

A postgrowth economy as a care economy

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This paper will develop the case for a care economy as the basis of a sustainable postgrowth economy. The overlapping crises of covid-19, austerity, and sharp increases in the cost of living, in many OECD countries has highlighted the extent to which our wellbeing and our prosperity depend on care and care work. The care sector is also likely to be a key part of a transition to a zero-carbon economy as it is a low-carbon, labour intense service sector. However, care work is predominantly done by women and has historically been undervalued and hidden, acting as an invisible subsidy to the formal market economy. We conducted a narrative literature review to better understand different definitions of care and a care economy, and to identify areas of existing overlap between the fields of eco-feminism and postgrowth economics, as well as areas for future development. Further, we undertook a reflexive thematic analysis of data from interviews with twenty eco-feminist economists, through which we developed a series of core themes, including: care as a subsidy to capitalism; the role of care ethics in a postgrowth economy; time and money as facilitating care; and ideology and narratives as barriers to change. These interviews illuminated key policies for a transition to a care economy, and the core cultural, political, and financial barriers to their implementation. As such they have helped us to better understand specific areas of coherence between the discourses around transition from different academic fields and social movements, highlighting that, at its core, a just and prosperous postgrowth economy is a care economy.