:12  
**To:** Barbara Williams <[bbwilliams](mailto:bbwilliams)>  
**Cc:** Population Discussion <[population-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion@googlegroups.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Malawians show us how to make Degrowth fun

EXACTLY what does degrowth mean if applied to current economic activity in specified sectors eg:

effect on tax income to HMG (as an example) ?

On house prices and thus market confidence that provides pension funding?

Car , air travel again linked to market confidence

Many other examples abound

Where is the detail ?

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The detail that deals counters detail supplied by many other think tanks and bodies ?  
What exactly is the view of a degrowth society in moving technology with linked economics and human progress forward?  
There has never been a historical example of this before so the onus for detailed examples is vital

JD

On Mon, Sep 27, 2021 at 12:54 PM 'Barbara Williams' via Population Discussion <[population-discussion@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion@googlegroups.com)> wrote:

Dear All,

I thought that the letter writers might be interested in the approach taken by my Malawi friends to raise awareness about overpopulation. Details of a recent [Degrowth Day in Malawi](#). This Malawi event should get covered in their local media over the next few days. I loved the simplicity of the messages, I winced at the word 'control' initially, however I feel that in this context it helps significantly to break the taboo about admitting the reality of overpopulation. Key messages which they chose for the day were:

- Think Green, Control Overpopulation
- Involve Us in Climate Justice
- Climate Justice Now!
- Let's protect our Bio-diversity

As you know I have written to the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) introducing myself and my friends in Kenya and Malawi. I have explained that we are working to combine the Degrowth message with having some fun. I am hoping that AFIDEP might get involved and assist Jack to get the funds to hold a similar event in Kenya, possibly involving retired footballers. AFIDEP have offices in both Kenya and Malawi, so I am optimistic that they will soon become aware of the work that my friends are doing and be interested in getting involved. They have not responded to my approach as yet.

I always felt that Africa might hold the way forward for us, because they approach problems in a much more simplistic fashion. I am feeling slightly optimistic that my work in Africa will force attitudes to change in the affluent countries. The link to the Malawi Degrowth day is in the middle of my homepage, and available here: [Malawi - Degrowth Day - Poems For Parliament](#)

Much love to all

B

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To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to [population-discussion+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:population-discussion+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com).

To view this discussion on the web visit <https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/population-discussion/009801d7b3e6%2484d3c500%248e7b4f00%24%40btinternet.com>.

For more options, visit <https://groups.google.com/d/optout>.