

## Degrowing transport

In July 2019, people from 150 nations gathered in Barcelona to attend the conference Degrowth of Aviation. Participants were from many different backgrounds: grassroots airport-resistance campaigners, environment campaigners, Barcelona residents fighting over-tourism, anti-capitalists, specialist academics, representatives from NGOs, campaigners for sustainable alternatives like trains, and even people running and spreading solutions such as zero-emission shipping.

The focus of the conference was on different potential ways to limit air travel. These ranged from banning airport expansion and downscaling existing airports to taxing aviation fuel – kerosene is currently entirely tax-free – and encouraging alternative forms of travel. Tourism degrowth was also discussed as a way to tackle the root cause of some airport expansion. In Barcelona, which was visited by around 30 million tourists last year, tourism is causing overcrowding and people fear their home city is being turned into a commercial theme park. Much of the weekend was spent discussing the benefits and limitations of the various tactics, and the hope is that these can serve as a solution toolbox for local campaigners.

For example, there is a campaign gathering support across Europe calling for a tax on kerosene to be implemented by the EU. All petroleum products except aviation and shipping fuel are subject to tax, and taxing kerosene has the benefit of roughly correlating with carbon emissions. This would begin to bring the costs of air travel into line with other means of transport, reducing one



of the many current unfair advantages the aviation sector enjoys.

The conference was overwhelmingly attended by people from the global north, and going forward there is a lot that involving more perspectives from the global south could do to broaden the discussion. At the same time, flying is still largely caused by the wealthy global north, and so it is these people – and I am one of them – who are most responsible for limiting air travel.

The good news is that awareness of the impacts of air travel is increasing and momentum for action is growing rapidly. It is time to tell the truth: flying is simply the fastest way to fry the planet. Degrowing aviation is the only way to stop its damage. R

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A bike demonstration in Vienna, 2017. Photograph by Christian Bock. All images courtesy of Stay Grounded