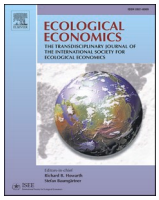
Ecological Economics 223 (2024) 108255

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Ecological Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ecolecon



Problematising degrowth strategising: On the role of compromise, material interests, and coercion

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Degrowth
Social ecological economics
Hegemony
Human needs
Problematisation
Strategy

ABSTRACT

Degrowth has been at the centre of ecological economics since the days of its inception. Recently, degrowth scholarship and practice have turned to questions of strategy. To contribute to this debate, this paper uses the methodology of problematisation to reveal and discuss unquestioned assumptions that underpin discursive degrowth-strategy practices and hinder effective strategising. Based on Buch-Hansen's assessment of the (not yet actualised) prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift, discursive practices are analysed against the aim of building a comprehensive coalition of social forces and achieving broad-based consent. In addition, the paper draws on Gramscian theory to introduce a third unactualised prerequisite: the will to coerce and rule. The analysis contributes to further developing a theory of deep social-ecological-economic change.

1. Introduction

Degrowth and steady-state agendas have been at the centre of ecological economics since the days of its inception (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Daly, 1973). Ecological economists define degrowth as an equitable downscaling of aggregate throughput, with a simultaneous securing of wellbeing (Kallis et al., 2018). Whereas in the past, degrowth scholarship has mainly focused on the "what" and "why" questions of social-ecological transformation, it has recently shifted its attention towards "how" questions, putting debates on strategy centre-stage (Barlow, 2022).

Given that "ecological economists have paid little attention to politics and strategy" (D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020, 8), this marks a considerable discursive shift that is indispensable for a theory of deep social-ecological-economic change. That is: unless social-ecological economists and advocates of degrowth engage with issues of strategy, their ideas will not materialise. But what does it take for deep social-ecological-economic change to happen? Drawing upon critical (historical materialist) political economy, Buch-Hansen (2018) identifies four prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift to occur: (i) a deep crisis, (ii) an alternative political project, (iii) a comprehensive coalition of social forces, and (iv) broad-based consent. The two latter prerequisites, he argues, are currently missing:

> (O)n the one hand, there is much to suggest that current crises cannot be resolved under existing institutional frameworks and that degrowth is a political project that provides solutions to some of the key problems currently facing humanity. On the other hand, the prospects for a degrowth paradigm shift remain bleak: unlike political projects that became hegemonic in the past, degrowth has neither support from a comprehensive coalition of social forces nor any consent to its agenda among the broader population (ibid., 157).

Based on this assessment, this paper contributes to Buch-Hansen's theoretical framework in two ways. First, it analyses – by means of problematisation – specific discursive degrowth-strategy practices related to comprehensive coalition-building and achieving broad-based consent. As this analysis problematises – i.e., reveals, discusses, and critically confronts – unquestioned assumptions that underpin degrowth strategising, it is an opportunity for critical insights and new ideas on the prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift.

To avoid misunderstandings from the outset: this paper does not claim to analyse *the* Degrowth-Strategy discourse, as if such a unambivalent and unified discourse would exist. Instead, it problematises *specific discursive practices* that are not necessarily shared by all degrowth scholars and practitioners but are nevertheless clearly discernible in the broader (partly ambivalent) discourse. In this regard, one of the most recent relevant interventions is the book *Degrowth & Strategy: how to bring about social-ecological transformation* (Barlow et al., 2022;

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108255
Received 19 January 2023; Received in revised form 31 March 2024; Accepted 22 May 2024
Available online 31 May 2024

hereafter: *Degrowth & Strategy*). This edited volume is used as a case study that provides rich examples of discursive practices related to degrowth strategising. Second, drawing on Gramscian theory, this paper introduces a fifth prerequisite for a degrowth paradigm shift – the will to coerce and rule – and problematises discursive practices regarding it.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the methodology and Section 3 introduces the case study. Section 4 enriches the case study by drawing on further degrowth literature to problematise discursive practices in relation to comprehensive coalition-building (Section 4.1), achieving broad-based consent (Section 4.2), and the will to coerce and rule (Section 4.3). Section 5 concludes.

2. Methodology: Problematisation

This paper offers a critical perspective on discursive practices in the broader degrowth-strategy discourse. Thus, the material it engages with are specific discursive practices, whereby *Degrowth & Strategy* serves as a case study (but is enriched with further degrowth literature). The paper's methodology is the engagement (i.e., reading, writing, re-considering, and re-interpreting) with these discursive practices. It does so *against the background of* Buch-Hansen (2018) assessment of the (not yet actualised) prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift and *by means of* what Sandberg and Alvesson (2011) refer to as "problematisation", broadly defined as an assumption-challenging methodology.

According to Sandberg and Alvesson (ibid, 31), challenging assumptions that underlie existing theory and practice is a core ingredient in theory development. This makes problematisation an essential methodology to further develop a theory of deep social-ecological-economic change. It is a methodological "endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently" (Foucault, 1985, 9), seeking to reveal "on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest … [and is, as such,] a matter of making facile gestures difficult" (Foucault, 1988, 155). Thus, a "central goal in such problematization is to try to disrupt the reproduction and continuation of an institutionalized line of reasoning" (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011, 32), turning unquestioned assumptions into an invitation to stimulate deeper thinking.

The methodology of problematisation is applied as follows. The book *Degrowth & Strategy* serves as a case study, because it represents the first edited volume that explicitly engages with degrowth strategising (see Section 3). The analysis focuses on Part I of this volume (chapters 1–10), which aims to build degrowth's common foundation for strategising. It "explores the meaning of strategy for degrowth as both a research area and an emerging international social movement with its own agency", presenting "the first collective effort of degrowth scholars to engage with the questions of strategy explicitly and in-depth" (Schulken et al., 2022, 27). The process of analysis is theory guided. Buch-Hansen's (2018) theoretical framework for a degrowth paradigm shift serves as a starting point but is expanded to include the element of coercion based on Gramscian theory (see Section 4.3). This results in three topics, central to strategising aimed at a paradigm shift: building a comprehensive coalition of social forces, achieving broad-based consent, and exercising coercion. Relevant text passages, i.e., discursive practices, from Part I of the edited volume are assigned to these three topics deductively.[1] This grouped material for analysis is enriched by further, thematically relevant, degrowth literature. In line with narrative review techniques (e.g., Sovacool et al., 2018), the selection of this literature is thus topic-driven, whereby the aim is not comprehensiveness but the potential for in-depth qualitative insights. Finally, in the tradition of critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 2013), this material is evaluated, i.e., *problematised*, in terms of its potential to achieve the three prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift, by drawing on critical political economy, social theory, and political philosophy.

[1] The decision to draw upon Buch-Hansen as the guiding theoretical framework followed a lengthy iterative process that went back and forth between "the material" and emerging themes, with the latter being continuously adjusted. After the first peer-review phase, one reviewer pointed out that the given thematic structure was compatible with Buch-Hansen's framework. This led to minor adaptations in the preparation (grouping, clustering) of the material and the inclusion of further degrowth literature, thereby sharpening the theoretical framework and enriching the process of analysis.

3. *Degrowth & Strategy*: A case study of discursive practices

Following the 2020 Degrowth Conference in Vienna on "Strategies for Social-Ecological Transformation", debates on strategy culminated in the book *Degrowth & Strategy* – a joint endeavour of more than 40 degrowth scholars and an articulation of a wide variety of (partly contradictory) discursive practices related to degrowth strategising (for a critical review see Stevenson, 2023). Brand (2022, 47) therefore suggests reservation "to look for an 'overarching degrowth strategy' as a more or less coherent meta-vision." Against this background, attempting to problematise *the* Degrowth Strategy would be futile, which is why this paper explicitly focuses on *specific discursive practices* within the broader degrowth-strategy discourse.

From the start, "why" and "what" questions of a degrowth paradigm shift – the deep crises of systems oriented towards perpetual economic growth ("why") and an alternative political project ("what") – have been discussed extensively in degrowth scholarship (e.g., Mastini et al., 2021; Cosme et al., 2017; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). However, *how* to build a comprehensive coalition of social forces and achieve broad-based consent has received less attention in the past. *Degrowth & Strategy* seeks to put these questions centre-stage (Barlow, 2022), while respecting the degrowth movement's "multiplicity", bringing together "multiple voices from degrowth and related movements, to create a polyphony" (Schulken et al., 2022, 10f).

The book presents the degrowth vision as "a democratically deliberated absolute reduction of material and energy throughput, which ensures well-being for all within planetary boundaries" (Schulken et al., 2022, 11). This vision is based on "the principles of autonomy, solidarity and direct democracy, (…) bottom-up organising" (ibid.) as well as "consensus decision-making mechanisms, transparent processes and horizontal structures" (Rilović et al., 2022, 119). The introduction of the book outlines its understanding of strategy – a term, the authors approach with suspicion, e.g., because of its connotations with "hierarchical chains of command", something "alien to the degrowth vision" (Schulken et al., 2022, 16). Despite these concerns, they acknowledge that discussing the strategising process itself can no longer be avoided but must be "guided by degrowth values" (Schulken et al., 2022, 21). Drawing upon Freedman (2013), the book understands strategy as:

> a *thought construct* that details how one or several *actors* intend to bring about systemic change towards a desired end state. When applied in practice, a strategy serves as a *flexible mental map* that links an analysis of the status quo to a vision of a desirable end state by detailing different *ways* of achieving (intermediate) goals on the journey towards that envisioned future as well as certain *means* to potentially be employed along these *ways* (Schulken et al., 2022, 18).

To this conceptualisation, which I follow in this paper, the authors add that strategies mustbe thought of in conjunctural terms (an important aspect we will return to in the analysis):

> a strategy is thereby more than a mere plan. While a plan outlines a concrete list of steps an actor intends to take to reach a goal, a strategy comprises a set of considerations for how one might bring about change more generally, the details of which may later change. Indeed, the ways, the means and even intermediate goals foreseen in a strategy may need to be adapted as a strategy plays out and one must react to the actions of allies and opponents and *to changing*

> *circumstances more broadly* … [also] to *reflect changes in the strategising actor's understanding of their surroundings* (Schulken et al., 2022, 19f, emphasis added).

Differentiating not only *ends* and *means,* but also *ways* and the *means* employed along those ways, allows the authors to group those ways along the lines of three modes of transformation based on Wright (2010): ruptural, interstitial, and symbiotic. These are accompanied by specific strategic logics: "smashing" (ruptural), "resisting" and/or "escaping" (interstitial), and "taming" and/or "dismantling" (symbiotic). Each of these modes has emerged from specific traditions: ruptural modes are rooted in revolutionary socialism, interstitial ones in anarchism, and symbiotic ones in social democracy. While ruptural modes aim to break with existing institutions through direct confrontation (e.g., strikes, blockades, riots, sabotage) and interstitial modes aim at social empowerment outside the spaces dominated by those in power (e.g., Transition Towns, urban gardening, repair cafés, community-housing projects), symbiotic modes seek to change existing institutions from within the current system (e.g., Green Deal).

In the context of *Degrowth & Strategy*, interstitial transformation is considered degrowth's "basis", and "the organising practices we consider degrowthian (…) operate within the interstitial mode, too" (Chertkovskaya, 2022, 58). However, the book explicitly aspires that degrowth, as a movement, starts engaging with all modes of transformation (ibid; see also Burkhart et al., 2022). While some authors highlight synergies between those modes, others caution that "complementarity cannot be taken for granted" (Asara, 2022, 97).

4. Analysis and discussion: Problematising discursive practices in degrowth strategising

4.1. Building a comprehensive coalition of social forces: Non-compromise versus hegemony, or community without society?

As Buch-Hansen (2018, 159) notes, "Political projects do not become hegemonic just because they embody good ideas", and "while degrowth, as a social movement, has been gaining momentum for some time", it is "nowhere near enjoying the degree and type of support it needs if its policies are to be implemented through democratic processes". On one hand, he points to the continued dominance of pro-growth discourses in political parties, labour unions, business associations, and international organizations. On the other hand, he emphasises that "advocates of degrowth do not possess instruments that enable them to force political decision-makers to listen to – let alone comply with – their views" (ibid., 161). The latterresults among others from the particular character of the degrowth project, which is "ideationally driven in the sense that support for it is not so much rooted in the material circumstances or short-term self-interests of specific groups or classes as it is rooted in the conviction that degrowth is necessary if current and future generations across the globe are to be able to lead a good life" (ibid.). We return to material interests of specific groups in Section 4.2, but before that focus on another element concerning the ability to build comprehensive coalitions of social forces: (un)desired forms of cooperation.

Here, the case study points to discursive practices that explicitly consider cooperation desirable only with actors who share similar (degrowth) values:

> Therefore, we maintain that it is vital that the strategising process itself as well as the ways and means discussed in degrowth strategies are *guided by degrowth values* (Schulken et al., 2022, 21, emphasis added).

> The concept of "social movement community" (…) is also useful in that it stresses that *"community" is forged* through social networks and a movement culture created through the overlapping participation of individuals *in diverse movements with similar values* (Asara, 2022, 94, emphasis added).

> To ensure that we create a movement that *embodies the values that we care about in degrowth* and nourishes dynamics that make *every degrowther* feel included, we need to be more intentional in our actions (Rilović et al., 2022, 119, emphasis added).

An assumption that seems to underpin these discursive practices is that cooperation is primarily an act within like-minded *communities*, based on "personal relationship-building" (Mailhot and Perkins, 2022, 153) and shared values. As such, it is an articulation of social homophily, defined as the tendency of individuals to interact primarily with people who are similar to them, who share similar values. This is understandable as it helps avoiding less radical compromises, making consensual decision-making[2] possible:

> In other words, it is important that taming does not become a less radical compromise in the struggle for transformation (Chertkovskaya, 2022, 64).

> I add a warning to think critically when applying the conceptual vocabulary of evaluation that is prominent in contemporary strategising. (…) While calculations of efficiency and effectiveness may, for example, favour a group vote followed by action on the majority decision, such procedures could jeopardise opportunities to build consensus amid long hours of listening to, thinking about, and experimenting with deeply different visions and approaches (Paulson, 2022, 187).

While there is an awareness in the broader degrowth-strategy discourse that compromise is necessary and that the search for consensus via deliberative and direct democratic means can enrich but not replace representative democracy (e.g., Koch, 2022), there is also a tendency to assume that *the core* of democracy consists in building and strengthening like-minded communities willing to find consensus without (less radical) compromise. Following this line of reasoning, democratic agency must "resonate *directly* with social movement demands, rather than representatives" (Petridis, 2022, 166). Democracy becomes a method of governance in societal niches with shared values. This might be praised or criticised as prefigurative agency exploring innovative forms of conviviality but becomes problematic in the current conjuncture in which liberal democracy – which has severe weaknesses, to be sure – is increasingly delegitimised by the far right (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Scheiring, 2022).

In such a conjuncture, disdain for democratic forms that go beyond consensus building among like-minded people fails to acknowledge the achievements of representative democracy. As such, it underestimates the danger of "reconstituting authoritarian political relations by way of introducing a political system supposedly based on grassroots democracy" (Brand and Heigl, 2011, 247 reiterating Poulantzas). In our current historical moment, there is much to suggest that a (direct) 'grassroot democracy' would rather be dominated by those campaigning "for anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian, and anti-ecological 'alternatives'" (Blühdorn, 2022, 580) than by advocates of degrowth values. Assuming that the core of democracy consists in building like-minded and consensus-based communities not only disregards the value of representation (see Hodgson, 2021, 202–204) but also tends to confuse grassroot democracy with *progressive* movements. Moreover, it impedes strategic agency to build cross-class and cross-milieu alliances. It tends to build eco-social communities, not an eco-social society.

In a *society,* strangers and opponents – people who think and live differently, who might neither like each other nor share degrowth values – must live together peacefully. This requires a polity with rules for dealing with unavoidable conflicts between sectional interests. And it requires non-personal forms of solidarity (see Durkheim, 2013 on

[2] While *consensus* means that everyone agrees on a decision, *consent* means that no one is actively against it (hence, *broad-based consent* means that majorities are not actively against a decision).

"organic solidarity") as well as forms of collective action based on non-personal relations, including political representation. While collective action is already challenging within like-minded communities, its complexity increases in pluralist societies, where different values, convictions, interests, and lifestyles co-exist. Diverging values lead to socio-cultural cleavages, e.g., with respect to religion, family, and gender; diverging interests lead to politico-economic cleavages, e.g., with respect to labour markets, migration, taxation, and welfare institutions. Given these fragmentations, accepted rules *must* emerge out of less radical compromises.

As already mentioned, many – though by no means all – discursive degrowth-strategy practices acknowledge the need to make compromises (e.g., Koch, 2022; Mastini et al., 2021; Latouche, 2018). This raises a key question that has received only marginal attention in degrowth strategising: What are strategically necessary compromises? To approach this question, it is useful, first, to reflect on the general *character* of compromises and, second, to outline a *strategic method* to guide processes of compromise-making.

First, in terms of its character, compromise must be distinguished from consensus. As Zanetti (2022, 22f, own translation) writes,

> In the case of a consensus, actors who had previously held divergent positions come to agree on their convictions. Consensus may well involve one or more parties (or even all of them) changing their positions. But they do so with regard to a conviction that they now share. (…) It is (…) an essential characteristic of compromise – in contrast to consensus – that the participants hold on to their respective convictions. In this respect, individuals find themselves in a form of *cognitive dissonance*, for they agree to something which they consider wrong (or at least undesirable). Compromise, in this respect, is a *second choice*. That is why a necessary characteristic of compromises is that they end in unresolved dissatisfaction for both parties; both see the agreement reached as suboptimal and yet as *second best*.

Put differently, a compromise does not emerge from moral insight but from the willingness to give up certain demands (even if this is considered wrong or undesirable) while remaining convinced that those demands are justified and necessary. A compromise denotes an unsatisfactory action. It involves prioritisations of – i.e., decisions for and against – goals that are incommensurable (and thus cannot be ranked), implies a (moral) loss, and is not concluded without a justified feeling of regret, *even if nothing better could be obtained under the given circumstances* (ibid).

This points, second, to the need for a strategic method to guide processes of compromise-making, which facilitates understanding given circumstances and identifying the best step under these circumstances. In this regard, Eckersley (2021) suggests a two-step method: conjunctural analysis followed by situated, critical problem-solving. A conjuncture is "a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape" (Hall and Massey, 2010, 57). While some critical conjunctures are unique and bound to a specific place (e.g., the Arab Spring), others affect more or most places in different ways. Current examples of the latter include right-wing autocratic-authoritarian tendencies, processes of hyper-individualisation and singularisation, geopolitical ruptures, a crisis of social cohesion, an increasingly challenged neoliberal order, intensifying ecological emergencies, and new milieu dynamics (Blühdorn, 2022; Novy et al., 2022; Novy, 2022). As such, a conjunctural analysis aims to identify political opportunities (and dangers) that are present for a transition towards eco-socialist degrowth. It provides the basis for the situated and more practical task of *critical* problem-solving, which overcomes the unhelpful distinction between radical action and mere problem solving.

Debates on degrowth strategising often suggest that problem solving should be avoided in favour of radical action to "stay focused on all social structures [e.g., capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, ableism, nationalism] that combine to produce or 'over-determine' socio-ecological injustices" (Eckersley, 2021, 255, own insertion). Yet, as it is politically impossible to restructure everything at once, critical problem-solving *in the service of transformation* becomes crucial to prioritise certain goals over others (even if they are incommensurable) in a specific political context:

> If uncritical problem-solving is like puzzle-solving, which accepts the fixed parameters set by the puzzle, then critical problem-solving looks for ways to unsettle *at least some* of these parameters as a first step, with a view to challenging others in subsequent steps. This requires provisionally bracketing some problematic social structures, recognising that not all can be tackled fully and at once (…). Critical problem-solving necessarily takes place in political contexts that are structurally unjust and communicatively distorted, so the practical task is to identify *the next best transition steps with the greatest transformative potential* in the relevant context, guided by conjunctural analysis. 'Next best' means the best of the politically possible next steps. Depending on the political opportunities presented by the conjuncture, in some cases the next best steps may be small and incremental, while in other cases there may be opportunities for larger leaps. … The judgment about whether the next steps will indeed prove to be the best cannot be fully known *ex ante*. The virtues of a step-wise approach is that it enables scaling up (or back) and adaptation *ex post* as a result of political and policy learning (Eckersley, 2021, 256).

It is beyond the scope of a paper to conduct a conjunctural analysis and apply critical problem-solving, and some authors explicitly emphasise that these demanding steps should only be undertaken collaboratively (e.g., Eckersley, 2021; Clarke, 2018). However, this two-step method can be a significant contribution to degrowth strategising with the potential to build unconventional coalitions for *the next best step,* which nevertheless will involve some form of (moral) loss and a justified feeling of regret. As Sovacool (2022, 16) shows, such an approach has successful historical antecedents:

> Another interesting theme is the ability for social movements to form broad coalitions with other actors, even if those actors hold opposing values and goals. The temperance movement capitalized on xenophobic and anti-immigration sentiments towards German Americans. [Martin Luther] King and others reached out to Christian audiences. … To do so, King and advocates had to accept the religious organizations as a possible partner, even though it was the religion of those who originally kidnapped and trafficked people as slaves and had no historically positive relationship.

To sum up, less radical compromises, involving some form of (moral) loss and a justified feeling of regret, are a precondition to build comprehensive coalitions of social forces (beyond communities of like-minded people) in a specific conjuncture. Following Gramsci (2003), the search for compromises that maintain a sufficient connection with and integrate the common sense of different sections of the population (while also critically stretching it) is essential in the struggle for hegemony (see also Opratko, 2022; Bärnthaler, 2024). Hegemony is, in this sense, a *compromise-mediated* and *consent-based* process of exercising power.

4.2. Achieving broad-based consent: Degrowth values or objective material interests?

Buch-Hansen (2018, 158) writes, "In liberal democracies, broad-based consent, or at least passive consent, is an additional prerequisite for a political project to become institutionalised", noting that "degrowth enjoys no 'passive consent' from the majority of the population." This, he argues, is not just a matter of the term degrowth

triggering "negative feelings in people when they first hear it" but also one of "the actual content of the degrowth project" (ibid., 161), including its anti-capitalist sentiments in a world where the desirability of economic growth has become common sense and its incompatibility with accustomed lifestyles. To this assessment, this section adds another element that characterises discursive practices in degrowth scholarship and hinders achieving broad-based consent: an underestimated distance from the common sense of majority populations.

We already established the emphasis given to degrowth values in parts of degrowth strategising. As there is no shared definition of values, I use the term in line with studies on milieus, which build on "value clusters" to categorise groups of like-minded people. After World War II, a centre of a middle-class dominated and mass-consumption oriented society existed with rather homogeneous values (Aglietta, 2015; Reckwitz, 2021). This accommodation of class conflicts was abandoned during neoliberal globalisation, leading to renewed polarisation and fragmentation. Recent studies on milieus show that the societal centre has split into various groups, some of which are hardly able to connect with others, e.g., the "nostalgic bourgeois milieu" and "progressive realists" (Integral, 2022). These studies on milieus have also shown time and again that, even though "environmental" values are considered important to people, they are often not on a par with other "non-environmental" issues of everyday life, including jobs, (social) security, better health services, and affordable housing (German Environment Agency, 2019; German Environment Agency, 2022). Relatedly, recent studies suggest that large sections of society are today more critical of the climate movement than they were three years ago (More in Common, 2023). These developments highlight a key challenge for achieving broad-based (at least passive) consent: to reconceptualise necessary climate policies as potentially popular social policies, i.e., to root "environmental" action in the "non-environmental" common sense of majority populations (Bärnthaler, 2024).

However, without disregarding its connection to other movements with wider outreach (see, e.g., Burkhart et al., 2022, Kothari et al., 2019), the degrowth movement still attracts mostly highly-educated, middle-class people (Andreucci and Engel-Di Mauro, 2019, 180; see also Schmelzer et al., 2022, 271). This becomes problematic if the values, attitudes, and practices of these rather privileged members of a niche movement, i.e., their group identity, is taken as the *starting point* to achieve broad-based consent. It is ethically problematic if it reinforces anti-underclass prejudices; and it is strategically problematic if the values of a minority determine political agency, as this restrains feasibility. For example, D'Alisa and Kallis' (2020, 6-7) understanding of building a counter-hegemony within the integral state[3] has been an important step in degrowth strategising, overcoming the unproductive dichotomy between action outside and inside the state. In this respect, they argue that grassroots can "construct a counter-hegemony that reorders common-senses", whereby the "fate of this counter-hegemony depends on its ability to occupy the political sphere and use the collective force of the state to spread the new common senses" (ibid, 6). This raises the question: What kind of common senses are – at a given point in time – powerful enough, i.e., shared by "a critical mass of people" (ibid), to effectively occupy the political sphere? Here, D'Alisa and Kallis (2020, 6f) suggest that:

> Alternative food networks, open software communities or solidarity practices, such as popular health clinics change the common sense of participants and allow them to imagine different knowledge, health, care or education systems. Participants, and those who experience these projects become then a potential base for articulating social demands for changing political institutions.

Similarly, elsewhere, Kallis et al. (2020, 63, emphasis added) highlight that the "institutional and structural changes proposed (…) are motivated by people described here, *already thinking and living in different ways*". But those who already think and live in different (degrowth-oriented) ways are far from representing a critical mass of people and thus from being able to occupy the political sphere (I acknowledge exceptions that prove the rule). This begs the question how "simply opening up degrowth alternatives to vaguely defined 'participants' will somehow catalyze wider movements for 'social demands'" (Huber, 2022, 171).

This dilemma is also captured in the idea that social change is "an amalgam of change in everyday practices, ideas (*interstitial strategies*) and eventually institutions of coercion and enforcement (*symbiotic strategies*)" (D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020, 6, emphasis added). Such an understanding of change seems to assume that new common senses are always rooted in interstices, i.e., in "parallel systems in the civil society arena around self-management" (ibid, 2), rather than emerging from more widespread societal practices. And while Kallis and colleagues are at times more careful to point out that new common senses will not emanate from prefigurative nowtopias only,[4] many discursive degrowth practices nevertheless prioritise such niche strategies, e.g.:

> Logics of prefiguration guide many small-scale efforts with expectations that, as degrowth-supporting practices and relations circulate and take root in everyday practice and culture, they ripen conditions for the emergence of correlating expressions on other scales and structures (Paulson, 2022, 187f).

> The core of the "degrowth" institutions that are envisioned will likely be derived from social movements and interstitial bottom-up solidarity economy initiatives that operate against the logic of capital. (…) These "nowtopias" (Carlsson and Manning, 2010) are prefigurative, emancipatory initiatives that not only envision but also embody an alternative model of societal organisation in practice (Petridis, 2022, 161).

There is a strong tendency in degrowth discourses to present the causes for wellbeing – and thus the basis for broad-based consent – in "rather narrow and reductionist ways" (Buch-Hansen and Nesterova, 2023, 5). Here, wellbeing often arises "from living in eco-communities (Cattaneo, 2014) or other small, cooperative, close-knit communities (Trainer, 2020) as well as from engaging in community-based activities like music, drama, meditation or craft workshops" (Buch-Hansen and Nesterova, 2023, 5; see also Schmid, 2019).

Contrary to the assumption that new common senses always spread from such interstitial nowtopias and niche milieus to society more broadly, achieving broad-based consent requires a *starting point within* the common sense of the societal mainstream, while seeking to transform it (Bärnthaler, 2024). Relatedly, according to Overbeek (1990, 248-249), political projects that become hegemonic generally pass through three stages: deconstruction, construction, and consolidation. By definition, deconstruction begins with and draws on the dominant common sense of a time; it builds on the "widespread".

Such a strategy, however, necessitates an understanding of the universal and general, which has been increasingly lost in contemporary late-modern singularised societies (Reckwitz, 2021). Against this zeitgeist, what is thus at stake is a rediscovery and redefinition of the general and universal for collective action. Here, dialectical materialism provides a useful entry point, relating consciousness to (everyday) material life and the interest to satisfy needs. It allows focusing on objective – and objectively shared – material interests among large sections of the population. Against this background, I propose an unorthodox reading

[3] The theory of the integral state conceptualises the state as a dialectical process between civil and political society.

[4] As, for example, in the city of Barcelona, where new common senses were articulated in alternative projects of the city *and* in struggles against evictions that forged new alliances with "working-class constituents" (Kallis et al., 2020, 107).

of "objective material interest", one that differs from Marx's objective interests of the working class. In this reading, objective interests have their theoretical basis in human-need theory (Doyal and Gough, 1991), which identifies needs uniting us as human beings (see also Gough, 2017; Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017; Kohn, 2016). These needs are universal, because if they are not satisfied "serious harm of some objective kind will result", implying "obstacles to successful social participation" (Gough, 2017, 42). At the same time, like all need theories, Doyal and Gough make a distinction between *needs* and *need satisfiers* – the latter being contextual and non-universal. The need for food and shelter is objective and universal, but there exist wide varieties of cuisines and forms of dwellings that can meet any given specification of nutrition and protection from the elements.

These need satisfiers are assembled in foundational provisioning systems (Bärnthaler and Gough, 2023), like those for housing, care, energy, and health, also referred to as "the foundational economy" (Foundational Economy Collective, 2022), i.e., the *potentially* un- and de-commodified foundations of contemporary economies. A policy framework to actualise the decommodification potentials of foundational provisioning systems is that of universal basic services, ensuring everyone has access to the necessities of life as a right, not a privilege (Coote and Percy, 2020; Gough, 2020; Hickel, 2023; Bärnthaler and Dengler, 2023). Such a policy framework – which, consistently, includes a public work programme and job guarantee to mobilise labour for the provisioning of these services (see also Hickel, 2022; Olk et al., 2023) – has the potential to appeal across large sections of the population (including segments of contemporary right-wing voters), providing jobs and improving immediate material living conditions (Bärnthaler et al., 2021; Novy et al., 2022). As foundational provisioning systems are the material basis of everyday life for everyone, *regardless of values*, politicising them (via the framework of universal basic services) enables "doing universality" and cultivating a "culture of the general" (Reckwitz, 2021, 31). It unearths a universal social reality that exists *as potential* even in highly polarised late-modern societies. This understanding insists on and reinforces a universal element in the political struggle, while acknowledging that alliance building is context-specific: alliances might evolve around a lack of decentralised care institutions in one context and around unaffordable housing in another.

At the same time, as Huber (2022, 198) emphasises, strengthening the de- and uncommodified foundations is necessary but insufficient as people would intuitively understand "free electricity, or public housing as beneficial, but it would be up to political organizers to *name* those improvements as measures taken to address the climate crisis". While Huber is correct that such improvements must simultaneously address the climate crisis, given the insights from studies on values and milieus, where"environmental" concerns are often not on a par with "non-environmental" issues of everyday life (e.g., Borgstedt, 2023; Barth and Molina, 2023), it seems strategically sensible to turn Huber's argument on its head: rather than naming social improvements as measures taken to address the climate crisis, measures taken to address the climate crisis should be named as social improvements.

For example, as I have argued elsewhere (Bärnthaler, 2024), while downscaling car-centric infrastructures *as a means to tackle climate change* often lacks broad-based consent, such consent can be nurtured when such exnovation is framed *as a precondition to strengthen local provisioning systems* (e.g., poly-functional neighbourhoods with essential amenities and meeting places in walking distance). Also, consider the example of housing, where the current demolition-construction boom blows carbon budgets and has devastating consequences on biodiversity (e.g., Zu Ermgassen et al., 2022). In this context, it would be necessary to frame the ecologically destructive housing demolition-construction boom *as socially problematic*. This includes demonstrating that the overproduction of housing does not lead to affordability but undermines it. The inflow of private capital, primarily into high-end (and often financialised) housing segments, puts upward pressure on land prices, which, in turn, hinders social-housing provision and leads to higher rents in socially regulated housing segments if these rents are linked to land prices (e.g., through location premiums).

Much more thinking is needed here[5] but the examples suggest a certain strategic logic: to reconceptualise necessary ecological policies as potentially popular social policies (see also Bärnthaler, 2024) that strengthen foundational provisioning systems – while demonstrating that strengthening these systems *necessitates* the ending, weakening, and shrinking of other economic zones and activities (e.g., provision of car-centric infrastructures, financialised housing). Such a strategic approach can foster broad-based consent, but simultaneously entails radical eco-social potentials. It dialectically interweaves improved social foundations and the downscaling of excess, innovation and exnovation, enablement and restriction, growth and shrinking (see also Buch-Hansen and Nesterova, 2023).

To be clear, the question is not whether but *how* to overcome capitalism in the long term. Provided that non-concrete utopias to abolish capitalism in the short term are unlikely to create broad-based consent (see Buch-Hansen, 2018), the approach outlined above suggests a more dialectical path towards breaking with capitalism, avoiding either-or dichotomies as in reform *or* revolution, incremental *or* radical (see e.g., Luxemburg, 2006 [1899] on 'revolutionary realpolitik'). In this respect, a realist-institutionalist understanding of economies (e.g., Polanyi, 1977; Spash, 2020; Nelson, 1993) highlights that contemporary economies are always "more than capitalist economies" (Peck, 2013, 1556; see also Poulantzas, 1975 on "social formations"). Even within a capitalist system, capitalism is not the only game in town: as an "institutionalised social order" (Fraser, 2014), it depends on non-capitalist foundations, i.e., de- and uncommodified foundational provisioning systems that prioritise use values. These foundational provisioning systems provide inputs and values on which capital accumulation depends (e.g., a healthy and educated workforce, public infrastructures). They are thus part and parcel of the institutionalised social order of capitalism but are also essential to satisfying human needs. This *foundational* (rather than "interstitial") character makes these provisioning systems – and with them: universal basic services – a privileged strategic entry point (Bärnthaler et al., 2021; Bärnthaler et al., 2023) here and now, i.e., *within* capitalism (Bärnthaler and Gough, 2023).

As structures are always strategically selective, privileging some forces, strategies, actors, and interests over others, a hegemonic project here and now will also need to resonate with some capital fractions to be selected and retained (Jessop, 1990; Overbeek, 2013; Bärnthaler et al., 2024). Demands for universal basic services have the potential to attract some of these capital fractions (e.g., patient capital, capital for the decarbonisation of foundational provisioning, socially licensed capital; see also Newell, 2019), while pushing back those that immediately undermine the sustainable provision of universal basic services (e.g., fossil capital, capital profiting from rent extraction, see Stratford, 2020). Here, strategic overlaps with Green Keynesianism and social-democratic movements emerge.

Yet, universal basic services have revolutionary potential beyond these traditions as they nurture the breeding ground *for further struggles* and *subsequent steps* against the reified power of capital (see also Gerber

[5] This might benefit from what Margaret Kohn (2016), drawing upon Henri Lefebvre (2003), refers to as "heterodox rights claims" that "on the one hand, strike a responsive chord among different interest groups and seem to be realizable within a given social and political order (a strategy to circumvent, among others, outright opposition by the state) while, on the other hand, actively pursuing the transformation of an established order's fundaments" (Haderer, 2020, 9).

and Gerber, 2017): they reduce inequality; build solidarity through an awareness of shared needs; improve working conditions for many (potentially mobilising large fractions of labour[6]); decouple livelihood security from wage work (abolishing material insecurity as a precondition for radical climate action); invert the current hierarchy of capitalist production over social reproduction; reduce growth imperatives (e.g., the requirement to produce things that we do not need to earn the money to buy those things that we do need); counteract the creation of artificial scarcity that serves as the engine of capital accumulation; shift productive capacities to what is known to be essential for wellbeing; foster in-kind forms of public consumption (linked to lower energy requirements than individualised consumption); and push back market-driven decision making (the anarchy of production). If we pursue a conjunctural approach to critical problem-solving, strategising implies identifying the next best transition steps with the greatest transformative potential (see Section 4.1). If this *next step* towards eco-socialist degrowth is shared with (less radical) Green Keynesians and social democrats and with (productivist) eco-modernist socialists, so much the better (for a similar gradual approach, see Gough, 2017, Schulze Waltrup, 2023, 14).

4.3. *The fifth prerequisite for a degrowth paradigm shift: Hegemony's protective armour of coercion*

We already established Buch-Hansen's four prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift: (i) a deep crisis and (ii) a political project that provides solutions to key crisis tendencies, has (iii) support from a comprehensive coalition of social forces, and (iv) enjoys at least passive consent among the broader population. Based on this, we also established that (iii) and (iv) are prerequisites for hegemony, defined as a *compromise-mediated* and *consent-based* process of exercising power. But hegemony, as Gramsci (2003, 263) points out, is "protected by the armour of coercion". Elsewhere, he refers to this dialectical unity as "the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation" (ibid., 170). Gramsci is not always consistent in his use of the conceptual hegemony-coercion pair – sometimes he remarks that domination/rule[7] is exercised through the combination of coercion and hegemony/broad-based consent, while at times hegemony includes both elements of consent and coercion (see Opratko, 2022, 42). This inconsistency, however, is due less to imprecision than to Gramsci's insistence not to make the "theoretical error" to turn methodological distinctions into organic ones (Gramsci, 2003, 159f). Organically, the temporal and compromise-mediated stabilisation of broad-based consent always and simultaneously involves coercion and the exercise of power *over* others to sustain domination/to rule. This includes, by definition, a potential degrowth rule/domination – or, in other words: a degrowth paradigm shift. Hence, we can establish the will to coerce and rule as fifth prerequisite for degrowth to escape its political marginalisation.

Specific discursive practices in the broader degrowth-strategy discourse, however, seem to disavow or distance themselves from this prerequisite. This is most obvious in strategies based on "voluntary simplicity" (e.g., Alexander, 2013; for a critique see Romano, 2012) but also features in other discursive practices:

> Emancipatory transformations are … about a very different remaking of society, beyond exploitation and domination (Brand, 2022, 41).

> Based on our patriarchal, racist, hierarchical culture, it is no easy task to create a process leading towards a culture of participation that transcends relationships of domination (Rath, 2022, 330).

The quotes above not only lump together exploitation and domination but also equate domination with racism and patriarchy – rather than acknowledging that overcoming forms of exploitation, racism, and patriarchy will also require new forms of domination. Others, like Rackham (2012), even argue that a degrowth transformation requires "the abolition globally of societal relations of domination (hierarchies and states)" (cited in D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020, 3). Such discursive practices not only rest, as D'Alisa and Kallis (2020, 5) recognise, on the misplaced assumption that the state is always the locus of violence/coercion and civil society of horizontalism/freedom. They also lack an understanding that domination is an important and desirable feature of society, because collective self-limitation in a context of diverging sectional interests requires a monopoly of legitimate violence. This has been beautifully encapsulated by two quite different thinkers, the Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai and Hans Kelsen, a legal positivist and the architect of the 1920 Austrian federal constitution:

> But I can hear you objecting, my young friend, that though it may be true that love-comradeship will become the ideal of the working class, will this new "moral measurement" of emotions not place new constraints on sexual relationships? Are we not liberating love from the fetters of bourgeois morality only to enslave it again? Yes, my young friend, you are right. The ideology of the proletariat rejects bourgeois "morality" in the sphere of love-marriage relations. Nevertheless, it inevitably develops its own class morality, its own rules of behaviour, which correspond more closely to the tasks of the working class and educate the emotions in a certain direction (Kollontai, 1923).

> [Freedom] is the basic element of all social speculation, although – or precisely because – everything social is, in its innermost essence, a bond (*Bindung*) and only as bond (*Bindung*) becomes an interdependency (*Verbindung*) and thus the negation of freedom. (…) If society, if even the state shall exist, then a binding order for the mutual behaviour of people must apply, then there must be domination (*Herrschaft*) (Kelsen, 2006, 54, own translation).

In this respect, Malm's (2020) plea for some degree of hard (state) power in the face of chronic emergencies has been considered "poles apart from … the deepening of democracy as part and parcel of the degrowth transformation, or visions of a bottom-up constitution of local communities" (Asara, 2022, 98). While the role of the state in a degrowth transformation has been widely acknowledged (e.g., D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020; Koch, 2022; Bellamy Foster, 2023; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022), an irritation with authority and hard power still underpins many discursive degrowth practices. This assumes that top-down governing is antithetical to (rather than compatible with) democratic values and that democracy can and should be reduced to small-scale, decentralised, and horizontal dialogues in search of consensual forms of decision-making, a vision that is "quite popular among degrowth activists" (D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020, 3; for a critique see also Işıkara and Narin, 2023).

However, this reduces democracy to a *communal* form, limited in its validity and use in contemporary pluralist *societies* (see Section 4.1). It overlooks that democracy necessarily remains a form of domination, albeit one less repressive than others (Bärnthaler et al., 2021). Effective planning and democratic governance – also through government – involves public authority as well as forms of top-down and *collectively binding* political decision-making (Haderer, 2023; Graham, 2023). These decisions are based on territorial sovereignty and exercised through a monopoly of legitimate violence (Koch, 2022). Exercising coercion via collectively binding societal rules entails the *potential* to punish capital that does not behave properly (via the Keynesian state) and to restrict unsustainable practices (restraining liberal value pluralism and preference neutrality; see Jaeggi, 2018) in order to protect and institutionalise

[6] Today, the share of the paid foundational-economy labour force is between 40% and 45% in Europe (FEC 2022). Moreover, a public work programme and job guarantee, as consistent parts of a universal-basic-service framework, would not only increase this share but could also set new labour standards, thereby putting pressure on private companies to follow suit to attract labour force.

[7] In the absence of an unambiguous translation of the German term "Herrschaft", I use the terms domination/rule.

compromise-mediated forms of consent (see also Eckersley, 2021). This potential is notoriously absent from domination-free horizontal networks that prefigure communal forms of democracy (see also Romano, 2016 on degrowth's horizontalism).

Finally, and relatedly, it is striking that many discursive degrowth-strategy practices embrace the concept of *counter*-hegemony rather than that of hegemony (e.g., Robra et al., 2021, but see Koch, 2022, Buch-Hansen, 2018), although Gramsci (the widely acknowledged scholar of hegemony) never used this term.[8] In this context, I propose an abduction, an inference to the best explanation, of why the concept of *counter*-hegemony tends to be more present than that of hegemony in degrowth-strategy discourses. *Counter*-hegemony is understood as a system of alternative ideas, practices, and movements that challenge and resist the dominant cultural, economic, and political structures established by a hegemonic power. Therefore, compared to the concept of hegemony, counter-hegemony is not only more inclined to resist less radical compromises (Section 4.1) and build on degrowth values (Section 4.2). It also favours *countering* contemporary forms of domination/rule rather than exercising coercion *in order to rule.* And although some degrowth scholars use the term counter-hegemony while acknowledging the need to exercise coercion (e.g., D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020), the case study points to discursive practices that are reluctant to such ideas, e.g.:

> Strategies for social-ecological transformation are bottom-up and focused on building *counter-power to dominant actors* who focus on reproducing business as usual. *Rather than trying to wield power* for a single vision of a coordinated transformation, they primarily *deal with dismantling existing power relations* and organising alternatives (Schulken et al., 2022, 23, emphasis added).

> Moreover, this focal shift [towards an emancipatory transformation] also largely bypasses the longstanding debates on the role of the state versus bottom-up action by focusing instead on *subversive strategies* (both state and non-state) that would ultimately help us build more participatory institutions. … Still, it would require large doses of ingenuity *to identify non-hegemonic ways* of linking social movements with higher-level institutions (Petridis, 2022, 167f, emphasis added).

This is *not* to say that counter-hegemony is a futile form of agency. On the contrary, protests, strikes, civil disobedience, blockades, and the like are as important elements of a social-ecological transformation as is alternative prefiguration (Sovacool and Dunlap, 2022). However, in the current conjuncture, revolting against dominant institutions or operating at distance to them *without striving to enforce new societal norms* is insufficient to enable deep social-ecological-economic change. Striving to enforce new societal norms requires abandoning the illusion of a society in which coercion, authority, and domination are absent. As Polanyi (2001, 266f) notes, any ideal of society that would ban these features – where "power and compulsion are absent" and "force has no function" – "must be invalid". Here and now, contemporary hegemony of a profit- and growth-oriented economy over other life-sustaining economic zones like care, housing, and sustainable agriculture can only be defeated if other values and interests become hegemonic and structure societal rules, which involves forms of coercion. Lacking this will to rule (at least conceptually), the focus on *counter*-hegemony makes a degrowth paradigm shift improbable and restrains deeper thinking about symbiotic strategies.

[8] There is, of course, a long debate in Gramscian scholarship with some authors arguing that the term *counter*-hegemony, although not used by Gramsci himself, is present in his work. It is not necessary to reiterate these debates here, for I am not concerned with whether Gramsci has been correctly or incorrectly interpreted per se.

5. Conclusion

This paper focused on the discursive shift in degrowth scholarship and practice towards questions of strategy, arguing that this shift is crucial for developing a theory of deep social-ecological-economic change. Buch-Hansen (2018) provides the groundwork for such a theory, synthesising four prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift: (i) a deep crisis, (ii) an alternative political project, (iii) a comprehensive coalition of social forces, and (iv) broad-based consent. Drawing upon the methodology of problematisation, this paper contributed to theory development. It problematised specific discursive practices on degrowth strategising that relate to the not (yet) actualised prerequisites, i.e., (iii) and (iv), while also adding a fifth prerequisite: the will to coerce and rule. In so doing, it enriched Buch-Hansen's theoretical framework in three ways.

First, regarding the missing prerequisite (iii), Buch-Hansen highlights the continued dominance of pro-growth discourses in society and the ideational character of the degrowth project. Adding to these insights, Section 4.1 problematised a reductionist understanding of cooperation and democratic agency as acts within like-minded *communities* (based on personal relations and shared values). These tend to avoid compromises (and thus moral losses and justified feelings of regret) but disregard that pluralist *societies* require a polity with common rules that accommodate and deal with diverse sectional interests. Establishing such rules requires forms of collective action based on non-personal relations, including political representation. Therefore, the focus on building eco-social communities, rather than eco-social societies, leaves potentials for more comprehensive coalitions unrealised. To actualise these potentials, the paper suggested a two-step method to guide compromise-making: conjunctural analysis followed by situated, critical problem-solving. Becoming hegemonic is a compromise-mediated process that sometimes also integrates antagonistic classes and social groups.

Second, regarding the missing prerequisite (iv), Buch-Hansen points to the anti-capitalist sentiments of the degrowth movement in a world where the desirability of economic growth has become common sense and to its incompatibility with deeply accustomed lifestyles. Enriching these explanations, Section 4.2 problematised the distance of some discursive degrowth-strategy practices from the common sense of majority populations. Here, it proposed a shift of emphasis from (degrowth) values to objective material interests (based on human-need theory), which are satisfied via foundational provisioning systems. This makes universal basic services a strategic centrepiece (a next best transition step) for degrowth strategising. As foundational provisioning systems constitute the material basis of everyday life for everyone, *regardless of values*, demands for universal basic services can appeal across large sections of the population, reinforcing a crucial universal element in the political struggle. This, however, leads to a key strategic challenge: to *foreground* demands for universal basic services while demonstrating that actualising these demands necessitates the downscaling of other economic activities. This is the basis of a more salutogenic approach to degrowth strategising, i.e., one that focuses on factors that support human flourishing rather than proceeding from problems or deficits (see Di Giulio and Defila, 2021); something that is also captured in the idea of "radical abundance" (Hickel, 2019).

Third, having established that (iii) and (iv) are prerequisites for hegemony, i.e., the *compromise-mediated* and *consent-based* process of exercising power, Section 4.3 highlighted that hegemony is always stabilised by some degree of hard (state) power and coercion to sustain domination/to rule. Based on that, it problematised discursive practices that assume that top-down governing is antithetical to (rather than compatible with) democratic values. These practices fallaciously reduce democracy to the search for consensus, equating it with decentralised, domination-free, and horizontally organised forms of participatory decision-making. In this context, I argued that a *counter*-hegemonic project (in contrast to a hegemonic one) tends to remain limited to

countering contemporary forms of domination/rule rather than exercising coercion *in order to rule*.

In conclusion, the modest goal of the three problematisations in this paper is to stimulate further debate in degrowth scholarship and practice, questioning some existing lines of reasoning. As "degrowth does not claim one unitary theory or plan of action" (Kallis et al., 2020, 19; see also Eversberg and Schmelzer, 2018), these problematisations can only be selective. I nevertheless believe that they can contribute to taking the *next best step* in degrowth strategising towards building comprehensive coalitions of social forces that enjoy at least passive consent from the majority. This is a precondition to force political decision-makers to listen, to open new strategic spaces of revolutionary potential (e.g., via universal basic services), and to exercise coercion to regulate the most undesirable capital fractions and practices out of existence. One step at a time.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Richard Bärnthaler: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

Nothing to declare.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

Acknowledgements

I thank Andreas Novy, Charles Stevenson, Nick Fitzpatrick, Nathan Barlow, Ian Gough, Jürgen Essletzbichler, and Sarah Ware for their comments on earlier versions of this work, as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

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