

Welfare in Degrowth Transformations

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1. Climate and planetary emergency and policy implications

- IPCC (2022) and Alliance of (over 11,000) World Scientists (Ripple *et al* 2020) call for ‘**bold** and drastic **transformations**’ in this decade:
 - ‘Economic growth must be quickly curtailed’ to ‘maintain long-term sustainability of the biosphere’.. The **goals** of economic and other **policymaking** ‘need to **shift from GDP growth** ... toward sustaining ecosystems and improving human well-being by **prioritizing basic needs** and reducing inequality.’
- Echoes **comparative studies** (Parrique *et al* 2019; Haberl *et al* 2020): Attempts to absolutely decouple GDP growth from resource use and greenhouse gas emissions either failed or did not reach the extent necessary to meet the Paris climate targets
- **Implications**: ‘Decoupling needs to be complemented by sufficiency-oriented strategies and strict enforcement of absolute reduction targets’ (Haberl *et al*); de-prioritization of GDP growth as overall target in policy making (Parrique *et al*)

2. Degrowth: a shorthand definition

- **Economy** as **bio-physical** process (use value rather than exchange value): reduce matter and energy throughput and scale of economy via voluntary changes in production and consumption patterns
- Rightsizing to be **democratically deliberated** without undermining critical levels of wellbeing
- Start in the rich countries of the **Global North** asap to open up space for development in the Global South (considering the colonial history and ecological debt)

Deep Transformations: A Theory of Degrowth (forthcoming in Manchester University Press, with H Buch- Hansen and I Nesterova)

- **Social theory** capable of capturing the **complexity** of degrowth transformations
 - A range of institutions and values would need to change in parallel and at similar speeds (Buchs & Koch 2017, 2019), considering that changes of just one institution or societal field often has (unintended) consequences for others
- Combination of **Critical Realism** (CR, Buch-Hansen & Nesterova 2023), heterodox **political economy** and **Bourdieuian sociology**, along
- **Four planes of social being** (CR): material transactions with nature, social interactions, social structures, inner being, and
- **Three sites**: business/economy, civil society, state

Outline of the book

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Capitalism and the growth imperative
- Chapter 3: Institutional forms and diversity
- Chapter 4: The political economy of deep transformations
- Chapter 5: Civil society
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- Chapter 9: Conclusion

The (welfare) state in degrowth transformations (Koch 2020a, 2022a, b):

increases in size in a first phase (nationalisations to phase out fossil fuel industry etc) only to shrink thereafter

Economic development: Interpreted as bio-physical process (use value orientation)	Spatial target	Economic and eco-social policies: Sustainable welfare and needs orientation through redistribution of wealth, income and pollution rights
<p>States ensure that production and consumption patterns do not exceed environmental limits</p> <p>Define limits for economic and social inequality</p> <p>Steer governance network with collective, communal and private and actors</p>	<p>Global and local levels</p> <p>Global: Identification of thresholds for matter and energy throughput</p> <p>These delineate the leeway within which national and local economies can evolve</p>	<p>Management of mixed economy ensures provision of sufficient need satisfiers</p> <p>Directed at moving production and consumption norms towards social floors and ecological ceilings of the ‘safe and just operating space’ (Raworth 2017; Brand et al 2021; Khan et al 2023) via corresponding ‘corridors’ (Bärnthaler & Gough 2023; Fuchs et al 2021)</p>
<p>Presupposes civil-society mobilizations, self-transformations of state employees and an expansion of its ‘left hand’ (Buch-Hansen et al forthcoming)</p>		

3. Support for eco-social policy ideas to respect ‘social floors’ and ‘ecological ceilings’ (Survey data, Sweden 2020 and 2021; Khan et al 2023, Lee et al 2023)

	Limit living space (2021)	Limit number of flights (2021)	Limit (maximum) income (2021)	Tax on wealth (2020)	Tax on meat consumption (2020)	Working time reduction (2020)	UBI: Basic income (2020)	UBS: Water low fee (2021)	UBS: Public transport in nascent area low fee (2021)	UBS: Electricity low fee (2021)	UBS: Internet low fee (2021)
Against	70.4	59.7	50.7	42.7	52.7	31.4	71.1	25.1	22.6	25.9	24.6
Undecided	21.1	18.8	22.1	14.8	17.1	17.0	17.6	24.7	22.7	25.4	29.0
In favour	8.4	21.4	27.2	42.5	30.3	51.6	11.3	50.2	54.7	48.8	46.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Ceilings: Limit, tax, reduce

Floors: Universal Basic Income (UBI), Universal Basic Services (UBS)

Degrowth transformational potentials of habitus groups by planes of social being (O = Open to Degrowth; S = Sceptical to Degrowth; elaborated from Fritz et al 2021)

	Passive anti-ecological conservatism (10%)	Self-centred privatism (8%)	Environmental centralism (21%)	Eco-modernist conservatism (16%)	Fossil liberalism (10%)	Active sustainable welfare (19%)	Moderate traditional welfare (16%)
Material transactions with nature	S	S	O	O	S	O	O
Interactions with others	O	S	O	O	S	O	S
Social structures	S	O	O	S	S	O	S
Inner being	O	S	S	S	S	O	O

- Bourdieusean methodology: Principal component analysis applied to a set of survey answers about social and ecological topics resulting in 8 eco-social dispositions. Subsequent cluster analysis resulted in 7 habitus types

Negative needs satisfiers by sites of degrowth transformations

(84 participants, selection; Max-Neef 1991; Koch et al 2021; Lee et al 2023)

	Civil society	State	Business
Material transactions with nature	Fossil-fuel dependent and profit-driven transport system	Overall policy priority of economic growth Transport policies that complicate fossil-free ways of travelling	Monocultures
Interactions with others	Limits of representative democracy undermining social participation	Reinforces representative democratic systems with its elections only so often	Competitiveness
Social structures	Privatisation of core infrastructures/basic services Standardised teaching practices in education system	Pension policies based on employment records	Growth imperative
Inner being	Corporate social media	Anthropocentrism Illusion of social differences as following from meritocratic principles	Perfectionism and productivity Anthropocentrism

Positive (‘utopian’) needs satisfiers by sites of degrowth transformations (selection)

	Civil society	State	Business
Material transactions with nature	Advertisement- free zones	Infrastructure for cycling and walking	Sufficiency Localisation Sharing, repair and recycling economy
Interactions with others	Democratic renewal via deliberative citizen forums	Introduce/strengthen deliberative elements in democratic institutions	Participatory budgeting
Social structures	Socialised/public and localised system of non-commercial basic welfare provision Local currencies	Life-long learning opportunities for all Universal basic income and universal basic services	Working time reduction
Inner being	Life-long learning Mindfulness, meditation	Decommodify/socialise social media	Care

4. Conclusion

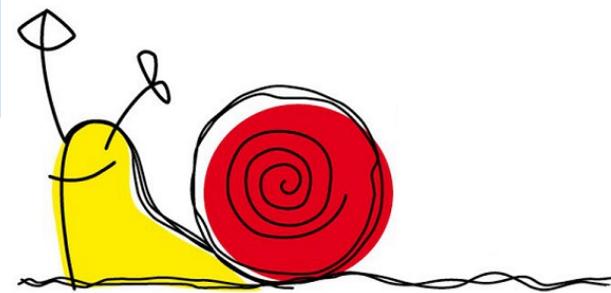
Economic **growth** must be **deprioritized** in policymaking to survive

Complexity of **degrowth transformations** best understood in terms of different planes of social being and sites

Empirical **gap** between **quantitative** survey and **qualitative** forum data

Expansion of **alternative spaces** (Koch 2020b) as measure of 'countertraining' (Bourdieu) such as representative citizen forums or assemblies where citizens and researchers **co-develop eco-social policies** at local, national and European levels

Many thanks!



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