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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute English

### What is degrowth?



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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#### **Phil**

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Phil and today we have Hannah joining us again from BBC podcast What in the World. Welcome Hannah.

#### **Hannah**

Hey Phil, it is so great to be back here. So, Phil, I'm wondering, do you do things that are good for the planet?

#### **Phil**

I try, but I don't think I do enough. So, maybe I cycle more than I drive and I try to recycle things, but I should be doing a lot more.

#### **Hannah**

But some people think that in order to deal with climate change, we can't rely on individuals. Phil, it's not up to you and me. We need to change the way our economy works. It's an idea called degrowth that we've been investigating at What in the World, and we're going to learn more about it today.

#### **Phil**

But first, our quiz question. World leaders promised in 2015 to limit global temperature rises. But what was the limit they agreed to?

- a. 1.5 degrees Celsius
- b. 2.5 degrees Celsius
- c. 3.5 degrees Celsius

#### **Hannah**

I think I know this one, Phil. I think it's 1.5°C.

#### **Phil**

OK. We'll find out the answer later in the programme. So, Hannah, you've been researching degrowth – what does that mean?

**Hannah**

Well, traditionally governments have always wanted to grow the economy. More money, more jobs and more stuff. But degrowth is a different way of thinking about things. Some people argue that to tackle the climate crisis we need to stop our economies from growing, from using and making more, and focus on using fewer of the Earth's natural resources. The people who support the idea of degrowth, are often called degrowthers.

**Phil**

Right, OK, so degrowthers argue we should make and use less stuff.

**Hannah**

Yes, mostly. It's a little bit more complex than that. And I spoke to BBC journalist Alvaro Alvarez, who told me more about the idea.

**Alvaro Alvarez**

So, degrowth is not saying that we need to reduce everything. It's saying that we need to decrease some elements of our production that are not beneficial. An example of those elements would be fast fashion, private jets, the beef and meat industry. So it's not about decreasing everything.

**Phil**

Alvaro says that degrowthers believe we should reduce some **elements** of production. An **element** of something is a part of something.

**Hannah**

According to Alvaro these **elements** of production are not believed to be **beneficial**. If something is **beneficial** it is useful or good.

**Phil**

One example of a kind of production that degrowthers disagree with is **fast fashion**. **Fast fashion** refers to clothes that are made very cheaply and quickly, so that customers can afford to buy new outfits more often.

**Hannah**

Exactly. And before we go any further, many economists do not think that degrowth is a good idea. Some people argue that it will create more poverty. And

some economists believe degrowth would actually make it harder to solve the climate crisis.

**Phil**

For example, Professor Sam Fankhauser, an economist at Cambridge University in the UK, spoke to you on What in the World. And he argues that **degrowth** could limit innovation.

**Sam Fankhauser**

I think **degrowth underestimates** the power of innovation. **Degrowth underestimates** the need for investment that we need in new technology and in new solutions. And **degrowth underestimates** the social, sort of, **feasibility** of what they propose.

**Hannah**

Professor Fankhauser thinks that **degrowth underestimates** many things, such as innovation. If you **underestimate** something, you don't understand the true importance or size of it.

**Phil**

Another factor that Professor Fankhauser says is **underestimated** by degrowthers is the **feasibility** of social change. **Feasibility** means the possibility that it can be achieved. It comes from the adjective **feasible**. For example, I could say that I think it's **feasible** for us to finish this podcast in six minutes. I think that we can do it!

**Hannah**

Well, Phil, we're going to have to get a move on. I think it's time to hear the answer to your quiz question.

**Phil**

I asked how much world leaders agreed to limit global temperature rises to. The answer is 1.5 degrees Celsius, which scientists believe is needed to stop the worst impacts of climate change.

**Hannah**

I got it right! OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **degrowth**, which is the economic idea that we should use and make less stuff.

**Phil**

An **element** of something means a part of something.

**Hannah**

**Beneficial** means useful or good.

**Phil**

**Fast fashion** refers to clothes that are made cheaply, so that people can buy them more often.

**Hannah**

If you **underestimate** something, you don't understand the true importance or size of it.

**Phil**

The **feasibility** of something is the likelihood that it can be achieved. We can also describe something as **feasible** or **unfeasible**. We can do it, or we can't do it.

**Hannah**

Once again, our 6 minutes are up, but there's just some time for me to tell you more about my podcast What in the World. We have a new episode every weekday and we talk about the news, trending topics. In fact, it's a great place to come and learn new vocabulary about things happening in the world.

**Phil**

Yes, if you've found this episode interesting, try watching What in the World on YouTube with subtitles to practise your English. There's a link in the notes for this episode. And don't forget to try the quiz and worksheet at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Hannah**

Phil, thank you so much for having me again on 6 Minute English. Bye for now.

**Phil**

Bye!