



Not Just Newer, but Fewer

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James Jackson

20 Not Just Newer, but Fewer: A Bridge Between Ecomodernism and Degrowth?

Abstract: One of the defining features of degrowth's ascent in the literature in recent years is its opposition to ecomodernism. The point of contention between these approaches centres around the desirability for the economy to grow ad finitum. In this chapter, I offer a site of reconciliation between degrowth and ecomodernism by proposing the *Newer but Fewer (NBF) principle* wherein degrowing the economy is contingent upon superseding carbon intensive technology with low carbon alternatives at a lower ratio than of its predecessors to ensure a planned reduction in aggregate economic activity. Within this view of degrowth, I present three potential challenges that may be encountered in the transition away from capitalism's current growth dependency, namely: (i) greenflation – inflationary pressures centred around environmental policies but also how degrowth is a means to circumvent the fossilflation gripping the global economy, (ii) green finance – in which the issuance of maturity of green debt will be affected by degrowing the economy and (iii) climate justice – insofar that the previous two challenges will have profound implications for the capacity of Global North and the Global South to begin degrowing their economies.

Keywords: degrowth, ecomodernism, greenflation, fossilflation, green debt, climate justice

Introduction

The ceaseless exceedance of planetary boundaries has long since posed profound questions about how the global political economy is to be brought into harmony with the natural environment (Rockström et al., 2009). Since the 1980s, the answer to this question has largely centred around the deployment of technological fixes in the form of solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicles, to name just a few, that reduce society's reliance upon prior fossil fuel incumbents. Over the preceding decades, doubt has been cast over technological solutions by different schools of thought, not least degrowth and associated scholars be, if not the, which has come to a prominent critique of simple technological fixes to ecological problems (Bardi & Pereira, 2022). Typically, these positions are thought to be dichotomous, with the latter's focus on an aggregate reduction of economic activity seen as a response to the former's presumption that aggregate growth of the economy can continue unabated so long as growth

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is ‘decoupled’ from emissions (Hickel, 2021; Kallis, 2018). It is within the space cleaved upon by this polarised debate that I situate this chapter. I therein propose a site of reconciliation in which these positions need not always be diametrically opposed but can be co-constitutive features of degrowing the economy, employing technology as a means to, rather than the alternative of, degrowth.

Degrowth’s ascent up the research agenda of scholars from various disciplines has come in the wake of evidence that technology has had only a limited impact on resolving the impact of the extraction, production, transportation and ultimately consumption of goods in the global economy. It is important to note that solutions embodied in technological modernism, manifested in the advent of ecological modernisation and sustainable development, were themselves responses to the previous criticism of capitalism and its relationship with the natural environment found in the *Limits to Growth* debate (Bardi & Periera, 2022). To that extent, degrowth is ostensibly a critique of the validity and indeed the possibility of green growth, as seen through a critical lens honed by capitalism’s failure to avert climate and ecological breakdown. The echoes of limits to growth scholars of the past can thus be heard in the now amplified critique of degrowth scholars today.

The fundamental postulation, that infinite economic growth on a finite planet is an intellectual and physical impossibility, has been lent credence by recent evidence the current trajectory of the global political economy will far exceed the objectives of the Paris Agreement, itself a conservative or optimistic target of ecological conciliation (Tingley & Tomz, 2019). And whilst the logical resolution to this existential problem would tacitly appear to lie in an acknowledgement that economic activity needs to be limited to a natural capacity, the fact remains that present fossil fuel infrastructure will almost certainly need to be supplanted by technological alternatives. In this chapter, I look to bridge this divide in the traditionally opposing positions by proposing a Newer but Fewer (NBK) principle in which the promise of ecomodernists, that technology will resolve environmental issues, is coopted for the purpose of degrowth. To that end, this chapter is structured as follows. I begin by reviewing the points of divergence between these antithetical political perspectives. I then propose these positions can converge on the subject of technologies which could be used in the pursuit of degrowth. Through this view of degrowth, I examine three potential implications that might occur in the process of degrowing the economy, namely (i) greenflation – inflationary pressures centred around environmental policies but also how degrowth is a means to circumvent the fossilflation gripping the global economy, (ii) green finance – in which the issuance of maturity of green debt will be affected by degrowing the economy and (iii) climate justice – insofar that the previous two challenges will have profound implications for the capacity of Global North and the Global South to begin degrowing their economies.

Ecomodernism and Degrowth: The Dividing Line(s)

Ecomodernism has roots in the paradigmatic view of sustainability since the 1980s and is attributed to the diffusion of technology. It has followed the mantra that technology could decouple economic growth from its environmental impact and economies could be simultaneously modernised whilst being brought into greater harmony with the environment (Vandeventer et al., 2019; Kerschner et al., 2018; Grunwald, 2018). An ecomodernist perspective has come to be the common means by which the decarbonisation literature is framed, taking root in both the discourse and policy of the Paris Agreement and carbon neutrality. According to the ‘ecomodernist manifesto’ (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015), produced by scholars sympathetic to its aims, far from simply a technological approach, ecomodernism is thought to be contingent upon a social democratic political and economic settlement, informed by evidence-based policy making (Symons, 2019; Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015). Ecomodernists proclaim that whilst it is itself a response to the perceived eco-radicalism of the 1970s, situated as a third-way alternative between *laissez-faire* and anti-capitalist, it is a concerted cause for change (Symons, 2019; Nisbet, 2018; Lewis, 1992).

Degrowth, by contrast, rejects the third-way assertion of many ecomodernists, firmly locating itself in anti-capitalist schools of thought (Stuart et al., 2020; Kallis, 2017; 2016). Just as ecomodernism has served as the policy paradigm for ecocentrist scholars and policymakers alike, degrowth is considered an alternative conceptual framework that repoliticises the very ideological and political edifice upon which ecomodernism is based (Akbulut, 2021; Hickel, 2021). Where the former reflects the primary economic objective of capitalism that prioritises growth, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the latter deprioritises this fundamental objective (Koch, 2015). Degrowth instead supplants the objective of growth as the imperative for the economy, replacing it with an alternative imperative, such as well-being, universal access to goods and services within planetary boundaries, ensuring biodiversity and sustaining life (Kallis et al., 2020; Kallis, 2018). The simultaneous (de)prioritisation of economic growth and (re)prioritisation of a successive imperative is reflected in the ongoing splintering of disciplines, from the neoclassical to ecological economics (Brand-Correa et al., 2022; Common, 2005), political economy to environmental and ecological political economy or political ecology and more (Craig, 2018; Meadowcroft, 2006).

A distinction can be drawn between the ultimate aims of ecomodernism and degrowth, at least in the short-term. That is to say that while ecomodernism has bled into the environmental priorities of developing countries just as it was institutionalised in the developed countries of the world (Hickel, 2021), doubts remain over the implementation of degrowth in lesser developed countries. On this point, some scholars, including Chiengkul Likaj et al. (2022) propose that degrowth advocates need to acknowledge that low and middle-income countries will need to undergo a degree of economic growth, in both aggregate and per capita terms, to allow their citizens to meet a particular level of material prosperity. This bleeding of perspectives is, however, muddied by many of the

countries that retain developing countries' status, particularly China, Russia and India, to prevent them from committing to such environmental objectives when their economic activity would suggest otherwise (Khusyakova & Urumov, 2021). Nevertheless, this suggests that the economy must first grow, albeit as environmentally accommodating as possible, before it can then degrow.

Where the dividing lines exist between ecomodernism and degrowth strategies to ultimately reconcile the economy with the environment has important implications for this chapter. Firstly, it suggests that contemporary analyses of degrowth are inevitably concerned with developed capitalist polities that presently exceed both their territorial capacity and requirements at the expense of their lesser developed counterparts (Trainer, 2021; Hickel & Kallis, 2020). This is, of course, not circumstantial but indicative of the exploitative and extractivist tendencies of contemporary global capitalism, founded upon the uneven flows of capital, resources and labour from the Global South to the Global North (Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Kallis, 2017). Secondly, degrowth is intimately tied to the notion of 'national' responsibility for those most responsible for climate and the ecological breakdown and those duty bound to begin the transition in earnest (Hickel et al., 2022). Finally, it indicates that for the transition to begin, those countries currently in the process of development must ultimately reach a certain level akin to developed nations.

These dividing lines are not solely drawn between pro-growth and post-growth positions but within post-growth positions themselves. Historically, degrowth has been considered an alternative to ecomodernism so radical that it was delegitimised by association with socialism and Marxism (Koch, 2015). This has, in part, given rise to alternative post-growth alternatives, post-growth and a-growth that purport to provide more viable, and indeed precise, alternatives to green growth (Jackson, 2021; Van den Bergh, 2011). Where the dividing lines are drawn between degrowth, post-growth and a-growth centre around the amelioration of growth with relative indifference, as post-growth seeks to modify the growth imperative while degrowth is a critical perspective (Likaj, 2022). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace these additional dividing lines further but suffice it to say they are a nuanced critique of capitalism with relative divergence. Instead, I turn to how the divisions between ecomodernism and degrowth can be bridged.

Newer but Fewer (NBF): Bridging the Divide?

By way of bridging the divide, I propose that degrowing the economy could be predicated on a not just newer, but fewer principle (NBF), concurrently incorporating the technological contingency of ecomodernism for the purpose of undertaking the aggregate reduction of economic activity advanced by degrowth. This, like other social and ecological principles proposed by ecological economists and others, is an attempt to

contribute to the foundation upon which degrowth can be built (Brand-Correa et al., 2022). Such a position maintains a deep scepticism, if not complete rejection, of the prospect of green capitalism coming to fruition through the vast deployment of technology but a co-optation of technology as a means of achieving ecological objectives within a degrowth framework. The NBF principle I propose is thus a reconciliation of the ecomodernist and degrowth perspectives through decarbonisation that pushes degrowth into a new conceptual territory.

As noted by Kallis (2019a; 2019b) the key dividing line between ecomodernists and degrowth centres around the question of growth. One on the hand, the former believe growth can be limitless when facilitated by new, emergent technology. On the other, the latter asserts that growth is quite literally limited by the laws of thermodynamics (Brand Correira, 2022; Hickel, 2020). Of course, on this count, the divide is insurmountable. On a more technical level, Kallis (2018) notes that the dividing line is oriented around scarcity, wherein ecomodernists accuse degrowth scholars of self-imposed scarcity by highlighting the need to limit societies' material throughput, or as Kallis (2018) calls it 'collective self-limitation.' In response, degrowth scholars decry ecomodernists fanaticism that technology can continue the ceaseless growth of the economy whilst keeping within ecological limits. It is therefore on the question of the ultimate utility of technology as a tool for keeping the economy within ecological limits that I seek to propose a site of reconciliation between the two positions.

Together, I propose a view of decarbonisation through a planned degrowing of the economy predicated on newer technology, but at a ratio of less than 1:1 (or < 1) with its present carbon intensive alternatives. New technologies are inevitably required to supersede carbon intensive incumbents. Degrowing the economy, by extension, would therefore be limited under present technological and industrial conditions. In the process of replacing carbon intensive incumbents, however, the supply of various goods and services does not need to, nor should it, replicate that presently produced through carbon intensive sources. Whilst the amount of goods and services in the economy has been a source of debate as to whether it is rooted in the supply of, or demand for, such commodities, the underlying cause is the pursuit of growth (Kallis, 2018). This need not be the case, however, with technology deployed to liberate workers from unnecessary labour time, sever its link to fossil fuels and used as a tool to degrow the economy.

Inevitably, degrowing the economy at an aggregate level contains within it a significant degree of nuance in terms of individual sectors. For instance, requisite supply will still be needed for developed economies to meet the consumption needs of citizens, businesses and services as yet unfulfilled. This requirement will vary, as it presently does, depending on the industrial composition that characterises the accumulation strategy of the economy in question. Energy demand in South Korea, for example, will likely remain higher than in the United Kingdom (UK) due to the former's reliance on manufacturing and exports compared to the latter's export of financial services but with acute import dependency. Longer term, it also remains to be seen whether finan-

cial services serve any purpose in a degrowth future. This is despite South Korea having a smaller population (~16 million) than the UK, and so lower per capita energy use, but larger aggregate demand given the productive output of the economy. The industrial compositions of economies are a continuation of the broader acknowledgement of growth sceptical scholars that developed economies will need to reduce consumption as developing countries increase their own. Two such examples of the disproportionate consumption of energy include that of the USA, whose energy consumption is far higher than India despite a far smaller population (~971m) or Norway which likewise consumes more energy than Pakistan (~215 million population). Therefore, a basic level of material requirement will need to be adhered to by all countries, one that means some economies need to degrow in earnest (reducing their ratio) as others undergo a degree of growth (in some specific sectors) before plateauing.

Where the NBF principle is more acute, however, is in the case of goods consumed disproportionately by higher income countries, and higher income groups within those countries, across the global economy. For instance, evidence shows that consumption statistics in the areas of transportation, clothing, entertainment, housing and many more are consumed by the global elite (Oxfam, 2021). Technological alternatives, from electric vehicles, garments made from recycled materials, new forms of home entertainment or houses which rely less on concrete, for example, have limited net benefit when consumed on the scale they are today. It is in these instances, then, that technological alternatives continue to supplant carbon intensive incumbents, but at a ratio less than one. Therefore, electric vehicles in aggregate, in many instances for medium to higher income earners, will need to be lower than their present level (e.g., <0.85). Housing, or specifically house building, could in principle now cease to grow at any discernible rate, if at all (e.g., <0.05) due to an imbalance between housing stock and occupancy in many countries and the wealth inequality therein (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021). Implementing such reductions in consumption will consequently require a strong political authority, of which the state is the most likely candidate that can challenge the power of capital and the growth imperative and implement the type of bottom-up process typically proposed by degrowth scholars.

The NBF principle is therefore just that, a principle, but contains within it a panoply of political and economic features. However, the NBF principle is an important element of degrowth, as the transition to or the degrowth of, the economy will likely need to reshape the ecomodernist interpretation of capitalism from the inside. Viewed in such a way, the NBF principle is not a concession on the part of degrowth, but actually a means to co-opt the central tenet of ecomodernism. To that end, rather than technology being used as a means to distract from the inherent problems of growth, as noted by Kallis (2018), technology could instead be deployed as a way to better degrow the economy. Rather than being a means to exhaust natural abundance as quickly as possible, exceeding planetary boundaries in an ever-quicker way, technology would be programmed for the sole purpose of limiting the use of resources to that which satisfies the

needs of society through planning the economy with real time information, greater planning and freeing of unnecessary labour and carbon dependency. Technology, used in this way, is therefore not a way to distract from the collective self-limitation, but a way to realise it.

The Challenges to Degrowing the Economy

Taking into account the NBF principle I have outlined above, those institutions tasked with degrowing the economy will encounter challenges that require greater attention. Many such challenges can be observed in the emergent features of ecomodernism. I address three unique but interdependent challenges here, namely (i) greenflation – how the degrowing of the economy might cause inflationary pressures through increased demand on the relatively underdeveloped environmental infrastructure required to facilitate the transition, and (ii) green finance – like the inflationary pressures incurred by degrowth, the increased demand for what green debt markets have already emerged will need an equivalent growth in supply before halting growth in the market and (iii) climate justice – the distribution question at the heart of degrowth. The failures of ecomodernism are subsequently indicative of those that would inevitably be faced with degrowth. I accordingly take these challenges in turn.

Greenflation

Central to degrowing the economy, in both aggregate output of the economy and individual sectors, is the requirement for a reduction in the extraction, production and transportation of goods. A general reduction in the supply-side dynamics of the market, according to the neoclassical view of economics, and the view that underpins the global economy, incurs inflationary pressures. In particular, the contraction of economic activity, and, by extension, a reduction of supply, would lead to cost-push inflation by virtue of making what goods remain in the economy more expensive (Jung, 2022; Senay & Sutherland, 2008). Inflation of this kind would only be made more acute by the other contingency of degrowth that demands alternatives also reduce their impact on the environment (Schwarzer, 2018). These inflationary pressures might only afflict domestic economies as they undertake aggregate degrowth, but they will nonetheless present an important challenge.

Analogous to the inflation to arise from degrowth, are the recent supply-side shocks incurred by the Russia-Ukraine war, the COVID-stricken production in China and the overall mismatch of supply and demand following the ‘re-opening’ of polities across the global economy (Banerjee et al., 2020; Ebrahimy et al., 2020). Because inflation was caused in the energy market, one such cause was linked to the levies applied

to energy bills to finance renewable alternatives, referred to as ‘greenflation’ (European Central Bank, 2022; Sharma, 2021). In response, due to the inflation of energy prices being driven by supply constraints in oil and natural gas, the actual cause has been called ‘fossilflation’ (European Central Bank, 2022). And while those inflationary pressures are linked to energy, and by extension to capitalism’s relationship with the environment, they are multifaceted, scholars and policymakers alike must remain sensitive to how the cause may be related to their actions.

Such pressures will inevitably be made more acute in the case of degrowth, as the reduction in economic activity creates a simultaneous reduction in the demand for carbon intensive fuels and higher demand for those produced by renewable means. Longer term this will likely alleviate potential inflationary pressures on the economy by shifting energy generation from finite fossil reserves, what Malm (2015) refers to as the stock of energy generation towards a flow, free from the constraints linked to scarcity. In the short-term, however, the reduced demand for fossil fuel energy, which a degrowth strategy must almost by definition comprise, would produce increased demand for the relatively few energy alternatives that presently make up energy mixes across the global economy. For instance, renewable energy at the moment only accounts for 21% of energy use in the USA, 43.5% in China and 12% in Japan (International Energy Agency, 2019). Resolving these energy needs will naturally be an incremental transitional process, one that reveals how little progress has been made in the pursuit of ecomodernism but can nonetheless not be addressed overnight.

Perceived greenflation can already be observed in the limited progress made in arresting climate breakdown, as the electric vehicle transition requires greater input of lithium, nickel and many other materials compared to contemporary alternatives, increasing the price (sometimes by more than 1,000%) for already scarce resources (International Energy Agency, 2021). Likewise, the materials required for solar panels, wind turbines and more in many instances require more resources than for coal plants (*ibid*). The phenomena also have a fiscal dimension, having been linked to the levies placed and energy bills to finance renewable energy infrastructure. Degrowing the economy might, therefore, be subject to a paradox in which the attempt to ameliorate further climate breakdown hastens the demand for, and perhaps even exhaustion of, critical raw materials in the name of transition (European Central Bank, 2022). To what extent the ongoing transition can be attributed to current inflation is limited, and indeed as a solution to such inflation, but that does not discount the sensitivity required by degrowth scholars to such potential adverse effects.

By the same token, degrowth might be alternatively considered the solution to the fossilflation currently gripping the global economy. Degrowth might then be deemed a means to reduce ‘energy dependence’ from traditionally energy-producing countries and the volatile means with which they are produced (Chalvatzis & Ionnidis, 2017; Kanchana et al., 2016). Notwithstanding, the potential short-term implications of raw material demand, degrowth presents an opportunity to circumvent energy-linked inflation pressure in the longer term. There are three possible ways in which this may

be achieved. Firstly, as I have already mentioned, the transition could be linked to the elimination of demand in the economy by limiting the number of vehicles produced and/or owned, the energy required for certain sectors and the diffusion of alternative means (energy or otherwise) to simply achievable were it *needed* to achieve a level of material subsistence rather than what is *wanted* for present environmentally damaging activity.

Secondly, required under present conditions, it could entail, at least in the short to medium term, that goods and services needed to degrow the economy within ecological boundaries are omitted from inflationary indices. That is to say that central banks, the institutions tasked with monitoring inflation, discount the cost of lithium, cobalt and other volatile goods from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Retail Price Index (RPI). Alternatively, they might increase the historically consensual 2% inflation target upwards to incorporate price increases. This itself pertains to the relationship between inflation and GDP within typical central bank mandates, as the central bank is required to slow growth when the economy ‘overheats’ but with GDP deprioritised so too would its links to inflation, affording central banks greater institutional freedom to aid degrowth.

Finally, averting fossilflation could present degrowth with another viable critique of capitalism’s dependency on fossil fuels. That is to say that capitalism is inherently fossilflationary. Such rises in goods and services are reflections of the path dependencies of fossil capital and energy dependency (Malm, 2015). Should this relationship, as evidence would suggest, be embedded within the very structural mechanics of capitalism, then avoiding this pressure is only viable through the transition away from its growth dependency. These insights open new areas of research not yet explored by degrowth scholars, including various ways to facilitate the degrowth of the economy. One such way is financing the transition through taking on greater levels of government and corporate debt, indebting society tomorrow to save the environment today.

Green Finance

Ways and means to issue green finance have pluralised in recent years, from the issuance of debt instruments and green bonds across many economies, including Germany, the UK, Netherlands and more and the greening of bond purchases corporate issued to the bond market (Kedward et al., 2022). What is more, there has been greater consideration of prospective green financial tools, including a green form of quantitative easing (Coppola, 2019) and a green collateral framework that omits fossil assets from being used as debt (Dagermos et al., 2021). Within such varied forms of ‘green debt’, whether they be in the process of implementation or confined to the realm of abstraction, there are broader attempts to allocate green credit from nation states, central banks and international actors, such as the Network for Greening the Finan-

cial System (NGFS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (Kedward et al., 2022). And whilst there remains a disparity between the required capital needed and what has been allocated, there is a nonetheless burgeoning sphere of finance that can be utilised.

Due to the maturity of such debt that has already been issued to capital markets, degrowing the economy and, by extension, a reduction in capital markets, recent evidence suggests there is a premium, or ‘greenium,’ on debt allocated towards ecological ends. The greenium refers to the willingness of creditors, bondholders and capital to pay or receive lower yields for debt with an environmental benefit (Climate Bonds, 2022). Financing of this kind will be imperative for overcoming the shortfalls in low carbon infrastructure linked to the cause of greenflation (see above). Green debt and the development of low carbon infrastructure are thus intimately tied, with the dearth of capital being linked to the absence of low carbon transition infrastructure and vice versa.

The limited issuance of green debt subsequently reveals just one of the shortfalls of green finance, one that might be overcome in the event of planned degrowth necessitating greater issuing of debt of this kind. Indeed, such is the way in which financial markets derive confidence from the directionality outlined by the state, that those green bonds issued to bond markets by several governments across the global economy have been replicated in corporate bond markets (Armijo et al., 2019; Stiglitz, 1993). At the same time, the greenium indicated by some studies (i.e., that of a lower yield) compared to a representative bond demands that yields are brought into relative parity with conventional bonds or that such bonds are omitted from the market by order of financial institutions (Schmittmann & Teng, 2021).

Conventional bonds already blur the green credentials of debt markets as in many instances green debt can be converted into convertible bonds, thus potentially voiding any green investment, or as has been the case, flowing into a contestable territory, such as the upgrade of coal plants or further research into hydrogen (Kedward et al., 2022; OECD, 2015).

Whilst the growth in green debt markets continues to encounter its challenges, a broader challenge facing degrowth is that it will ultimately need to halt the growth of green finance. And while this eventuality remains far in the distance, the need for green debt is limited, for it, like many other features of the present economy, will no longer require expansion within a degrowth framework. Therefore, just as degrowing the economy will be contingent upon green finance, degrowth will bring about the cessation of green finance. What is more, this line of inquiry follows the degrowth of any one economy in question but is made all the more complex on a global scale. Consequently, green debt financing presents an opportunity to facilitate the degrowth of the economy but it invites the question of who is financing who, by what means and how it will be achieved.

Climate Justice

The final challenge faced by the NBF principle is the distributional question of how to allocate newer resources to consumers but at a lower aggregate level. As I have already outlined in this chapter, degrowth is a transition that will likely need to be undertaken by developed capitalist economies in the first instance before it can take place elsewhere. This is not only due to the need for developed economies to do so, given that they contribute disproportionately to climate breakdown (Hickel, 2020), but that they are also most capable of reducing aggregate output whilst still meeting the material needs of their citizens (Kallis, 2018). Therefore, it is because developed economies exceed their requirements, whether that be measured in their carbon budget, overshoot of domestic resources or otherwise, that they are able to degrow.

Of the challenges I have identified here, climate justice is undoubtedly the one that has received the greatest attention from degrowth scholars who, by all accounts, are acutely aware of how the present inequalities of capitalism might be reflected in the degrowth transition (Schmelzer et al., 2022; Stuart et al., 2020). Such is the way that degrowth has evoked questions of climate justice, then, that scholars have increasingly come to focus on the Global South in debates about the viability of degrowth in these contexts (Rodríguez-Labajos et al., 2019; Nirmal and Rocheleau, 2019) So much so that degrowth has been attributed to the (re)politicisation of climate justice in response to the normalisation of extractivism and inequality engendered by capitalism's ceaseless pursuit of growth. Tornel (2019) referred to this process as a post-political condition within the ecomodernist paradigm wherein the tension between access to, and use of, natural resources had been systemically depoliticised through the promise of a technological future. Nowhere are the failures of ecomodernism's technological future starker, however, than in the Global South, as degrowth demands that climate justice is not simply left to technocratic or individual responsibility but is the site of localised and collective action as a precondition (Perkins, 2019; Akbulut, 2017).

Climate justice is brought to bear in the issues of greenflation and green finance that I have outlined here. Indeed, the greenflationary pressures caused by the demand for the resources that will disproportionately come from the Global South, will not only deprive those same countries located most notably in South America and Africa, but it will also raise the cost of such goods beyond the capacity of its individuals to consume. That is to say little of the inflationary pressures that these countries would experience through the increasingly scarce fossil fuel resources upon which they currently rely also rising in price. Degrowing politics in the Global North may therefore subject the Global South to simultaneous bouts of green and fossilflation, such is the way the decisions made by the developed world will determine the demands for goods and services. The alternative is that climate movements can prevent the expropriation of their natural resources by the developed world as they embark on degrowing their economies.

This might incidentally impede degrowth in absolute terms but ensure the inflation of goods is kept at a relatively stable price across the global economy.

The just implications of finance, not least finance oriented around environmental ends, are becoming an increasingly prominent issue in developing countries as the issue of ‘loss and damage’ has risen in the policy agenda (Mechler & Schinko, 2016; Hug et al., 2013). The lack of green finance in developed countries has already been outlined above, but this is even more profound in the case of the Global South. As shown by the inability of developed countries to provide the \$100bn in climate finance to their developing counterparts. The Global South lacks the financial capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate breakdown (Timperley, 2021). This is brought into even sharper focus by the Global South, which deems that climate justice should take the form of ‘climate reparations’ with those most responsible for climate breakdown, namely the Global North, bearing greater financial cost (Perry, 2021; Tan, 2023). That the Global North reject such an interpretation, for doing so might expose them to inordinate costs due to their disproportionate contributions to climate breakdown, is therefore equally problematic (Verlie, 2021). But other financial instruments could be utilised to aid the degrowth of the Global South, including debt cancellation, refinancing through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank or simply fulfilling prior commitments to climate finance as an alternative to climate reparations. However, the absence of such measures, and the appetite to assemble a policy toolkit, indicates that degrowth might ultimately be constrained by the injustices of contemporary capitalism.

Conclusion

Degrowing modern economies will be a transition that exhibits as many common features across the global economy as it will be a nuanced case study within each national context. So too will it require the reconfiguration of capitalism’s internal mechanics before the machinery of the structure may ultimately be abandoned. As such, I have proposed a principle by which this may be achieved, one that co-opts the central tenet of ecomodernism as a means to facilitate degrowth. What I propose here is not a concession that needs to be made by degrowth scholars, or one that is intended to blunt the analytical precision that continues to be honed in the literature, not least in this handbook. Rather, it is an attempt to offer a site of collaboration between ecomodernism and degrowth, wherein a feature of ecomodernism has been identified as one such mechanism that can be utilised to degrow the economy. Therefore, while degrowth will ultimately be born from the dissolution of ecomodernism, it is important to consider what components of the contemporary structure can be reconfigured and/or deployed anew.

As a matter of course, I have attempted to outline three challenges that stand between the global economy in its present, carbon intensive form and the beginning of

its planned degrowth. I outlined how degrowing the economy, whilst maintaining a reliance on technology, would likely cause inflation of a kind recently linked to green policies. This will undoubtedly be a debate that receives greater attention in coming years, as the consequences of climate breakdown are felt evermore prominently in the agricultural yields, water supplies and supply chains upon which the global economy has come to rely. That is to say little of the conflicts that might also take place during this time, conflicts which may themselves be intensified by profound disruptions caused to the everyday lives of communities, particularly in the Global South, by declining climatic conditions. However, whilst I have only presented the potential for greenflation here, that should not ignore, nor distract, from the fossilflation that already envelopes the global economy. Fossilflation instead presents a profound problematic question of politics across the world where degrowth can offer the answer.

Thereafter, I showed that the issuance of green financial instruments that continue to be employed in various forms will be impacted by the transition to degrowth. It will not only affect the present maturity of green debt, in terms of an increase in demand for such asset classes, but its demand that both more and new debt of this is issued to finance the technology required for degrowth. Furthermore, I argued that whilst the transition to degrowth will require growth in green finance, then so too will it ultimately require the cessation of it. Degrowth will therefore one day need to curtail the growth of green finance, as it will need to curtail other forms of growth. Finally, I argued that both greenflation and green finance will have profound implications for climate justice, as the challenges faced and indeed benefits reaped, will initially be experienced by the Global North. The actions of the developed capitalist countries will thus have direct consequences for the developing world, incurring higher greenflation and more green finance that would be born out of the same countries which already face the impact of climate breakdown. How these challenges will be negotiated remains largely unknown, but what is of little doubt is that the need to bridge the divide between ecomodernism and degrowth has never been more urgent.

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