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**THE ALLURE AND TRAGEDY OF THE DEGROWTH PERSPECTIVE:  
HEGEMONIC STRUGGLES OVER GREEN IMAGINARIES**

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The Allure and Tragedy of the Degrowth Perspective: Hegemonic Struggles over Green  
Imagaries

Küçülme Perspektifinin Cazibesi ve Trajedisi: Yeşil Tahayyüller Üzerine Hegemonik  
Mücadeleler

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## **TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CPE	Cultural Political Economy
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DiEM	Democracy in Europe Movement
EC	European Commission
EGD	European Green Deal
EROEI	Energy Return on Energy Input
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GND	Green New Deal
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GOs	Governmental organizations
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IEA	International Energy Agency
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information technologies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals of United Nations
MNCs	Multi-national corporations
ND	New Deal
NEF	New Economics Foundation (United Kingdom)
NFCs	Non-financial corporations
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (France)
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
RA	Regulation Approach
ROCAD	Réseau des Objecteurs de Croissance pour l'Après-Développement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations
SG	Secretary General
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WB	World Bank Group

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis discusses the degrowth perspective as a green imaginary variant in the context of the Triple Crisis. It compares and contrasts degrowth with other contesting green imaginaries i.e., green capitalism, sustainable development and the Green New Deal (GND) in addressing the Triple Crisis and their hegemonic potential in the current interregnum. In this regard, this thesis primarily problematizes why the degrowth perspective failed to become the hegemonic vision as a growth critical perspective and was absorbed by its alternatives, despite its theoretical influence over the course of several organic and conjunctural crisis moments of the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes. The thesis attributes generations to degrowth perspective, in order to reveal the internal and external shortcomings it has carried along since its emergence.

The thesis will employ Regulation Approach (RA) and Gramscian analysis as the main theoretical framework, along with several methodological instruments from Cultural Political Economy (CPE), to understand the dynamics behind the alternative techno-economic paradigm(s), mode of regulation and mode of societalization in a prospective “green” socioeconomic paradigm. Consequently, it is argued that the risks that the previous growth critical perspectives have experienced are still relevant for contemporary debates over degrowth, as degrowth underestimates the political struggle to become hegemonic and arises as a transformation projection without a valid transition strategy.

*Key words:* Degrowth, Triple Crisis, Green New Deal, Green Economy, Sustainable Development

## ÖZET

Bu tez, küçülme perspektini Üçlü Kriz bağlamında bir yeşil tahayyül varyantı/türevi olarak tartışacaktır. Bunun için, küçülme perspektifi gündemdeki diğer yeşil tahayyüller olan yeşil kapitalizm, sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve Yeşil Yeni Düzen ile, Üçlü Kriz'e cevap verme ve hegemonik olma potansiyelleri ekseninde karşılaştıracaktır. Bu bağlamda bu tez, öncelikli olarak küçülme perspektininin, Fordist ve post-Fordist birikim rejimlerinin çeşitli konjonktürel ve organik krizlerinde büyüme eleştirisi temelli bir perspektif olarak varolmasına rağmen, neden hegemonik bir vizyon olmakta başarısız olduğunu ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma paradigması tarafından soğurulduğunu problematize etmektedir. Bunun akabinde bu çalışma, küçülme perspektifine “jenerasyonlar” atamaktadır. Bu şekilde, perspektifin kendi özelinde ve de haricinde sebeplerden kaynaklanan açmazlarını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu amaçla, ana teorik çerçeve olarak Düzenleme Okulu ve Gramsci'ci analizi kullanmakta ve böylelikle olası bir “yeşil” sosyoekonomik paradigma içerisindeki tekno-ekonomik paradigmayı, düzenleme araçlarını ve toplumsallaştırma araçlarını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, metodolojik çerçeve olarak Kültürel Politik Ekonomi geleneğinin çeşitli teorik araçlarını da, teorik çerçeveye ek olarak yer verecektir. Sonuç olarak, geçmiş büyüme eleştirisi eksenli perspektiflerin hegemonik olamamasına sebep olan risklerin, günümüz küçülme perspektifi için tekrar geçerli olduğunu, çünkü küçülmecilerin hegemonya mücadelesinin politik ayağını azımsayarak geçerli bir geçiş stratejisinden yoksun bir dönüşüm projeksiyonu olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

*Anahtar kelimeler:* Küçülme, Üçlü Kriz, Yeşil Yeni Düzen, Yeşil Ekonomi, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma

## INTRODUCTION

The world economies were hit with the US-originated Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008, where the finance-oriented accumulation regime of the neoliberal socioeconomic paradigm was toppled by the burst of mortgage bubble. In the aftermath of the crisis, a comprehensive restructuring became imperative for the afflicted neoliberal regime. However, the failure of accomplishing such restructuring had important socio-political repercussions. These repercussions incarnated a series of grassroots movements around the world, most prominently the Occupy Wall Street in 2011 (also the Arab Spring in 2010), and were coupled with numerous spontaneous, local, and partial forms of objection from organized and disorganized labour groups at the global scale. These events eventually took the form of a legitimation crisis and formed a two-folded crisis with the accumulation crisis of the GFC. Subsequently, this ‘double crisis’ articulated with an exacerbated ecological and climate crisis, which showed itself primarily in rising atmospheric temperatures as a result of increasing carbon emissions and formed the Triple Crisis.

These three crisis pillars – accumulation, legitimation and ecological – form what we call the Triple Crisis (Mueller and Passadakis, 2010; Lipietz, 2013), that is still relevant in the existing conjuncture. In the midst of this Triple Crisis, several socioeconomic imaginaries came to being with “green” agendas, aiming to address this multidimensional crisis simultaneously, as each pillar in fact interrelated in nature. These green imaginaries are namely the green capitalism (green economy), the social liberal/democrat Green New Deals (GNDs)<sup>1</sup> and the degrowth perspective, which are currently in a contentious competition to become the *retained imaginary* (Jessop, 2012) amongst others. Although these imaginaries have differences among each other on their projections for a green(ing) order; both green capitalism and the social-liberal(democrat) GNDs emerge as green accumulation regimes. On the contrary, the degrowth perspective inherently diverges from the other two imaginaries with its holistic critique of growth economics and growth imaginaries and its deep connections with grassroots anti-globalization movements.

The degrowth perspective prevails in the political and academic scenes since the crisis of Fordism in 1970s. Usually associated with the famous *Limits to Growth* report of the Club of Rome in 1972, degrowth in fact has far-reaching roots in various heterodox economics

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<sup>1</sup> As we will discuss in Chapter 3, we have identified certain variations of the GND proposals in our contextualization. Thus, we use the ‘GND’ in plural here and will do so hereafter.

traditions and biophysics and represents the most recent and comprehensive version of past growth critical perspectives. Originated from the works of a former mathematician and “economic-myths buster” Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (Levallois, 2010), growth critical perspectives have pioneered and influenced many disciplines like ecological economics and political ecology over the past fifty years. In the meantime, they have articulated with various critical currents i.e., anti-utilitarianism and post-developmentalism, and extended the scope of their main argument on the impossibility of “the pursuit of infinite economic growth in a finite planet”. This growth criticism that predominantly focused on the ‘biophysical limits’ aspect, then, included a criticism of *growth imaginaries*<sup>2</sup>, which represent the ideological manifestations that complement the workings of the existing economic paradigm at the societal level (Latouche, 2009; Demaria et al., 2013; Parrique, 2019). However, the main *problematique*<sup>3</sup> of the growth critical perspectives have been continuously disrupted and absorbed by several hegemonic actors and their interrelated discourses, most prominently by the sustainable development paradigm that came to being under the neoliberal socioeconomic order.

Although the relevancy of their claims, the growth critical perspectives could only remotely influence the main discourse of the past interregnum<sup>4</sup>, that marked the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist accumulation regime. Consequently, they were dragged into a period of dormancy from 1980s onwards until their revival in the late millennium. A similar interregnum is currently prevailing in the post-GFC Triple Crisis conjuncture, which is recently accelerated with the global Covid-19 pandemic. In this picture, the revived and redefined degrowth perspective aims to challenge the growth-based “recovery and reform” narrative of other contesting green imaginaries. Yet, it still remains as a marginal approach for the most part, and struggles to penetrate to the mainstream political discussions. In this context, this thesis aims to assess the reasons behind the failure of degrowth perspective on becoming a hegemonic vision retrospectively, and to shed light to its current position and potential as a challenger imaginary. In sum, the main question of this thesis asks why the degrowth perspective could

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<sup>2</sup> To give a hint of the concept, some of the growth imaginaries can be exemplified as productivism, modernism, developmentalism, consumerism and so on.

<sup>3</sup> The word *problematique* is a deliberate choice here, in reference to the definition of the Club of Rome regarding their primary vision and conceptualization of the global problems. For a detailed explanation; see Chapter 2, section 2.1.

<sup>4</sup> This term is adopted from the Gramscian framework that refers to the ‘vacant seat’ period in a transition process from one hegemonic paradigm to the prospective, yet indistinct, one. The contemporary framework of this concept we adopt here in the context of Triple Crisis is used by Candeias (2012).

not be *the* hegemonic vision despite its resilience and wide-ranging influence in academic and activist circles over the years and was marginalized by hegemonic actors in this process.

To answer this question, the thesis will discuss the degrowth perspective by attributing it “generations” since the early 1970s until its revival after the 2008 GFC. The evolution of the degrowth literature will be analysed through the prominent actors and discourses in different crisis moments. To do so, the master periodization and the lenses of the Regulation Approach (RA) will be employed<sup>5</sup> as the main theoretical framework. The RA fundamentally tries to understand the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism<sup>6</sup> by looking at the continuities and discontinuities in periods of accumulation and expansion vs. ruptures and restructuring (Aglietta, 1976; Boyer, 1996). The position of RA in the critical political economy tradition, e.g., its contextualization of the capitalist crises, its conceptual and temporal diversity and its ability to be relevant emerging crisis moments perfectly fits the main problematic of this thesis. The following chapters will employ the main conceptual tools of the RA i.e., techno-economic paradigm(s), mode of regulation and mode of societalization to understand the growth/rupture/restructuring cycle(s). The reflection of Triple Crisis over alternative imaginaries will be tackled with these tools as well. The theoretical framework will be accompanied by several tools and concepts from Gramscian approach on hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), Cultural Political Economy (CPE) tradition (specifically critical semiosis analysis) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the methodological framework (Jessop, 2013; Sum, 2005). These traditions and methodological tools are especially useful as the RA has strong ties with these approaches, thus they serve as compatible instruments to accompany our main contextualization.

Chapter 1 will identify the key features of the labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization in the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes, as well as their respective crises. Subsequently, the chapter will proceed into their crises first in the 1970s and after that in the late millennium. The chapter will primarily discuss the moments of conjunctural (occasional and sudden) and organic (relatively permanent) crises, since the 1970s crisis of Fordism and rupture with first generation growth criticism and recent GFC and rupture with second generation degrowth, to identify the manifestation of these organic and conjunctural

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<sup>5</sup> Our framework will mostly be based on the second-generation RA analysis (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p.58).

<sup>6</sup> Thus, the RA scholars reject the neoclassical reading of capitalism as a “general and transhistorical economic conduct” and oppose the naturalization of periods of capitalist reproduction and expansion as a consequence of a pursuit of rational economic behaviour (Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 4).

crisis moments in the current atmosphere. This chapter will provide the main periodization that we will map the generations of degrowth in Chapter 2, namely why first generation growth criticism and the famous *Limits to Growth* report has emerged in the crisis of 1970s and was relevant and resilient enough to be revived as the second generation degrowth today. We will also introduce the New Deal (ND) policy framework and Keynesian regulation, that forms the basis of the ‘virtuous cycle’ that will bring about the GND variations as of late millennium.

Chapter 2 will introduce and discuss the degrowth alternative and will attribute generations to the degrowth literature. The chapter will unfold the historical evolution of degrowth from a periodization standing point, and will scrutinize not only conjunctural events and dynamics, but also the role of transnational networks, mainstream actors and their power struggles on determining the hegemonic discourse. To do so, it will begin with the emergence of the growth criticism under the Club of Rome in the late 1960s, which corresponds to its first generation, and present its earliest philosophical and theoretical inspirations from biophysics and economy. Then the “dormant phase” of the growth criticism throughout the 1980s until the end of early millennium will be presented, where most of the academia and political arena has been dominated by the “sustainable development” discourse. Finally, the reasons behind the revival of degrowth in 2008 after the GFC will be discussed, with its extended and more comprehensive framework as it corresponds to the second generation of the perspective. In doing so, we will be able to identify theoretical, discursive and strategic continuities and discontinuities among generations of degrowth which will shed light for our assessments in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 will compare the degrowth perspective with other contemporary green imaginaries i.e., green capitalist GNDs and social-liberal GNDs. The aim here will be to decipher the promised recovery strategies for the Triple Crisis, their projected political economic configurations and the gist of their proposals to become the hegemonic vision. The chapter will apply the CPE’s “variation-selection-retention conceptualization” (Jessop, 2012), to see the varieties within each green imaginary *variation*, their *selective* discourses and strategies, and eventually their capacity to become the *retained imaginary* in the current interregnum.

In conclusion, the thesis will argue the degrowth perspective’s “tragic” inability to become the hegemonic vision, by providing insights for the prospects that awaits each imaginary. The periodization it brings about presents its own approach by the way it conceptualizes each generation, the phases it defines under them and also the theoretical/conceptual instruments it

uses to frame them. Moreover, this thesis also enriches the degrowth reading through the framework of the RA and CPE, which has been referenced in the literature, but not employed as the main theoretical framework so far. The employment of these approaches is important because as we will specifically see in Chapter 3, this framework illuminates certain parts where degrowth lacks explaining i.e., the mode of regulation under degrowth, the role of the state and transition strategies that will be utterly needed as we are now in an interregnum of paradigmatic change. In addition, the comparative study of degrowth in tandem with other green capitalist imaginaries is an essential analysis to be tackled right now, in the face of the intensification of the Triple Crisis with the current coronavirus pandemic and the election of Biden administration which advocates for the social-liberal GND. These developments will potentially bring about new trajectories for degrowth as well as new risks for it to be hijacked again, if the “lessons from its past” are disregarded. In this regard, this thesis also contributes to the International Political Economy literature with regards to its assessments on the (re)structuring of the prospective international environmental regulation regime.

## CHAPTER 1

### FORDISM, POST-FORDISM AND THEIR AFFILIATED CRISES

This chapter will tackle the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes and their crises under the framework of the Regulation Approach (RA). It will also introduce the notion of *Triple Crisis* and clarify the dynamics that brought about the green imaginaries (degrowth, green capitalism, Green New Deal) that will be discussed in the later chapters. By doing so, the modifications and reforms that each green imaginaries address to in their crisis responses will be explicated. By doing so, the inherent and conjunctural faces of the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes and their crises can be seen more visibly with this chapter. Moreover, this chapter will represent an introductory lens for theoretical background and units of analyses that will be employed throughout the thesis.

We will first begin with an overview of the Regulation Approach, to acquaint the reader with out theoretical instruments and analytical goggles. Later, the main characteristics of the Fordist accumulation regime and its crisis components will be discussed i.e., techno-economic paradigm and labour process (under accumulation regime), mode of regulation and mode of societalization. Here, we will specifically tackle the discussions with regards to the fossil energy regime and the roots of the environmental activism, since these has been influential in the post-Fordist era as well. Then, the post-Fordism will be unfolded with the same elements with a special attention on financialization, and globalization will be paid due to their comprehensive role not just as an accumulation strategy or an accompanying mode of societalization, but also as determining concepts with regards to the fossil regime and the intensification of the *Triple Crisis*. In this regard, the crisis reading of the post-Fordist era will be specifically made under the three aspects of the *Triple Crisis*. Lastly, it will conclude with an overall assessment of the chapter and a transition to the Chapter 2 will be presented.

#### 1.1.THE REGULATION APPROACH

Regulation Approach (RA) was coined in the mid-1970s by the Parisian scholars, under the critical political economy tradition, to accentuate the role of extra-economic elements in the course of capitalist development. Despite enriched with various schools in addition to the Parisians and generations it divided into in later decades, all RA scholars accept that all economic and extra-economic institutions are crucially influential as transformative actors, as well as the undeniable part that social action plays. In this regard, they argue that social agency is utterly determinant in both the pattern of periods of capitalist expansion and periods of its

crises and concomitant restructuring. Frankly, they reject the orthodox interpretation of the crises as periods of malfunction that stems from irrational behaviour and/or information asymmetries that result with market failures<sup>7</sup>, and argue that crises in fact occur as a result of the incompatibilities between institutions and social agents that “regulate” and reconcile the mechanisms that capital accumulation is realized. Hence, uninterrupted and stable capital accumulation is impossible since such (periods of) incompatibilities are inevitable in capitalism due to the inherent conflict between capitalist mode of production and class struggle.

With regards to this framework, the RA developed three main units of analysis as mentioned above, being; accumulation regime, mode of regulation and mode of societalization. An *accumulation regime* is composed of all strategies and mechanisms that determine the mode of production, labour process, organization of capital and labour and the capital-labour relations. It constantly aims to stabilize the capital accumulation which it can maintain for a period time until the inherent crisis tendencies exacerbate. In this thesis, we will specifically focus on the *labour process* (and later the associated *techno-economic paradigm*) of accumulation regimes. The *mode of regulation* refers to all the institutional, structural, normative and social formations that aims to regulate, maintain and realize the dominant accumulation strategy through various mediatory actions and actors (Lipietz, 1988). These actions and actors include wage relations, form of enterprise, form of money (also type of capital), the state and the international regime (Boyer, 1990; Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 42). Here, this thesis will primarily look at the state and wage relations primarily, whilst other elements will be discussed more latently. Lastly, the *mode of societalization* performs as the glue that integrates the accumulation regime and the mode of regulation at the societal level; by naturalizing the processes of accumulation, reconciling the capital-labour tensions, maintaining social cohesion through integration with the institutional forms and practices, and creating new norms and practices that are compatible with this configuration (Jessop, 1994). Hence it involves hegemonic processes that aims to create consent to maintain the capital accumulation and the existing class structure (Gramsci, 1971).

Speaking of Gramsci, RA theorists are heavily influenced from the works of Antonio Gramsci on the contextualization of the above-mentioned units of analyses that they developed. The

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<sup>7</sup> “...as a sort of absurdity [insofar as] a crisis represents the difference between theory and reality in the economy in question, a result of the irrationality of consumers and workers (victims of monetary illusion, for example), inadequate information, or the blockage of market mechanisms by monopolies, labour unions, or interest groups that introduce rigidities leading to inflation and unemployment.” (Boyer, 1990).

Gramscian framework on Fordism and “American way of life” has been ingrained in the RA thought quite significantly. Insomuch that, certain RA figures have complained from the perception towards RA as solely a “study of Fordism” because of this strong fusion (Jessop 1990; Boyer and Saillard 2001). Furthermore, the RA offers an “integral economic analysis”, and take the economy and the state “in their inclusive sense” (ibid). Hence, RA scholars draw on Gramsci’s analysis, through “accumulation regime and mode of regulation” inclusive dynamics, that can be “studied in terms of the ‘the self-valorisation of capital in and through regulation’” (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p.7).

## **1.2.FORDISM AND KEYNESIANISM**

The Fordist labour process aims for an “uninterrupted mass production” and was based on technical (and social) division of labour that is performed at the Taylorist lines of production by de-skilled workers. It also included a wider range of technical personnel from technicians and engineers to designers and an extensive departmentisation - and a spatial separation from where the labour is actually performed – of the managerial segment where the control over accumulation is ensured at all stages from production to marketing (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p. 59). Moreover, on the hand, to make sure that the Fordist growth and productivity was not disrupted, all other firms and sectors in the economy ended up having to (re)organize themselves to fit with the dynamics and needs of mass production. On the one hand, it was needed to be accompanied by mass consumption. Concomitantly, the *accumulation regime* was shaped based on the ideal that; on the one side the “virtuous cycle of mass production and consumption” was never interrupted, but complemented by all other sectors (i.e., from steel industry for the provision of raw materials to services sector for retailing and marketing). On the other hand, both the investments for the further mechanization and the consumption of the waged-workers were to match with the increases in productivity to secure this cycle (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p. 60).

This was accompanied by a compatible mode of regulation that prioritized sustaining mass demand in order to “keep the economy going”. In that sense, the Fordist mode of regulation was designed under the principles of the Keynesian welfare state; in which the non-wage earners like the retirees, disabled and unemployed were provided with pensions and the wage-earners were insured with various social security mechanisms. The reasoning behind this was to include every segment of the society to the economic activity, with aiming either full

employment or a level of fixed income. Thus, *the state* under the Fordist mode of regulation functioned as a “demand guarantor” in this period. In terms of the *wage relation*, the predominant labour force was formed under de-skilled workers, who worked in large production plants or firms. Their wage was determined both by the level of productivity and was also secured by the active presence of the labour unions. The dominance of unionized labour sadly remained unique to this period, which had a significant role for safeguarding the rising wages.

Nevertheless, the onset of the Keynesian ideals dated back to the late 1930s, with the introduction of the “New Deal” policies in attempt to revive the US economy in the aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression. In that context, the reason behind the distrust towards the market mechanism can be better seen. The New Deal (ND) was based on the motto of “relief, recovery and reform”, thus the regulatory institutions in the Fordist Golden Age were already established or reformed by that time and was in effect for about a decade. In this regard, the state-led mass infrastructure projects became pivotal instruments to curb unemployment and boost spill-over effect in production. Several acts and policy programmes were also taken into action to provide and secure employment, and to relieve poverty and homelessness under the ND<sup>8</sup>. One of the most important of these was the Glass-Steagall Act, that came to life in 1933 (which was evicted in 1999 for a greater financial expansion in the millennium) for a more conservative regulation of finance and the separation of investment and commercial banking to prevent speculation which devastated the economy. The ND vision was also employed in the international regulation through Marshall Plan and several other aid programmes for the recovery of the war-hit Europe and other impacted economies, exporting the Keynesian political economic framework in the Atlantic<sup>9</sup> (Holm, 2016).

These principles brought about a new social normative framework and a mode of societalization for the organization of the daily life and reformulated the imaginaries<sup>10</sup> of the

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<sup>8</sup> National Labour Relations Act and the Social Security Act of 1935, the Fair Labour Act of 1938, restructuring of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the formation of the US Housing Action and Farm Security Administration to address homelessness and problems in agriculture (Aşıcı & Bünül, 2012)

<sup>9</sup> The framework of the ND policies is especially worth mentioning here, given its influence on the development of the Green New Deal (GND), in response to the Triple Crisis and Global Financial Crisis (GFC), will be discussed widely in the following chapters.

<sup>10</sup> “...an imaginary is a semiotic ensemble (without tightly defined boundaries) that frames individual subjects’ lived experience of an inordinately complex world and/or guides collective calculation about that world. There are many such imaginaries, and they are involved in complex and tangled relations at different sites and scales of action” (Jessop, 2013)

individuals. Since mass consumption was an indispensable part of the “virtuous cycle” of the accumulation regime, consumerism was an essential idea to be embraced. Despite the overall takeover of the daily consumption by the market was to happen more extensively in the post-Fordist era, the key aspects of the consumption habits were rooted in this period. Cars were undeniably the official “driving force” of the Fordist economy, therefore the demand for them was supposed to be extended in the market. As the new work organization created a separation from and distance between the place of work and place of residence, “driving to work” was an essential part of the day. This was accompanied by the emergence of new suburban neighbourhoods – which was also important for further sectoral division within the economy (like steel, cement etc.) and employing more people in a labour-dense sector like construction – with the reinforcement of house ownership – through bank credits mostly – for a wider range of income groups. This brought about a standardisation of the houses along with cars and many other products, where prefabrication become more widespread and cheapened the building costs (Koch, 2011). Home and car ownership became a social status among people, along with having a variety of durable goods (the “ideological commodities” as attributed by Jessop) in the house and being able to shop for previously densely traditionally-produced consumption goods from the market (ibid). This was also an important gap that was covered from the pre-Fordist period, where “...workers were involved in capitalism primarily as producers and their consumption needs were mainly met through petty commodity and/or subsistence channels.” (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p. 63). Another important feature of the Fordist mode of societalization was its rather successful implementation in not just the mainland US but over most of Western Europe and also Japan – despite all had their own version of Fordist experiences on all levels of labour process, accumulation regime and mode of regulation. This outstretched infusion of the “American way of life” was achieved primarily through recovery plans and aids in war-hit Europe and throughout Japan. Before closing this section, it is important here to mention that the mode of societalization in Fordism and also in post-Fordism is tackled primarily with a focus to consumerism and its bring abouts, since it holds a specific importance on the interpretation of the exacerbation of the ecological crisis in this study. Hence, this contextualization is preferred to align with the focus in the upcoming chapters, as consumerism will be one of the key aspects for the comparison between degrowth and other two alternatives.

### **1.2.1. Fordism, natural capital and the emergence of the (fossil) energy regime**

The Fordist accumulation regime and primarily its productivity-based growth, was possible with an intense reliance on energy resources before anything and the energy demand

significantly increased. But in fact, the technological innovatory and productive success of the US that paved the way for the know-how and practical experience in Fordism was rooted in the fact that it had vast mineral resources and more importantly, crude oil reserves. Between 1879 to 1940, the US was a significant natural resources exporter, especially compared to the imports in the same field. (Koch, 2011, p. 78). However, this resource abundance was already beginning to be exhausted – though not completely – when the Fordism was at its heyday. Within the decades between 1920s to 1950s, the US lost its position as a net exporter and increasingly became an importer. However, this was not only because of the US but also because the global potential for both resource extraction and markets for trade were expanding in the same period. As the resource demand in the American mainland and its other Fordist Western European-counterparts have risen, and American Fordism evolved into Atlantic Fordism, a new energy regime came into being with the need to feed the Fordist mode of production. Moreover, this energy regime also began to define a new type of dependence relation between “the resource-demanding centre” and “the resource-provider periphery”. This novel international division of labour created “extraction societies” (Koch, 2011, p. 79), where the developing countries had to structurally develop at the extend of and based on the needs of the industrialized Fordist countries. As a result, these countries left excluded from both the Fordist mode of societalization and the socioeconomic growth and was only articulated in the Fordist accumulation regime as raw material exporters. Therefore, the Fordist accumulation regime brought about its own (fossil) energy regime and an international division of labour along with it (Koch, 2011, p. 79).

Moreover, this also created a renewed approach towards the nature, given its fundamental reliance on more energy and resources to feed its mode of production. Nature become more and more excluded from the daily life and from the imaginaries of the people as an embedded part of their livelihood, and solely turned into a source of resource extraction and “idle lands” to be commodified as a fuel and means to the productive activity. Natural landscapes turned into a “place to escape” for leisure and hobby activities, where the “home” became the suburban towns and highly urbanized city centres. Despite this shift was taking place gradually since the Industrial Revolution, the significant decrease in the rural population and the industrialization of the agriculture in this period changed the understanding towards more robustly; and for a wider range of people, both at the national and international scale within the countries who experienced Fordist mode of production, regulation and societalization. This showed itself both

in the levels of air and water pollution in the “further industrializing countries” under Fordism – primarily the US, most of Western and parts of Northern Europe.

Therefore, the late-1960s and the 1970s have witnessed a rising environmental activism, as both grassroots movements at the national scale and also at the international scale. The most significant of them was the first Earth Day on 22 April 1970 in the US, as a result of decades long grassroots efforts for air, water and land pollution.<sup>11</sup> Concomitantly, the Clean Air Act passed at the US Congress in the same year, and followed by the Clean Water Act in 1972.<sup>12</sup> Even though it will be extensively dealt with in the proceeding chapters, here it is worth mentioning the emergence and the importance of the Club of Rome movement in these developments, as it both co-existed and also co-created them in the 1970s. The Club of Rome has initially come into being in 1968 as an international group of decision-makers on the environmental policy, thus had both academic and political origins. From then on, the Club had wide ranging impacts on the future of the scope and concerns of environmental science and environmental activism. Their ground-breaking work *Limits to Growth* was published in 1972 and brought about one of the very early and formed critiques towards economic growth. It claims that neither the infinite pursuit of growth nor the Westernization of the consumption norms at the global scale is feasible, due to the finiteness of the fossil energy reserves, primarily crude oil (Meadows et al., 1972). Later, this initial claim on fossil energy scantness lost its primacy mostly, due to the technological developments and increased capability on fossil extractions in the upcoming years. So, the concern and emphasis were shifted towards issues like global warming and climate change in the following decades. However, the importance of this original framework on limited energy resources in the critique of growth-based paradigm(s) lies at the heart of disciplines like ecological economics and also in international environmental policy-making, namely the sustainable development phenomena, which will be elaborated in detail in the upcoming chapters (Levallois, 2010; Koch, 2011, p. 82; Schmelzer, 2017).

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<sup>11</sup> From, *I. Origins of the Environmental Movement · Exhibit · Give Earth a Chance: Environmental Activism in Michigan*. (2020). Give Earth A Chance Environmental Activism in Michigan.

[http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/environmentalism/exhibits/show/main\\_exhibit/origins](http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/environmentalism/exhibits/show/main_exhibit/origins)

<sup>12</sup> From, *A Timeline of Key Events - The Environmental Movement*. (n.d.). The Environmental Movement. Retrieved October 2020, from <https://sites.google.com/site/thewesterngreen/publications>

### 1.2.2. The infamous “oil shocks” and the crisis of Fordism and Keynesianism

This is the point where the narration of the crisis of Fordism gets tricky. From a neoclassical standpoint, the crisis of Fordism can be interpreted as a one that was triggered by the oil shocks and was deemed as a result of the “inflexible” nature of Fordist labour process and regulation to respond crises. However, for the theoretical framework of the RA that this thesis employs, these events were only the torches for the inherent crisis tendencies of the Fordist (and all capitalist – if such divergence can be made in the first place) mode of production and accumulation regime to be more apparent. Therefore, this section will first begin with the conjunctural crisis reading and then present the RA perspective on it, to show how the conjunctural face of the crisis was actually solely the reflection of the deeper systemic crisis tendencies.

To begin with, in 1973, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries were using more than the 60% of total energy supply worldwide, whilst the (significantly more populated) rest of the world<sup>13</sup> used less than 25% of the same total (IEA, 2008). Moreover, the share of fossil fuels was 86.6%, oil alone consisting of the 46.1% of the world’s total energy consumption. Meanwhile, the nuclear power, renewables and others generated only of 5.9% in the consumption of OECD countries in the same year. Hence, even from this picture it is easy to derive the conclusion that Fordism was only possible and inherently depended on a perpetual consumption of fossil fuels (Koch, 2011, p. 82).

This also makes apparent that the number of population tells little in terms of *how much* (and what type of) energy is needed for consumption, compare to the difference of *where* the population resides make. In the years between 1950-1973 – which also mark the summit of Fordist consumption and accumulation – per capita carbon emissions in all countries rose to 4.08 tonnes from 2.32, almost doubling in just two decades. For the same period, the change in the main Fordist countries was even more drastic, where carbon emissions reached 12.19 tonnes per capita. Such display was also eminent on the levels of carbon emissions that these countries contributed to in the same period. On the one hand, the carbon emissions of the OECD increased significantly throughout the 1960s –on average 316.48 million tone – and in the year 1970 peaked the historic high of 660.87 million tonnes, almost three-fold of the average in the

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<sup>13</sup> Africa, Latin America, Asia (without China), China, Non-OECD Europe, Middle East and World Marine Bunkers (IEA, 2008).

previous decade. On the other hand, all of non-OECD emitted approximately 165.13 million tonnes on average in the 1960s.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, more a country was interacted and articulated with Fordism, more its role in environmental degradation was apparent. Thus, the statistics of the OECD vs non-OECD show that in (and since) the 1960s<sup>15</sup> that the impact of Fordism was way more determinant on the use of energy than to any other variable, including population as one of the key arguments. This debate is also important for both the argumentation that this thesis will be interested in the upcoming chapters, and for the analysis of the crisis of Fordism in this current section.

In 1960, Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded by five primary oil-exporter countries in the Middle East and Latin America<sup>16</sup>. One of the main goals and functions of the organization was to prevent massive price fluctuations with working towards a stabilized price for oil. This was well-serving for both the international markets and for the oil-exporting periphery countries, ensuring them a more stable real income from oil revenues. However, from the very beginning, they also expressed their displeasure with feeding Atlantic Fordism just as cheap oil exporters and being excluded from other aspects of Fordist growth. This latent tension then evolved into a major crisis, with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the support of the US for Israel. Significantly loathed with this political move, the member countries issued an embargo for oil exports to the US, which was a turning point for both the centre-periphery relations and more importantly as a rather external challenge to the Fordism. This first oil shock was followed by a second one 6 years later, with the Iranian Revolution in the 1979 (Koch, 2011, p. 82). As a result, the (nominal) price of a barrel of oil three-folded from \$4.75 in 1973 to \$ \$12.21 in 1975, and then continued to increase where in 1979 reached up to \$25.10 and peaked with \$37.42 in 1980.<sup>17</sup> The invasion of Iraq by Iran also caused the production of oil to stop nearly altogether in the respected countries, which obviously affected more than just the prices. Consequently, the centre countries of the Atlantic Fordism fell into a cycle of steady increase of inflation and unemployment, known as “the

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<sup>14</sup> Ritchie, H., & Roser, M. (2020). CO2 emissions, Year-on-year change in global CO2 emissions. Retrieved October 28, 2020, from <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions>

<sup>15</sup> The choice of the decade is due to start of the available data and is also useful given the stage of consolidation of Fordism.

<sup>16</sup> Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela; later joined by Qatar (1961), Indonesia (1962), Libya (1962), the United Arab Emirates (1967), Algeria (1969), Nigeria (1971), Ecuador (1973), Gabon (1975), Angola (2007), Equatorial Guinea (2017) and Congo (2018) (OPEC, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup> Historical Crude Oil Prices (Table). (2020, April 08). Retrieved from, Historical Crude Oil Prices (Table). (2021, April 1). InflationData.Com. <https://inflationdata.com/articles/inflation-adjusted-prices/historical-crude-oil-prices-table/>

Great Stagflation”, of the 1973-1979. This followed by a series of crises in the developing world, who articulated to the Fordist accumulation regime through import-substitution mostly, which occurred the need for a rapid change in all aspects of the Fordist labour process, mode of production, accumulation regime, mode of regulation and mode of societalization almost inevitable.

Now it is time to go back to the RA analysis of the crisis. The trademark Fordist labour process was designed on the principle of fragmenting tasks into tiny individual parts to extract the skill component out of the work. This enabled Fordism to create a mass army of unskilled labour and a smaller section of skilled labour who included managers and engineers to supervise the unskilled (also known as a “dual labour”).<sup>18</sup> In addition, with mass production and extreme standardization, it undermined the craft work in any field of mechanization almost completely, which was a type of labour that is antagonistic to all Fordist settings. In this regard, it cannot be said that the Fordist attempts towards exchanging labour power with mechanization and undermining the bargaining power of the skilled labour is unique to Fordism. This is an inherent motive for capitalism before anything else, and Fordism’s – temporary but longer – period of success comes from its ability to come up with (better) a mode of societalization compatible with this labour organization.

However, this had both technical and social limits. For the first part, the over-standardization of the Model T car saturated the demand in the domestic (American) market and variations in design was not achievable in the Fordist production. Even if this was to be overcome, the price of the design car was made it only for the luxury consumption. The same was also relevant for the durable goods like home appliances, where the domestic market saturated at some point for “new dishwashers”. For the latter, the settled production methods based on standardization locked innovations, which means that the labour force could not be de-skilled further, and they will eventually end up with an increasing level of bargaining power. Consequently, throughout the 1960s; as the profits based on productivities decreased and the alienation of the de-skilled labour increased, workers’ protests clogged the productivity growth even further. This was more apparent in the European case. Despite the Americanisation was indeed a valid phenomenon, each country had experienced their own version of Fordisms due to their individual national conditions. This was primarily apparent in the organization of the labour force. The US had the opportunity to impose a more intensified pressure and isolation on its

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<sup>18</sup> Clarke, S. (1990). Crisis of Fordism or Crisis of Capitalism? *Telos*, 71-98.  
<http://homepages.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/Publications.html>

unskilled workers, who were largely composed of immigrants, and was also able to monitor and manipulate the union's activities. Whereas Europe – namely Britain – had to comply with the demands of the skilled workers at a larger rate than the US, which resulted with different workings class compositions and organizations in each country (Clarke, 1990, p. 16).

The reflections of the stalemate in productivity, demand and labour organization showed themselves in the international economy regulation as well. As the American domestic saturation in production and demand came rather earlier, the European and Japanese took over the pioneering role in exports. In relation, as the American investments also shifted abroad, the dollar became scarcer in the US reserves. This occurred deficits in the balance of payments and jeopardized the dollars position in the gold standard; and eventually in 1970s dollar devalued significantly. Hence, the US retreated from the gold standard in 1971 and consequently the Bretton Woods<sup>19</sup> system came to an end soon after.

Therefore, these prevented the “standardization of the Fordist experiences”, and despite national circumstances mattered, the inherent gridlock in the productivity growth and in its regulatory and social structures in every country was originating from the inherent limits of Fordist but more so capitalist mode of production. The crisis of Fordism, therefore, might have been triggered by certain conjunctural events like the oil shocks, yet the crisis was *a priori* inherent and embedded in it. Moreover, from this point on, the three pillars of the *Triple Crisis* can be observed as they are co-evolved; with the accumulation crisis of the Fordist standardized production and labour process, legitimacy crisis of the labour organization, Keynesianism and the Bretton Woods system and the ecological crisis that has erupted with the increased use and dependence on fossil fuels and environmental pollution. Nevertheless, we will see that these three crises will resurface in a more matured manner in post-Fordism, hence the crisis reading of the post-Fordism will additionally employ a specific reading on the elements of the *Triple Crisis*.

Thus, in the next section, we will see how the post-Fordist labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization aimed to overcome these problems in Fordism. Yet, the post-Fordist re-structuring will not be able to overcome the inherent crisis tendency within capitalism anyways but will only so-to-say “postpone it” for just another 30 years.

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<sup>19</sup> Bretton Woods (BW): The international monetary system that was formed by 44 countries and relevant in the years between 1944-1971, that led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). The signatory countries fixed their currency (though adjustable) to the US dollar, whilst the dollar was fixed to one ounce of gold at 35\$ (Ghizoni, n.d.).

### 1.3. POST-FORDISM AND THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM

After it was pretty much agreed that there *is* a crisis of Fordist accumulation regime, and that it is not a conjunctural one solely; a systemic change for all of the labour process under accumulation regime, mode of regulation and mode of societalization became evident. The first halting factor of the Fordism that needed to be got over was the extensive standardization within the production process and the “inflexibility” it brought about. Therefore, the post-Fordist labour process was developed based on the principle of a flexible mechanization for a flexible production process, and an almost equally flexible labour to execute and survey it (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p. 77). Accordingly, compare to the predominance of the de-skilled workforce in Fordism, post-Fordist labour was characterized on a more intensive duality on the polyvalent workforce vs unskilled workforce. The focus on mass production was shifted to diversified/design-induced mass consumption goods, abandoning most of the reliance standardized goods, durables and cars. In addition, the technical infrastructure for this mode of production was the increasingly popular information and communication technologies (ICTs) and microelectronics, which provided the flexibility that is aspired at various levels. The advancements in the tech industry also re-defined concepts like intellectual property rights and copyrights, as these became profitable “commodities” to be developed and sold in a market where the competition was now heavily based on innovation and design. Hence, with the incorporation of these (micro)technologies both the spatial and temporal scope of production and job division have extended. The labour organization that this spatial and temporal enhancement brought about also reflected as a next phase in the international division of labour. In this new formation, skill-intensive parts of the work like engineering, design, marketing, consultancy etc. took place in the centre; whilst the labour-intensive production parts performed in the periphery. Thus, the most cumbersome and “Taylorist” part of production could be exported abroad; which served partially as a soothing mechanism for the alienation of the unskilled workers in the centre and more importantly, as a way of reducing labour costs and intensifying working conditions in the periphery. This was achieved through the flexible contracts of short-term and part-time working in both the centre and periphery, despite the standardized and rigid contracts of the Fordist period.

The corresponding mode of regulation that formed these contracts and organized *wage relations* around these principles was therefore a one that altered the collective bargaining methods as well. Compare to the productivity-growth based forming of wages in Fordism; wages were now largely determined based on the individual performances of the workers

(Demirovic, 2009). These were measured by various indexes designed by the managerial departments of the companies, that workers continuously aimed to catch up with and fulfil. This type of wage determination was possible with the undermining of the primary dependence on the de-skilled workers, in which post-Fordism decomposed into the polyvalent and the unskilled labour force; so that the rather homogenous demands of the mass worker and their collective bargaining power could be hindered.

Continuing with the mode of regulation, as of early 1980s, *the state* in the post-Fordist era was shaped around the principles of *neoliberalism* (Harvey, 2009), abandoning the Keynesian economic and social policy strategies by large. This meant that the state would retrieve from its “welfare state responsibilities” transfer most of these services – i.e., education, healthcare, care services and provision and construction of public utilities – to the market, through a massive wave of *privatization* (Harvey, 2007). In this regard, the neoliberal state also abstained from some other key Keynesian microeconomic targets like striving for full employment and be the watchguard of demand-side of the production to ensure that the supply will never be left unmet by a level of demand. Now, the employment was left to the dynamics of the (job)market, as the state no longer considered providing employment as one of its responsibilities but as a one of individual’s own. Hence, unemployment was either the result of the incompetence or the unwillingness of the individual to find a job. As for the demand, it was again not a concern of the state to create or sustain; but a matter of the market’s own needs and dynamics which could never be intervened or interrupted by the state. However, many monetary supply-side mechanisms were adopted to intercede in situations like stagflation and recession (Koch, 2011, p. 94); though these were not to be decided or executed by the state, but the now-ever-more-independent Central Bank(s) and other monetary regulatory institutions.

Therefore, the neoliberal state rejected all the “interventionism” of the Keynesianism and was only there to “regulate the deregulatedness” of the market and finance as the renowned “invisible hand” (ibid). As a result, privatization functioned as one of the fundamental channels of the new post-Fordist accumulation regime and was accompanied by a prominent commercialization throughout the decade. As discussed above briefly, the actualization of this expansion in trade was due to the developments in logistics, micro-electronics and ICTs; but it was only possible if the neoliberal centre had also neoliberal, free-trading partners. Therefore, in this period, many of the East Asian and Latin American countries – along with Turkey and Mexico namely – have left their longstanding import substitution industrialization (ISI) strategies and steadily adopted free trade market policies and transitioned to

neoconservative/neoliberal governments. This “integration” into the neoliberal economic and political structures took place mainly through the mediatory role of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the key institutions that regulate the international trade and finance (Harvey, 2007). Their influence on the international monetary policy “guidance” was heralded and consolidated through the 1980s, especially with the introduction of “the Washington Consensus”<sup>20</sup> principles (Rodrik, 2006). The first stage of the expansion of post-Fordist accumulation regime was thus marked by the commercialization, transition to the free market under neoliberal regulatory bodies, and the re-articulation of the semi-periphery and periphery countries to the international trade; accompanied by a new phase in the global division of labour and a new international (political) economic regulation.

### **1.3.1. Financialization as an accumulation strategy and the diffusion of globalization**

To get the terminology clear, financialization is the “...pattern of accumulation in which profit making occurs increasingly through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production” (Krippner, 2005) and is therefore often accompanied with a shrunk in productive sector. In this regard, given the fact that one of the key transfigurations and goals of neoliberalism was to deregulate finance and liberalize the financial markets; this predominance was not so surprising (Arrighi, 1994). Yet the dissemination was quite striking, and this specific characteristic of the finance capital is of great importance which will be elaborated in the next section. The second stage of the post-Fordism accumulation regime was marked by the drastic takeover of *financialization* as an accumulation strategy and the tremendous impact it created in all of the post-Fordist labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization. Historically, the enlargement of the financial sector can be dated back to the pre-Great Depression era. Yet in the late 1950s to 60s in the realm of the Fordism, finance capital was operating with a stricter regulation under the post-war regulatory structures (Lapavitsas, 2013). This rather conservative mechanism prevailed mainly throughout the 1970s as well; and though the neoliberal/neoconservative governments and institutions seized the regulation by large in the 1980s, its real advancement took place in the 1990s.

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<sup>20</sup> Ten recommendary principles that were initially forged in the 1980s by the WB, IMF and the US Treasury Department as a prescription to the crisis-hit Latin American countries at the time. Broadly they involve: 1) fiscal policy discipline, 2) reorientation of public expenditures, 3) tax reform, 4) financial liberalization, 5) unified and flexible exchange rates, 6) trade liberalization, 7) optimism towards FDI, 8) privatization 9) deregulation and 10) securing property rights (Rodrik, 2006).

As discussed above, one of the driving forces of this uptrend was the modifications that took place in the international monetary regulation such as the collapse of the Bretton Woods. Especially with the shift to floating exchange rates and flexible interest rate, the charm of the financial markets was undeniable as a faster and less demanding way of accumulation. Meanwhile, the Washington Consensus principles and the institutional structures it brought about eased the promotion and the penetration of the deregulated finance on the global scale. Empirically, where the percentage of funds raised on international financial markets was .5% in 1950, it skyrocketed to more than 20% in 1996 (Krippner, 2005).<sup>21</sup> Thus, in time, some NFCs – mostly giants like General Motors with G-MAC for example – began to develop their own financial divisions<sup>22</sup> to compensate this profit loss and in a way redirect the financial gains into the businesses (Orhangazi, 2008). In time, the “overaccumulation” brought about new practices like offshoring especially in the US, since the options for profitable investments got more constrict and requires a “spatio-temporal fix” in order to be revitalized in another location (Harvey, 2003). As a result, in the early millennium, almost 40% of the corporate profits in the US derived from financial sector, compared to its share around 10% in the 1980s (Weismann, 2013).

This is much of the macroeconomic profile of that the financialization has altered. However, it was vigorous in changing the individuals’ and households’ consumption habits and played a crucial role in shaping the mode of societalization under the post-Fordist regime. This primarily arose from the interrelated nature of finance and the type of consumption it requires to function efficiently, which was successfully integrated into each other under the neoliberal labour organization and regulation. On the one hand, the real wages were decreasing (Koch, 2011, p. 114) as early as 1980s in both the centre and semi-periphery who articulated in neoliberal regulation for the most part; due to the flexible organization of labour and formation of the contracts decrease in real sector profits (Demirovic, 2009, p. 49). On the other hand, credits were an essential source for the financial sector to assure that circulation and activity in the financial markets are incessant. Therefore, the fall in disposable incomes was compensated

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<sup>21</sup> Even more vividly, in the 1970s, the profits of financial corporations were significantly below compared to the profits of non-financial corporations (NFCs); whereas in 1990s the profits of financial corporations exceeded them outstandingly in the US and France (Epstein, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> This trend occurred in the 1980s and intensified as of 1990s, and many NFCs continued to redirect their investment funds to obtain more financial assets, which concomitantly increased the share of financial activity in the economy (Crotty, 2003; Krippner 2005). Moreover, many NFCs who are multi-national corporations (MNCs) in various sectors (from food and textile to the automobile and tech industry) began a widespread practice of mergers and acquisitions that constituted both the devour of smaller firms and mergers among giants; that enabled them to have bigger and more reliable shares in the stock market (ibid).

with the bank credits to keep the consumption levels high. This was relevant for both the consumption of now-extremely-diversified durables and cheap consumption goods, thanks to the flexibilization of production that enabled designing and the global division of labour that reduced the production. Moreover, as a result of both the privatization and commodification of education, healthcare and care services; the purchase of these “services” were also included in the consumption cycle either through long term savings or (and more often) via banks credits. Hence, in the fourth decades of neoliberalism the household debts increased astronomically.<sup>23</sup> These debts were mostly in the form of mortgages and with significantly low interest rates which made them accessible for an extremely wider range of society; from white-collar workers to migrant precariat, primarily in the US but also in many parts of Central Europe (Harvey, 2003; Lapavitsas 2009).<sup>24</sup>

In the light of these, the mode of societalization of the post-Fordist accumulation regime was shaped by the diffusion of neoliberalism, financialization and globalization<sup>25</sup> on an ever-more extensive manner; which has been distinctively potent in taking over the social, political and economic *imaginaries*<sup>26</sup> of the people on a global scale and structure the way they make sense of the world (Jessop, 2012; Harvey, 2007; Demirovic 2009). This is not unique to post-Fordism since all accumulation regimes and their complementary systems require their own conceptual framework and a mode of societalization (Harvey, 2007, p. 24); but the level of this diffusion was quite extraordinary and swift in post-Fordism for many reasons. Thus, neoliberalism has not only served as a mode of regulation, and equally – if not more importantly – provided an ideological framework for the mode of societalization and its effective imposition was realized through globalization.

The articulation of consumerism into the daily life has been already set in Fordism by large. However, the penetration of this level of consumerism and materialism was also accompanied by the “sacrosanct” ideas of individual liberty and freedom (ibid), in which its regulatory institutions already began to prescribe in the form of free market economy and non-

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<sup>23</sup> In numbers, household debt as percentage of disposable incomes went from 93% in 1995 to over 135% in 2005 in the US and 106% to 159% in the UK for the same years (Girourard et al., 2006).

<sup>24</sup> In addition, as early as 1990s, these mortgages were securitized by the banks with different levels of risks (tranching) thus the money reserve for financial markets to lay their back on were to be maintained under control (Koch, 2011, p. 114, Lapavitsas, 2009, p. 123)

<sup>25</sup> The key components of the current stage of global capitalism as defined by Krippner (2005).

<sup>26</sup> “...a simplified, necessarily selective ‘mental map’ of a super-complex reality and typically has normative and cognitive functions. [...] Hegemonic and dominant imaginaries are generally socially instituted and socially embedded and get reproduced through various mechanisms that help to maintain their cognitive and normative hold on the social agents involved in the field(s) that it maps.” (Jessop, 2012, p. 17).

interventionist government structures in many parts of the world simultaneously. Thus, notions like liberty began to be identified with one's freedom to consume in accordance with their likings beyond their needs, among the vast diversification and accessibility of the goods and services in the market. In this regard, it can be observed that one of the key continuities with the Fordist mode of societalization was the sanctification of the home and car ownership as primary social status determinants, yet it took a whole another form under post-Fordism in relation to financialization and privatization. As have been mentioned partly above, *money form* in this accumulation regime performed as bank credits mostly. Debts in the form of mortgages or college tuitions became almost default for all segments of the society in the developed countries. Hence, one could choose the house they want to live and the college they want to study in their own discretion via credits at easy accessibility and paid in the long-term with low interest rates.

In this regard, certain social and statutory norms and standards began to be promoted. Additionally, it was now could be preached to the individuals directly through various channels including the media, advertisement and entertainment; thanks to the incessant technological developments especially since the 1980s. To exemplify, entrepreneurship and takings risks (in accordance with the finance as well) were cherished; job titles and job performance were identified with individuals' personal capability and adequacy; and pursuing careers in top sectors – like services, information technologies (IT) and finance – were blessed as providers of uninterrupted consumption to accumulate various possessions according to one's likings and hobbies and enabled them to have a prosperous elder life. Therefore, the scope of “ideological commodities” have been illimitably widened, in addition to the early Fordist home and car ownership. Eased and cheapened travel opportunities extended the range of these options and promoted globalization as a broadening of these consumptions. Thus, neoliberalism as a mode of discourse found an ever-more-extensive ground and an equally wide audience in the global scale. This was possible through the globalization of the each post-Fordist mode of production, labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization. In the context of this chapter, therefore, globalization is taken into consideration as the rhetorical and strategic instrument that realized this process.

A demonstrative representation of the complementary function of the trinity of neoliberalism, financialization and globalization in post-Fordist mode of societalization can also be found in the consolidation of the multi-national corporations (MNCs), as one of the key actors that change the production and consumption patterns. As the urban centres represented the hub for

all the post-Fordist transition, increased rates of urbanisation within the global population mainly after the 1980s had become salient. Consequently, both domestic and international migration to the big cities all over the world increased the urban population significantly (from 39% in 1980 to 46% in 2000 and as of 2019 to 55% worldwide)<sup>27</sup>, which brought about its own dynamics in the production, provision and consumption of the goods and services in both the centre and the periphery. Therefore, as more rural people got unattached from their lands, the reproduction of the labour force became mediated by the markets. On the one hand, the giants of the food and textile industry began to enlarge their operations in terms of the scale and space of production, logistics and so on; and also, to commodify both the “idle” lands and the lands of the remaining rural population. The global production chains thus gained significance, and this complemented with the new global division of labour as now the different stages of production could be exported to these lands if found more profitable to do so.

On the other hand, since the provision and consumption of such needs were already beyond the sphere of sufficiency and transcended to the sphere of the individual self-expression through consumerism, the organization of daily life has altered accordingly. For the urbanized, career-driven and materialist “New (Hu)man” (Clarke, 1990, p. 9) of post-Fordism, accumulation of possessions and experiences (in the form of travels, entertainment and hobbies) became the ultimate manifestation of the self-realization. In fact, research in social psychology and consumption behaviour in recent years showed that people began to attribute deeper meanings to their possessions and perceive them as their “extended self” (Jackson, 2009). Jackson associates this apprehension with the views of Durkheim, who argues that the new wave of materialism functions almost as vigorous and instructive as religion and as a form of existential solace (Durkheim, 2001). Given the immensity of this alteration in social psychology, and the vast range of it with the undeniable impact of the globalization; the contemporary consumer society that the post-Fordism paved the way to separates from previous social constructions under other modes of societalization (Koch, 2011, p. 117). Along with many diverse implications of this phenomenon in various fields, such practices and morals have had longstanding ecological consequences as well, which will be discussed in the next section in greater extent.

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<sup>27</sup> See, Urban population (% of total population) | Data. (2018). World Bank.  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?end=2019&start=1960&view=chart>

### **1.3.2. The consolidation of the fossil energy regime on the global scale**

As a concomitant feature of the whole post-Fordist re-structuring, the upbringings of this new mode of societalization and its globalization had been influential on many intertwining levels, including the intensification of the so-called “fossil capitalism” (Altvater, 2007; Carroll, 2010). The inherent dependence of Fordism and thus of any capitalist mode of production on fossil fuels has already been depicted in the previous sections. This fundamental interconnectedness did not change in the post-Fordist configuration as well, despite what its prioritized sectors and accumulation strategies might represent. Despite the conspicuous undermining of the real economy and manufacture-oriented economic growth in exchange to the dominance of finance and the “virtual economy” of the tech industry in the new post-Fordist mode of growth and accumulation regime; the globalization and the consolidation of the fossil energy regime had been most robust in this period.

On the one hand this aspect has multiple dimensions: firstly, although the financialization and a tech-intensive economic orientation seem like putting a less pressure on the resources, they in fact augment it in a veiled manner. This is because financial markets have to urge the banks to force the borrowers to pay back their credits (debts), which is only possible in the case of a real growth. Thus, since the functioning of the finance is directly dependent on growth, the pressure is still there but only concealed (Altvater, 2007). Secondly, it derives from the “double character of capitalism”; in which on the one hand, it (capitalism) has a value dimension – the value of the gross domestic product (GDP), share of the foreign direct investments (FDI) and financial flows – and on the other hand, it has a material dimension where the production, consumption, transportation and distribution takes place based on a system of material and energy flows (Altvater, 2007, p. 38). And since capitalism by nature chooses the most (cost) efficient options to operate with, fossil fuels are the go-to energy resources that suffice in the post-Fordist period as well.

On the other hand, it has been argued (and rather “hoped” so far) by the proponents of the post-industrial, tech-driven, financial accumulation regime; that the rising GDP and concomitantly more investments to the technology will “decouple”<sup>28</sup> economic growth from the (fossil) energy dependency (Jackson, 2009, p. 48). This occurs in the form of “relative decoupling” mostly, where the per unit economic output have less ecological impact and thus requires less

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<sup>28</sup> The “decoupling” discussion requires a broader analysis, which will be provided later in great extent in the upcoming chapters, yet it is noteworthy to make a brief introduction of it here.

fossil energy or (ideally) can be exchanged with renewable resources which have lower Energy Return on Energy Input (EROEI)<sup>29</sup>. Hence, there is a misguided trust on the ability of the new technologies to reduce environmental impact. For, it is strongly (almost inevitably) connected with the GDP growth. This growth could only be achieved primarily through financialization, as discussed above, in the post-Fordist accumulation regime.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude, the consolidation of the fossil fuel regime that was seeded in the Fordist period took place mainly through the globalization of the mode of regulation and mode of societalization of the post-Fordist accumulation regime. This was coupled with the articulation of the resource-provider periphery to the new order was coupled with the “Americanization” or better say “Westernization” of the consumption habits of the rest of the world. In the next section, the crises that resulted from each of these pillars of the post-Fordist accumulation regime will be discussed and will be articulated to the triple crisis of the accumulation, legitimacy and ecology.

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<sup>29</sup> The amount of energy that is needed to extract or make use of another source of energy (Altvater, 2007, p. 39).

<sup>30</sup> Both sides of the coin have brought about their own real life implications and depicts a quite heterogeneous picture and thus is open to discussion. On the one hand, the share of oil in the world’s total energy supply reduced from 46% in 1973 to 31% in 2018. Moreover, when it is looked by region, the share of the OECD countries in the total energy supply for oil decreased from 52% to 35% for the same years. Nevertheless, this looks different when its looked at in Mtoe. In 1973 the share of oil in the total supply was made out of 2,817 Mtoe, whereas in 2018 it was almost twice-fold to 4,497 Mtoe. This also applies for the OECD share, as the fall from 52% in 1973 was actually consisted of 1,967 Mtoe of oil, whereas (a year later) in 2019 the 35% (same as 2018) represented 1,883 Mtoe of oil. Hence, the fall in the percentage of the use did not correlate with the amount of the use, but on the contrary an increase in the oil supply (and demand) was evident. This situation is depicted as the “Jevons Paradox” (Koch, 2011, p. 125) where the cheapening of a resource due to the technological developments leads to its increased demand, which can be seen quite clearly in the example presented above. On the other hand, whereas the total energy supply in the non-OECD world was approximately 39% in 1973, it drastically increased to 62.5% in 2018; so in a way changed positions with the OECD world in the last four decades. The most astronomic increase, however, was represented by China alone, whose portion increased from 7% from 22.5% in the given years. In this regard, the relative increase in the share of non-fossil fuels in the total energy supply worldwide, from 13.3% in 1973 to 18.7 in 2018, shows that this “position switch” among the OECD vs non-OECD also makes pro-arguments towards relative decoupling further questionable, when these numbers are compared with the increase in the per capita GDP growth in the world from 1,178.089\$ in 1973 to 11,374.847\$ in 2018. Hence, despite the per capita GDP growth and how this was distributed globally is a whole another story, which will again be discussed later on this thesis, it serves illustratively on how hopes of relative decoupling fell empty so far in terms of its correlation between higher economic growth and less energy use; and in fact showed quite the opposite. The argument still performs quite faltering when the country-case examples are observed, since countries with highest GDP per capita have quite heterogenous profiles in terms of their approach to renewables, energy use and source of accumulation. To put it briefly, it is even harder to come up with a correlation in favour of relative decoupling, by looking at a range of high-income countries such as the US, China, Norway and United Arab Emirates and their history in energy (ibid).

### **1.3.3. The GFC and the crisis of post-Fordism, neoliberalism and the Triple Crisis**

We have already ascribed two stages to the post-Fordist accumulation regime; first stage being the commercialization and the neoliberal diffusion as a mode of regulation in the 1980s, and the second stage being the financialization and the spread of globalization as of 1990s. The third stage, alas, refers to its crisis as an accumulation regime. Therefore, this section will unfold the characteristics and the dynamics of this “third stage”. But before beginning, it is worth re-noting the distinction between the mainstream crisis reading of the neoclassical school and the reading employed here under the framework of the RA, as it has already been discussed in the crisis of Fordism. In addition to the RA perspective, further contributions from other heterodox scholars and approaches will be included. Such reading is preferred not only for the concerns over conciseness or thematic contextualization, but more so to emphasize that the crisis in 2008 was not only a conjunctural crisis but a systemic/structural one, that is inherent and inevitable in capitalism. Thus, the reading of the GFC will not solely, or rather say primarily, focus on the “mortgage bubble narrative” and the concomitant global economic recession that hit both the industrial/post-industrial centre and the industrializing periphery; but will also assess it as (one of) the conjunctural pillar(s) of the crisis. Moreover, the GFC and the accompanying crisis of post-Fordism and neoliberalism will be articulated into the *Triple Crisis* (crisis of accumulation, legitimation and ecology) as the relay to the next chapters.

#### **1.3.3.1. Accumulation Crisis**

Despite the prominence and the main argumentation will lie on a broader analysis, *financialization* is still a good point to start reading the GFC with its overarching impacts on other elements.<sup>31</sup> To start with, the undermining of the real economy for decades has increased the pressures on the NFCs as of the early millennium, to catch up with their payments to the banks. As their profit decreased, they went into an ever-intensifying race to increase and maintain the value of their stock prices in the financial markets (Epstein, 2005, p. 7). This situation is described by Crotty (2003) as the “neoliberal paradox”, which is a deceleration in

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<sup>31</sup> It is harder and also not so viable to come up with a chronology of “which element paved the way for the which” on the gridlock of accumulation, but still a pattern can be traced. But to begin with, one of the accumulation-plugs was rooted in the way NFCs adapted to the supremacy of the financial profits. To overcome this, NFCs began going for merger and acquisitions among them in order to boost their value on the stock-markets, and another was them coming up with their own financial companies or divisions to “play by and with the rules of the finance” more efficiently. As Lapavitsas puts it, “Even the wage bill of large non-financial corporations is frequently financed through the issuing of commercial paper in open markets. Successive waves of takeovers, (...) have led to corporations becoming heavily involved in bond and equity trading in stock markets, thus developing skills in independent financial operations and trading.” (Lapavitsas, 2013, p. 800).

the global aggregate demand and intensified competition in top product markets decreases average profits, thus they resort to financial solutions which are not compatible with their original business structures.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, NFCs began to be caught up in the downward trend, and turned their eyes on the surplus that could be (further) extracted from the wages and benefits of the white and blue-collar labour and their key suppliers (Crotty, 2003, p. 80), which resulted with more extreme performance schemes and targets and even more flexible contracts to be imposed on the workers. The degree of the extraction also differed based on where in the world their workers were employed, since these NFCs were mostly MNCs whom have global operations, especially in manufacturing. This dimension represents one of the key points where the ills of neoliberalism, financialization and globalization intersects most vividly, and it will be held in more detail later while the labour process is discussed. In the light of these, the finance-driven growth reached its boundaries as of the early millennium, as the ventures to increase shareholder value led to diminished market share and profitability (Boyer, 2004).

Correspondingly, the change in the relationship between NFCs and financial markets paved the way for a fundamental re-organizing of the banks; in which investment banks began to profit at substantial rates whilst commercial banks got significantly side-lined as they got more detached from the industrial and commercial capital (Lapavitsas, 2009). The most important aspect of this changing role of the banking sector, stemmed from one of their major sources of profit and liquidity, which was the financialization of revenues of households and individuals. (Lapavitsas, 2013, p. 801). This meant that banks turned to income and savings of the households, in order to help them “manage” their savings and provide lends for their expenditures on housing and on now privatized education, health and insurances. (Lapavitsas, 2009, p. 115). The inherited ideals of home and car ownership of the Fordism were already extended with the neoliberal privatization wave of public services and ideals of consumerism and materialism; thus, the seeds of the “indebting masses” phenomena did not began solely with financialization but were already planted with the change in the mode of regulation in the previous decade and the mode of societalization it endeavoured. Lapavitsas conceptualizes this aspect of financialization with the term “financial expropriation”, which he describes as the

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<sup>32</sup>NFCs shift their investments towards financial agents and prioritize increasing stock prices with the bandwagon “shareholder value movement” and short-term projections and plans with respect to the transition of eager financial markets as opposed to patient financial markets in the pursuit of long-term growth (Orhangazi, 2008). As a result, this “deeply rooted paradox within neoliberalism” doubles what the damage of the financialization would be alone since neoliberalism also enforces competition at detrimental levels and thus reduces profits rates even more. (Crotty, 2003, p. 79; Orhangazi, 2008, p. 50).

way of “extracting financial profit directly out of the personal income of workers” (ibid)<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, the relationship of the banks with the households is inherently different than its relationship with the NFCs, because of this exploitative nature towards the households and also because of the “information asymmetries” (if looked from a textbook neoclassic perspective) between households and NFCs in their operations in the financial markets. In a way, it can be interpreted that even the mass privatizations were not enough to support the accumulation strategy under the post-Fordist neoliberal accumulation regime, so the household incomes were channelled into (more so confiscated by) the market with financialization.

In the period between late 1990s to the early millennium, the household indebtedness increased at astonishing rates<sup>34</sup> globally, but especially in the centre. In the beginning of the 2000s, the US mortgage-lending was still heavily focused on higher income households, but soon after in the years between 2004-2006 sub-prime mortgages<sup>35</sup> surged. These were mortgages designed for lower income groups – mostly migrant women who are employed in blue-collar/care works with flexible contracts – who cannot actually qualify for mortgage lending with their credit profiles and compromised of 4.3 trillion dollars’ worth of mortgages within these 2 years (Lapavitsas, 2009, p. 117). Frankly, “financial expropriation” was so farfetched, it even aimed the income of the precariat.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of these, the burst was initially triggered by the securitisation of these already-risky mortgages by the investment-banks,<sup>37</sup> however the crisis did not surface until the problems in

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<sup>33</sup> It is different than the long-standing “exploitation” which emerges in the production process, since it is an extra source of profit that comes from the field of circulation and stems from already-existing money flows and value as opposed to surplus-value which originates from new flows of money; yet it is no less than exploitation given its systemic aspect (ibid: 131).

<sup>34</sup> For example, compare to the early decades of the post-Fordist accumulation regime where saving rates were around 10% of disposable income, the US household savings melted to an unbelievable rate of 0.4% in 2006 (Lapavitsas, 2009: 118).

<sup>35</sup> Sub-prime mortgages: Loans that are provided for lesser income groups who cannot qualify for regular mortgages and (would) have troubles catching up with their payments and thus have lower credit scores, under 640 or less. Mostly offered in the form of Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARM) with low interest rates in the beginning and then adjusted for higher rates (Heyford, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Moreover, these aspects were accompanied by high reserve accumulation in the periphery countries – as a part of an IMF strategy – with trade-surpluses, because even in the epoch of financialization and popularity of the FDIs, they had less investments than their savings. In time, as these reserves began to flow back the US, enabling banks with more capital to be sold as lends.

<sup>37</sup> These were so immense that 79.3% (\$1.4tr) of the 4.3 trillion dollars between the 2004 to 2006 was already securitised. This meant that these mortgages were cut into little pieces and sit scattered in the assets of the financial corporations all over the world (Lapavitsas, 2009, p. 121), turning them into a globalized financial bubble that has stretched so far and waiting to be popped. In the light of these, the inevitable burst of the bubble was initially stemmed from the rising interest rates by the FED, which significantly halted the pay-back rate of the subprime mortgages.

liquidity and solvency<sup>38</sup> overlapped with this picture. This made another inherent paradox of financialization visible, that Marx also warned in the context of value: markets were filled with large amounts of (virtual) capital yet were short in liquidity (ibid, p. 121). Hence, he showed that independent from how much value do markets comprehend, no other form of value works out properly in capitalism, if it is not in the form of money.

This was the conjunctural and macroeconomic face of the crisis in the US. Nevertheless, the burst of this bubble was by all means multidimensional, given the heavily international and interdependent nature of the post-Fordist accumulation regime and the holy trinity that realized it. But before that, it is at utmost importance to discuss the crisis-inherent nature of financialization and then of post-Fordism as an accumulation regime which tries to establish an unbreakable hegemony. It was already mentioned that crisis was *a priori* in Fordism as well, since no matter in what configuration and which form, capitalist accumulation regimes are doomed with crisis. Here, financialization has a unique role as an accumulation strategy in different periods and under different accumulation regimes within capitalism. In his notable *The Long Twentieth Century* and after that in many of his work, Arrighi argued that financialization is not a phase in capitalism but (has been) a repetitive phenomenon which usually emerged in the middle of a hegemonic crisis and set the accumulation strategy of the next accumulation regime as a finance-driven one (Arrighi, 1994). This paradigm occurred as a result of two main crisis triggers of capitalism: 1) the overaccumulation of capital and 2) the vigorous competition among states in the pursuit of this mobile capital. The overaccumulation becomes apparent from the exhaustion of investment options in the real economy which resulted from intense competition in production (Arrighi & Silver 1999). Consequently, NFCs go out on the search for profitable investments and end up in the financial markets with their fast and furious money breeding potential, and this evolves into a widespread phenomenon. Moreover, one of the most important features of financialization has been its deeply global character, in which it exceeds the economy of the hegemon almost by default due to the expansionary and free-flowing nature of money in it. Thus, it is practically adjoined with a global financial and commercial freedom that to be embraced by its partners in the world. At this very point, it gets caught up in its own web that has been knitted carefully: the globalization of its regulatory and monetary practices innately requires both a level of standardization and

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<sup>38</sup> The liquidity problem emerged as the pay-back ratio fell, but banks had large amounts of mortgage securities and had to support other financial institutions that have them. Thus as mortgage pay-backs fall, they progressively became unable to sell securities; which occurred the solvency crisis (ibid).

hierarchy simultaneously, on a global level. Given the practical impossibility of this, financialization begins to dig the very hole it is supposed to fill to stabilize the rule of the (existing) hegemon. (Orhangazi, 2008, p. 44; Arrighi, 2003; Harvey, 2009). Thus, it can be safely said that financialization has been a stillborn accumulation strategy in the course of capitalism and has done nothing but bringing even more instability to it. Again, as Arrighi (2003) displayed, the dissolution of the system takes part in three stages: 1) interruption of accumulation, 2) halting the omnipotence of the hegemon and as a result 3) resistance and riots rooted among the expropriated/exploited groups questioning the hegemon, thus its legitimacy.

### **1.3.3.2. Legitimation Crisis**

After the eruption of the mortgage crisis in the US financial markets as of August 2007 and its aftershocks until September 2008, many giants of financial institutions and banks came to near collapse. What came as a shock to many whom had been impacted from the crisis<sup>39</sup> in both the mainland US and the centre, and also in the periphery; was the how and to whom the state(s) intervened in the aftermath of the crisis. Conceptually this represented an absurd irony, given the utmost no-intervention character of the neoliberal state and regulation. This unveiled another neoliberal paradox: the neoliberal state is a one that strongly regulates to make sure that the realms that it prefers deregulated remain unregulated. In this context, neither the aspired independency of the Central Banks, for example, does not utterly separate them from the state or its discourse, nor the decisions and agendas of the institutions like the IMF, WB, and other governmental organizations are of their own. On the contrary, these institutions present pseudo-independencies and pseudo-representations that block the way for grassroots collective bargaining channels; through attributing these facilities to the institutional level. Harvey (2007) argues that this very “antidemocratic nature of neoliberalism” contrasts with the neoliberal ideals of individual liberty and market-freedom, as these institutions remain immune to any democratic control mechanisms.

Going back, the way that the state and its certain apparatuses intervened in the GFC has led to the deep questioning of the legitimacy of the neoliberalism as a mode of regulation globally. It is seen that, primarily the US but also many European countries and also the European Union (EU) itself, threw their lifejackets to the financial institutions who were defined as “too big to

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<sup>39</sup> The US economy shrunk almost 5%, unemployment rose 7% in the immediate aftermath and peaked at 10% in 2009, and millions were left homeless (Luhby, 2010). Concomitantly, 210 million people lost their jobs globally as of 2008 and as the Eurozone crisis hit in 2010, number of unemployed reached above 42 million people in the OECD region (IMF, 2015).

fail”. However, what was tried to be rescued was not the (global) economy that is feared worse could happen if not interceded; but the neoliberal class relations that favoured the capitalist elite. This was not surprising again, given that neoliberalism was in the first place designed and put into practice to restore the power of the ruling class over the labour who had a “larger share of the economic pie” under the Keynesian regulation in Fordism (Harvey, 2007, p. 28). As a result, billions of dollars were poured to compensate the losses of the financial institutions in the US, and the waged labourers in the EU member countries, like crisis-hit Greece and Spain were left on their own and were doomed with the prescriptions of structural adjustment programs of the IMF and WB. These resulted with global political unrest and mass protests in the very aftermath of the GFC, like the “Occupy Wall Street Movement” and the “Arab Uprisings” in the early 2010s, which a decade later still prevalent in many parts of the world including East Asia, Latin America and Central to Eastern Europe.

This brings us back to the multidimensionality of the post-Fordist crisis, besides – yet still not outside – financialization. Since the crisis of neoliberalism and financialization represents the mode of regulation of post-Fordism, the RA reading now continues with other units of analyses to interpret both the GFC and the crisis of neoliberalism. The labour process in the post-Fordist was organized around the principle of flexibilization of the mode of production and also the form of contracts. The wage-labour nexus under this regime also brought atypical contracts (part-time works, temp works etc), non-standard employment relations, denied various types of security (labour market security, employment security, income security, work safety etc.) In addition, this type of employment was a useful instrumental for the economy as well, as it provided an income – despite being very low – for a wider range of society that enabled them to become consumers. Thus, the “democratization of the financialization” filled this very gap for the expenses that these flexible workers cannot afford; such as education, healthcare and most importantly housing. This labour process has contributed to the emergence (or better say preservation) of a new type of precariat and had especially detrimental effects in the periphery. As most of the MNCs shifted their manufacturing operations to the global South and East Asia thanks to the globalization of the neoliberal regulation and mode of societalization, many sensitive and disadvantageous groups like women and migrants were trapped in horrendous employment conditions for wages lower than the basic income in their respective countries, and also contributed to the emergence of a vast informal economy. Even in the US, the informal workers increased from less than around 500.000 in the 1970 to approximately 12 million in 2019 (Joassart-Marcelli, 2019). The socioeconomic inequality and the global hierarchy that

this labour process has established represents one of the core crisis-components of the legitimacy crisis of neoliberalism and globalization. Hence, neoliberalism as a mode of regulation first and foremost aimed to restore the class relations in terms of inserting and sustaining the upper-hand of the ruling elite over the working class; post-Fordism has indeed accomplished this and furthermore the establishment of the redistribution cycle from the wage earners to the capitalist elite (Harvey, 2007, p. 22; Demirovic 2009, p. 55) with the very undermining of the collective bargaining power of the workers. Moreover, this successful imposition of the idea that employees are “disposable” in the eyes of the employer contributed to the alienation of the white-collar/middle-class workers all over the world as well; with hardening work conditions and expectations to fulfil, to catch up with their ever more demanding performance scales and keep up with the life (more so consumption) standards constantly imposed by the media and advertisement.

### **1.3.3.3. Ecological Crisis**

The mode of societalization that has been designed under the ideals of neoliberal individualism, consumerism and (its) globalization has had its most devastating impacts on the environment, which bring about many irreversible damages on the climate and ecology. The most detrimental of them, carbon emissions, now at a level that threaten the climate that we know of. Their first significant peak was experienced under Fordism as has been mentioned in the previous sections after the Industrial Revolution, yet the global level it sits now has been the result of the post-Fordist accumulation regime. With the unprecedented level of globalization of the “Westernized” production and consumption habits, the carbon emission had quadrupled from 1950s to 1990s (Ritchie & Roser, n.d.). More strikingly, the world total in the 1950s represent the emissions that the US alone had emitted in 2017 and even more terrifyingly, the half that China alone had (ibid). However, one of the biggest changes in the emissions was the astronomic rise of the emissions in the regions who had comparatively very little impact prior to post-Fordism. Despite still, the US and Europe are responsible for under one third of the global emissions, the portion of the Asia now shares are at drastic rates.<sup>40</sup> This manifests the impact of the market globalization in the post-Fordist era and how the developed centre was able to export their

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<sup>40</sup> In 2018, Asia (without China and India) emitted 7.36 billion tonnes of carbon, whereas together with China and India the region’s total accounts to 20.07 billion tonnes out of the 36.58 of worldwide total. This is an incomprehensible rate in comparison to the amount that China emitted in 1970 for example, which is 770.07 million tonnes, India at 194.73 million tonnes and Asia (again excluding China and India) 1.74 billion. Also surprising is that, in 1970 the US was still emitting around 4.33 billion tonnes and Europe was at 6.13 billion tonnes, which in 2018 just 1 billion tonnes under for the US with 5.42 billion tonnes and around the same rate with 5.93 billion tonnes for Europe in 2018 (Ritchie & Roser, n.d.).

carbon footprint to the now-manufacturing/industrializing periphery. In addition to this, per capita emissions show an even more clear manifestation of this, showing that how much of individual consumption has a role in the country's emissions besides production. When it is looked so, it is seen that an average US citizen emitted 16.56 tonnes in 2018, whereas a global production hub China's citizen emits around 7 tonnes and from a key textile manufacturer country, an Indonesian emits 2.3 tonnes for the same year. Therefore, this picture shows that how much individual consumption plays a role in a country's emitting performance<sup>41</sup>, and it can be deduced that the emission of the centre is primarily consumption-based whereas the manufacturer (also semi) periphery is based on the production that take place in their lands for the consumption of both the centre and periphery.

All these brought an ever-more-cumbersome burden on the atmosphere and the environment in the post-Fordist era and is still on effect. In this regard, one of the very key failures of the existing regulatory framework and the international policy-making structures was their inability to catch up with their "sustainability goals" and environmental policy initiatives in which all failed to prevent further emissions and ecological degradation to reach the targets that is set based on fighting with climate change. In addition to climate change and carbon emissions, the pressure that the post-Fordist accumulation regime put on the Indigenous people and the wildlife through the massive commodification of lands for production purposes is at a very sensitive position and is also a point where the issues over social justice merge with ecological justice.

In the light of these, it can be concluded that neither the crisis of Fordism, nor the recent crisis of post-Fordism were due to conjunctural crisis developments; for the former oil shocks and the dissolution of the Bretton Woods and for the latter the Global Financial Crisis and the crisis of the neoliberalism, financialization and globalization trinity. The crises of this hegemonic accumulation regimes did not directly emerge from the way that they have been designed and regulated, but from the very crisis-prone nature of capitalism. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the latest Global Financial Crisis was not a crisis *in* system, but a crisis *of* system (Jessop, 2013) as can be seen in the crisis of Fordism and other periods where financialization

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<sup>41</sup> Another significantly important carbon contributor was again a result of the post-Fordist mode of societalization and technological developments in the past four decades, is the international transportation. As the affordability and accessibility of the international flights increased in years, due to both international shipping, logistics and also travelling activities – which all were a key contributor to the broadening world image of the globalization – the emissions by international transportation increased from 437.23 million tonnes to 1.24 billion tonnes in 2018 (Ritchie & Roser, n.d.).

resurrected as a hegemony-stabilizer afterwards (Arrighi, 1994; Arrighi and Silver, 1999; Arrighi 2003; Harvey, 2007; Jessop: 2013).

For all these reasons, it becomes inevitable to look for the solutions and alternative ways to *Triple Crisis* outside capitalism, given its crisis-prone or rather say crisis-proven nature. The most crucial distinction here with the past crises of capitalism and its executive accumulation regimes is that the world that we know of has an expiration date now, as a result of the damages that had been done in these subsequent periods of accumulation. With that in mind, giving a chance to alternatives is at its most vital stage, and this interregnum should take what these perspectives have developed in response to the *Triple Crisis* into consideration. This time around, the “show must go on” obsession of capitalism is threatened not by all of its inherent crisis tendencies, but with the very fact that the “stage” of the show is literally sinking. Hence, voicing any alternative to it is ever more vital.

In the light of this, the next chapter will tackle the “degrowth perspective” as such a counter system alternative and will aim to attribute generations to it given its tumultuous presence in the literature and political arena. In doing so, it is hoped to understand and clarify its message, points it emphasize and diverge in the respective generations; and how and why it is important make such a detailed inspection at this point in history and environmental policy-making.

## CHAPTER 2

### GENERATIONS OF THE DEGROWTH PERSPECTIVE

This chapter will aim to unfold the historical development of degrowth and alternative growth perspectives in liberal productivity model (Lipietz, 2013), in tandem with the developments in the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes. Here, it is worth mentioning that this chapter does not aim to unfold the occurrence of the degrowth perspective chronologically. Instead, this chapter aims to provide a *periodization* to interpret development of the degrowth perspective. Previous works on the periodization and history of degrowth were focused on the “mapping the intellectual influences” (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010) and attributing traditions to degrowth based on regional affiliations (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017). Others delved into the linguistic origins of the term degrowth (Sutter, 2017) and ascribed phases based on the terminological and contextual evolution of degrowth (Parrique, 2019). Another important work looked at the institutional entanglements between the Club of Rome and the OECD, to show the impact of the transnational networks on the formation of the Club of Rome and on its discourse (Schmelzer, 2017).<sup>42</sup> However, we propose our original periodization in this chapter, to better serve one of the main purposes of our research question, which is to reveal how the growth criticism of the late 1960s and 1970s were absorbed and transformed by hegemonic fractions during the neoliberal transition.

For our purpose, we have identified three stages within the degrowth perspective, namely the first generation from 1968 to the late 1970s, the dormant phase of the early 1980s to the late millennium, and the second generation from 2008 onwards. Such periodization is essential because the historical and discursive analysis of the degrowth perspective requires a concomitant analysis of certain conjunctural shifts. These shifts stemmed from the organic and conjunctural crises of the Fordist and post-Fordist accumulation regimes, as we discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, our analysis of degrowth consists of overlapping time scales in between attributed generations, thus the unilinear time scale of chronology falls incompatible with our contextualization. By choosing such periodization, we aim to observe the ruptures among the generations in degrowth perspective and to explain the reasons behind these continuities and

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<sup>42</sup> To name few that has inspired the periodization in this chapter: Alier et al. (2010)’s attempt to “mapping the intellectual influences” of sustainable degrowth in the Francophone and Anglophone thinking; Muraca and Schmelzer (2017)’s regional interpretation of the second generation roots; Parrique (2019)’s types of degrowth. Also Schmelzer (2017) for Club of Rome and the OECD.

discontinuities. Thus, the explanatory framework of periodization is more suitable with our purpose and the context of this chapter, as opposed to the narrative style of the chronology.

In sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of this chapter, we will unfold the actors, institutions and concomitant events that shaped each generation in detail. To forewarn the reader, this part will scrutinize the relations between some key figures and institutions. The reasons for that is, we have identified important ruptures and disjunctions within certain fractions of early growth criticism, which resulted with the exclusion and marginalization of some figures and their ideas from the mainstream intellectual scenes during the neoliberal transition period. These moments of ruptures and restructurings are observed to be quite illustrative for the absorption and transformation process of the early growth criticism, which later revived as the degrowth movement we know today. Therefore, we have selected certain actors and institutions as our vantage point, to unveil their systematic exclusion and marginalization by certain fractions and hegemonic discourses. Such scrutinization is of great importance in relation to our main research question as well, which asks how and why degrowth could not be hegemonic and absorbed by the hegemonic networks and institutions, primarily by the concepts like sustainable growth and development.

## **2.1. THE FIRST GENERATION AND THE CLUB OF ROME**

The history of growth criticism is intertwined with moments of economic and social turmoil. The concurrence of the degrowth perspective with the *conjunctural crisis* of “oil shocks” and the *organic crisis* of Fordist accumulation regime in the 1970s is therefore not coincidental. As discussed in Chapter 1, the ecological breakdown and immense water and air pollutions were already triggering environmental movements and environmental policy-making in the US. Moreover, these occurrences were both inspired by and articulated with the social movements of the 1960s, hence they involved in a wider critique of the social and economic aspects of the environmental degradation (Levallois, 2010). In addition, rapid industrialization and urbanization, the confiscation of the daily life by advertising and the spread of hyper-consumerism were already under criticism<sup>43</sup> (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010). Above all, the 1960s were also an important turning point in terms of the economization of nature. Previously ignored predominantly, nature was now included in economic models with its resources to be extracted and with its “externalities” to be fixed (Levallois, 2010). Therefore, the depletion of

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<sup>43</sup> This was a popular criticism in the 1970s that has been argued under the term “gigantism” by Charbonneau (1969).

fossil fuels, ecological degradation and pollution are all considered as errors that disrupt the market economy. In relation, this understanding posits nature as a unit that serves the economy and disregards it if it does not pose any setbacks to the functioning of the market. However, as of late 1960s, the resource-dependent character of the growth economy was begun to be criticized among conventional economists as well (Schmelzer, 2017).<sup>44</sup> Many argued that the finiteness of natural resources must be a core consideration for economics, and that the “more is better” is a problematic assumption (Levallois, 2010, p. 2). For this, they argued that the production and the flow of goods should not be maximized for the sake of growing the economy but be preserved as stocks at best (Boulding 1966; Daly 1968; Ayres et al., 1969). On the societal level, these criticisms were articulated with the 1968 movements in the context of the inequalities and injustices that the capitalist growth occurred. With the impact of the anti-racist and anti-war stance of the period, the idea of “modernizing the Third World” began to lose its legitimacy as well (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 30). In this respect, it can be seen that the questioning of the growth paradigm was begun to shape around in all aspects regarding its economic viability, environmental sustainability and social legitimacy.

In this environment, the Club of Rome was founded in 1968 with the primary initiative of Aurelio Peccei, an Italian industrialist and 36 international specialists. Among these, there were prominent figures whose impact will be discussed in detail later, like Thorkil Kristensen, the former Secretary General (SG) of the OECD and the organization’s long-time science director Alexander King. From early on, the organization had an interdisciplinary character with members from politics, academia and business (Mehr 2014; Schmelzer, 2017, p. 30). However, Peccei and other members who were the “brain team” of the Club had already came up with a thorough “problematique”<sup>45</sup> since their first meeting(s) in 1965<sup>46</sup>. To name a few of the main goals that the Club identified to address under their problematique were:

- “- ...to stimulate research and encourage the development of methods [...] to understand better the workings of the world as a *finite system* and to suggest *alternative options* for meeting critical needs.
- to provoke a dialogue with political decision-makers, industrialists, academics and many

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<sup>44</sup> Some of the pioneering works in this field are Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* in 1958, Carson’s famous *Silent Spring* in 1962, Mishan’s *The Cost of Economic Growth* in 1967 (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 30).

<sup>45</sup> “*Problematique*” is a deliberate choice word here, since from the very beginning the members of the Club and their publications referred to their main arguments and concerns under with the word “*problematique*”, which emphasized the “interconnectivity of the (defined) global problems” (Mehr, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> These meetings and the actors who involved in them will be discussed later in this section.

groups in many places, to arouse appreciation of the *nature of the crisis* and the need to consider new policies, attitudes and courses of action to ensure the continuity of mankind and to cultivate a *new humanism* conducive to world peace, *social justice* and individual self-fulfilment.” (Italics by myself, Malaska & Vapaavuori, 1984).

But the most critical emphasis that they voiced was:

“On the root causes of the *systemic crisis* by defining and communicating the need for, the vision and the elements of a *new economy*, which produces real wealth and well-being; which does not degrade our natural resources and provides meaningful jobs and sufficient income for all people. The new programme will also address underlying values, beliefs and paradigms” (Italics by myself, Mehr, 2014, p. 9).

There, we see a reference to the impacts of the “systemic crisis” that Peccei and his fellow Club members defined and a called for a “new economy” that will seek the inequalities and the natural degradation of the existing system caused. Hence, from early on, the Club’s emphasis was towards the economic, social/political and ecological ills that the growth-oriented liberal productivity model occurred on the systemic level. Here, we can safely derive references to our theoretical framework, and argue that the systemic crisis that the Club is referring to is the crisis of Fordism as an accumulation regime, mode of regulation and mode of societalization. And by suggesting a new economy that will address and resolve the issues raised in their *problematique*, they refer to abandoning growth in exchange for a steady-state or downscaled economy. Yet, there are very interesting dichotomies regarding how and by whom this change will be tackled, which will be dealt with later on in detail in this section.

### **2.1.1. Two pillars: the role of the OECD and Georgescu-Roegen**

Now, we will tackle two pillars that paved the way to the formation of the Club of Rome and the theoretical background of the *Limits of Growth* in detail (Meadows et al., 1972). The first pillar is the role of the OECD in the formation of the Club of Rome, in terms of the discourse it created and the “brain team” that it provided for the Club. The second pillar is the work and the vantage point that Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen brought into the growth critique, and how his convergence and later divergence with the Club is a telling illustration of the Club’s shifting attention and discourse. Both these pillars have fundamental and long-lasting impacts on the works of the Club and the emergence of the hegemonic blocs within the Club. Moreover, based on these two pillars, we are able to see the origins and shifts in the perspective and discourse of the Club in years.

The first pillar is the impact of the prominent OECD members to the Club of Rome, in providing the brain team and accessibility to the Club of Rome publications. The connections between the Club and the OECD are quite crucial to be identified and discussed. On the one hand, their collaboration seems quite ironic at first glance. It is because the primary aim and function of the OECD<sup>47</sup> was to promote and maintain economic growth (Fordist accumulation regime and its recently establishing international political regulation and mode of societalization under the values of Western modernity). As discussed above, the Club was founded with the initiative of Aurelio Peccei, but he was not alone in his views and willingness to tackle the systemic crisis, and the “crisis of the modern men”. Similar discussions and concerns were apparent in one of the most prominent international organizations, the OECD.

As introduced above briefly, Thorkil Kristensen, the organization’s first SG and one of the most influential figures in the OECD history, shared most of Peccei’s concerns and was voicing them under what he called “problems of modern society”. Despite coming from conservative-liberal politics, he has been a long-time supporter of his native Danish farmers’ interests in his two terms in office as Finance Minister. He was also a key figure in implementing the Marshall Plan successfully in Denmark in the late 1950s, which paved the way for the SG position. Before coming to this position, he had already begun taking part in discussions that questioned the pursuit of increasing the GDP. Kristensen especially warned that economic growth should not be correlated with increase in welfare directly (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 31).

The second figure that played a crucial role in bringing environmental issues and growth criticism into the OECD agenda was Alexander King, a Scottish chemist and environmentalist and was also a close friend of Kristensen. He was a very influential actor in the OECD, where he took part in for nearly two decades as the Director of the Science Committee and was – rather ironically – famous for his adaptation of growth models to increase performance in fields like science, education and productivity. However, as of 1960s, he began to express his great concerns about increasing economic growth’s impact on ecological degradation and was highly hesitant towards nuclear energy. King was especially concerned about the ever-improving technology and how it is presented to and perceived by the society as a facilitating miracle. In

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<sup>47</sup> Originally founded as OEEC (Organisation for European Economic Co-operation) in 1948, the aim of the organization was to implement the Marshall Aid and administer the post-war reconstruction of Europe. Then in 1961, with the inclusion of the US, Canada and 3 years later Japan; it was renamed as OECD and its main objectives were adjusted in accordance with the Cold War setting and productivity-oriented growth economics. (Schmelzer, 2016; Schmelzer, 2017, p. 30)

this regard, he argued that aiming for higher growth rates and increasing productivity “is absurd” both ecologically and economically, to keep the technology improving (King, 2006).

In relation with the King’s views and approach, the Science Committee’s growth criticism enhanced in scope, due to their collaborations with not only economists but also sociologists and political scientists. In time, the Committee began to be known as “the trouble-makers” of the OECD (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 32). Despite having this unamiable reputation, due to King’s significant influence and recognition in the organization and the fact that Kristensen shares the same concerns, the Committee’s scepticism towards growth and acknowledgement of the environmental and social aspects of their criticism began to influence all debates in the OECD in the late 1960s. These debates stimulated other initiatives outside the OECD. One of them was the “International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)” which was founded in 1972, as a result of a process that began in the auspices of the OECD in 1966. The main goal was to improve the “East-West dialogue” and touch upon the “unwanted by-products of economic growth, industrialization and urbanization” in which “all advanced industrialized nations face” (Schmelzer, 2017, pp. 32-33). A very interesting characteristic of this initiative was that it was initiated by the Ford Foundation in collaboration with the US administration at the time. This interesting example shows how much the growth criticism within the OECD in this period was influential on creating the urge to question (or seem to question) the very accumulation strategy – economic growth and productivity growth – of Fordism by the Ford Company itself.

Despite these developments and the undeniable influence of the OECD on setting up debates on the soundness of growth, there was an increasing tension between the Science Committee and the rest of the organization. In this environment, King and Kristensen were questioning the ability of the OECD as an international political institution on initiating action rather than just triggering debates. As a governmental organization, they argued that the OECD had bureaucratic and political limits on initiating such disputable discussions, set aside taking immediate action on them. King commented on that time by saying that they were “...faced with the extra-ordinary arrogance of the economist, the naivety of the natural scientist, the ignorance of the politician, and the bloody-mindedness of the bureaucrat” (King, 1970 in Schmelzer, 2017, p. 33). Filled with such concerns, the idea of having an independent organization to tackle the social and environmental outcomes of the growth economy was becoming imminent. Henceforth, the first encounter of King and Peccei in 1967 was not coincidental. Peccei, who was the head of Fiat at the time, was a well-known figure by then

addressing to issues related to economic growth i.e. resource deprivation, techno-mania and unbridled population growth. As they realized they share the same beliefs and concerns regarding what they call the “problems of the modern man and the modern world” and agreed that institutions like the OECD cannot address these issues at an urgency and swiftness that they aspire (King, 1981). Consequently, Peccei found the required common-visioned partners along with accessibility and credibility through their connection with the OECD; whilst King found the “right blood” to initiate the efforts for an independent organization. In this picture, the birth of the Club of Rome became indispensable. Later, the founding cadre was completed by another key collaborator and consultant of the OECD projects, Erich Jantsch, which made two of the four<sup>48</sup> founding fathers of the Club from OECD origin (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 34)<sup>49</sup>. To see the inbreeding of the Club from the OECD more clearly, not just the Club’s founding four and the brain team, but also nearly all the signatories of the *Limits to Growth* in 1972 were (either at the time or in the past) affiliated with the OECD (ibid, p. 37).

In relation to this marriage between the OECD and the Club, many of the OECD projects and conferences were held in collaboration with the full participation of the Club’s members. One event that has quite interesting highlights was the “Working Symposium on Long-Range Forecasting and Planning” in 1968, which resulted with the famous “Bellagio Declaration”. First highlight was that the Symposium was held by the OECD with the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation. Second highlight was the rapprochement with certain MIT scientists on modelling and projecting, who then became the members of the Club and played a crucial role on the calculations in the *Limits to Growth* report in 1972. Third was the open call for a “planetary emergency” and the need for an international planning, that needs to be achieved with an utmost “apolitical and technocratic approach”. However, this point on international planning requires further clarification. On the one hand, what the signatories of the declaration were aspiring for with a “technocratic approach” was an approach that is shaped outside of any political, economic and social ideological affiliations. On the other hand, the most important message of the declaration was to warn against the utmost reliance on technologies and reject the “technocratic belief” that science can be the remedy for the all the (unavoidable) problems that will result from the pursuit unlimited economic growth.

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<sup>48</sup> Fourth member was Hugo Thiemann, who was affiliated with the Battelle Institute, a prominent non-profit technology company based in the US, and later became the research manager of Nestle (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 34).

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed list of actors and projects that display the deep connection between the OECD and the Club of Rome, see Schmelzer (2017), Table 1.

With that being said, the declaration was a ground-breaking one in terms of its intense criticism of economic growth and defiance of techno-fixes, as well as the new computer-assisted planning model that they suggested to quantify their warnings on infinite economic growth. Moreover, it made the *problematique* of the Club more apparent than ever, as well as their critique on growth. To quote from Peccei himself, the declaration identified:

“The present state of disorganization of the world system, the uncontrolled forces we unleash against its compartmented structure, the exponential growth of interacting phenomena, many of them approaching critical maxima...is bound to bring civilization as we understand it, and possibly all mankind, to its gravest crisis and even to assured disaster in a not distant future.” (Jantsch, 1968, p. 518)

The declaration also gained the Club the early recognition before the *Limits to Growth* which provided them with an all-time fame. It is now time to move on to the second pillar that we identified earlier in this section with regards to the consolidation of the Club’s theoretical and methodological framework.

The second pillar is the pivotal contribution of Georgescu-Roegen to the theoretical framework of the Club. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen was a Romanian-born mathematician and studied statistics in Sorbonne before coming to Harvard in 1934. In the short period of 18 months that he had been in Harvard Economics Department, he developed many of his fundamental criticism towards the excessive quantification of economics and the exclusion of the study of economics from the political, social and environmental realities (Georgescu-Roegen, 1935)<sup>50</sup>. In the light of his merging interests in physics, mathematics, economy and the environmental discussions throughout the 1960s, he wrote his ground-breaking book *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* in 1971. In this book, Georgescu-Roegen instrumentalized the laws of thermodynamics to show the impact of the economic processes on nature, by re-formulating the approach towards nature and scarcity in economics. His primary claim in this regard is built upon the law of entropy, which is the irreversible dissipation of energy in the form of heat after its use (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Burkett, 2005; Koch, 2011, p. 179). As growth economics require more economic activity that increases the need for energy, Georgescu-Roegen argued

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<sup>50</sup> His criticism became firmer as he got back to Romania in 1936. There he observed that even the most fundamental principles of classical economics and marginal theory are not applicable to the still agrarian and underdeveloped economy of his home country. His surprise was even bigger for when he returned to the US in 1948 and faced with the even more orthodox neo-classical economics that developed in his absence and how diversity-blind his fellow economists were (Levallois, 2010, p. 3).

that the scarcity of these resources will get sooner as we use them increasingly more.<sup>51</sup> Also, he included that *no* technological progress – which themselves require more use of energy – can prevent this. Thus, because economic process is by nature entropic, the pursuit of economic growth must be abandoned, and preferably must be reversed; to “stop the “waste” of energy in “non-necessary” uses, so as to preserve it for the sake of future generations” (Levallois, 2010, p. 3; Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, pp. 176-177).<sup>52</sup>

Despite the staggering claims of the book and the increasing recognition of Georgescu-Roegen in the field of economics, the book received very few commentaries from the mainstream journals. The only review from the *Journal of Economic Literature* did not even tackle the main arguments of the book and commented that it lacks scientific explanations to justify its broad philosophical claims and economic projections (Adelman, 1972). The commending reception, as can be expected, came from the heterodox economists and praised the interdisciplinary growth criticism of the book, especially on consumption (Schlegel et al., 1973). However, Georgescu-Roegen was aspiring for a wider audience to open his growth criticism into discussion. He fulfilled this desire when he contacted with the authors of the *Limits to Growth*, which published a year later from *The Entropy Law*. He offered Dennis Meadows to write a comprehensive rebuttal against the criticism to the *Limits to Growth* received.

With his essay *Energy and Economic Myths* (1975), he responded the mainstream backlash to the report, by saying that objecting the report’s computer models and structural equations – which neoclassical themselves were fond of for the last three decades very much – is a hypocrisy and is primarily because they are not instrumentalized for a growth-favoured study (Levallois, 2010, p. 6). In relation, he criticized that the deep trust of the neoclassicals on the new resource reserves that will be discovered in the future with the help of new technologies that will compensate the depleted ones. Moreover, he argued that the warnings of the report on

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<sup>51</sup> First, natural resources with “low entropy” get transformed into energy, and then into waste which has “high entropy” in production process (of goods or a form energy such as heat from coal etc.). This means that in every (production) process that a form of energy is used (in the form of natural resources in economic activity), there occurs a “...portion of free and unbound energy declines by comparison with that of bound and dissipated energy, which can no longer be converted into work” (Koch, 2011, pp. 19-20). Second, any energy that is acquired from any natural resources can only be used once. Therefore, because resources can only be used for once and the waste they create have high entropy (which is creates an unavailable energy in the form heat), all natural resources are actually finite (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971, p. 7; Daly, 1973).

<sup>52</sup> Not surprisingly, the book created great controversy among scholars of economics and physics. The major criticism was that Georgescu-Roegen was preaching for a doomsday scenario without adequate scientific justifications. Many argued that unless he comes up with an “entropymetre” that will project his claims, which will show when the growth should be abandoned, his work remain premonitory yet irrelevant (Levallois, 2010, p. 3).

the resource depletion, pollution and population growth cannot be ignored (Georgescu-Roegen, 1975). Accordingly, he suggested a “bioeconomic program” under which he presented eight points that is necessary to be realized. These points consisted of; 1) supporting underdeveloped nations to make them achieve a good yet not luxurious life, whilst simultaneously downgrading the economy and lifestyle in the developed world, 2) abolishing borders and enabling free movement of all people (which will help to realize the former point), 3) eliminating industries like fashion, and 4) downsizing the world population (Georgescu-Roegen, 1975, p. 378). Some of these points were even more ambitious, such as the prohibition of war and in relation the abolishment of the military industry. This obviously radical “manifestation” was a telling example of Georgescu-Roegen’s robust stance on his views of how the downscaling of the economy can and should take place.

Although the marginality of his claims, *Energy and Economic Myths* (1975) was received with great interest and was reprinted the following year. Furthermore, since it was primarily written as a response to critiques of the *Limits to Growth*, the synergy between the Club and Georgescu-Roegen was now complete. Consequently in 1977, Georgescu-Roegen became a full-time member of the Club of Rome. This intersection was crucial for several aspects. First, it was a breaking point for Georgescu-Roegen’s career, which enabled him to reach the wide audience he aspired for. His wider recognition was important because in spite of the radicalness of his suggestions, they were quite influential on planting the seeds for the ideas and the framework of the second generation degrowth which we will discuss later. Second, in relation to the former, the espousal of the Georgescu-Roegen’s ideas by the Club provides us with a base point, to evaluate how the interests and the focus of the Club has changed in years. These changes in the agenda, discourse and the touchstones of the Club occurred as a result of the transformations in the labour process, mode of regulation, mode of societalization from Fordist to post-Fordist accumulation regime that we discussed in Chapter 1. Now we will pass onto the dormant phase, that will display the short-lived coalition between the Club and Georgescu-Roegen, and the shift in the Club’s overall growth critique.

## **2.2. THE “DORMANT PHASE” AND THE TRANSITION FROM GROWTH CRITIQUE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

In our periodization, the dormant phase signifies the time period in the history of growth criticism where the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism gradually comes into existence as of early 1980s, until 2008 which marks both the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the 2008

Degrowth Conference in Paris. As a result of the modifications in the labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization in the post-Fordist accumulation regime, the theoretical, discursive and practical lenses used for tackling and referring to the “problems of the modern society” and environmental issues has drastically changed. The most significant change, however, was visible in the estrangement from the growth critique. This robustly impacted the way that the environmental and social problems are tackled, which dominated the discussions in the previous two decades. And because of this very estrangement, this “sub-generation” of degrowth is preferred to be called as the “dormant phase” rather than the second generation after the first one – which is shaped by the key impact of the Club of Rome and the works and influences of other prominent figures in shaping the growth critique in the late 1960s and 1970s. Here, one might rightfully ask why this phase is tackled under this periodization of degrowth if it is a divergence from that very growth critique.

The answer to that question lays exactly in the fact that *when* and *how* this divergence from the growth critique took place. In the very eve of the shift to post-Fordist accumulation regime and the neoliberal mode of regulation, one of the most fundamental goals was to re-establish the belief towards capitalist growth and technological progress. The discourse and policies of the prominent international regulatory institutions and policy-makers were modified through new modes of regulation, as well as through various modes of societalization. Hence, this period which re-frames the concept of growth and steering the ship to the waters of sustainable development and green growth is both a *symptom* and the *result* of the systemic crisis that was prevalent in most of 1960s and 1970s. In turn, growth criticism did not completely disappear from intellectual production – especially in France, which we will discuss in the next section – but was replaced by hegemonic actors with other concepts like sustainable development. Therefore, we call this period a dormant phase until it will revive almost 30 years later in 2008.

To begin with, we will make a historical introduction to the key event and actors in this period as we did in the previous section. In this regard, we will continue with the two pillars<sup>53</sup> that we

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<sup>53</sup> It is important here to mention that we will not cover some key events and developments for the sustainable development discourse and neoliberal environmental regulation in the 1980s to the early 2000s, that are not directly related to our main pillars and narrative. To name a few that we will not include into our discussion here are e.g. the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (also known as the Brundtland Commission) in 1987, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Treaty and Summits from 1992 onwards or the UN’s Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) of 1990s. The reason for that is that despite these are concomitant and important events within the dormant phase we attributed, and are important in terms of the consolidation of the sustainable development discourse, our contextualization and main focus in our periodization leave them outside of our narrative.

analysed in the first generation, to better understand the continuities and discontinuities. In doing so, we will be able to unlock some of the precursor events that heralded the upcoming developments in this period, mainly observed in the Club's projects and approaches of some key figures. Therefore, we will be able to see the real-life indicators of the transition to the dormant phase.

### **2.2.1. Two pillars: the ascend of the OECD vs. the descend of the Club of Rome and Georgescu-Roegen**

As discussed above, the prevalence of the growth criticism in the OECD was a crucial moment in the history of growth-oriented liberal productivity model. Being one of the key post-War institutions that promote Western-type of growth and development, the emergence and the dominance of growth criticism in the organization was a defining occurrence. However, the member countries began to express their discomfort with this novel growth-sceptic attitude in the OECD. Also, despite the predominance of the ideational standpoints and the political objectives of the prominent figures like Kristensen and King, the tension between them and other committees were never fully appeased (Schmelzer, 2017, pp. 43-44). In relation, the “growth supporters” in the OECD increased their efforts to marginalize and mystify the growth critique in and outside the organization through various channels and tactics. In the light of these, Kristensen and King acknowledged the capacity of an intergovernmental organization to lead such discussions was significantly limited. Thus, the co-initiative of Kristensen and King to delegate these discussions to an “independent organization” – i.e., the Club of Rome – was a result of these struggles.

As early as 1975, just three years after the release of the *Limits to Growth*, a project called the “Interfutures” in the OECD was commenced (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 45). The research that was published by this group in 1979 was an almost complete rejection and negation of the main theses of the *Limits to Growth*. From the use of pesticides in agriculture to the contamination of the oceans and clean water resources, and to the “climatic fluctuations” that raised worries in terms of the stability of the agricultural productivity in a world with an increasingly growing population; the report claimed that all these are worrisome developments needs to be tackled carefully by all countries (OECD, 1979). However, the report concluded that *none* of these developments were unavoidable and could be decelerated with the improvements in the chemical industry and promising technological developments in other sectors i.e., biotechnology, energy and so on. In addition, the problems that has been mentioned could be

bettered or reversed if “the economic growth of the world countries” is to be collectively continued and improved (OECD, 1979, p. 61). This affirmative position for the potential of economic growth and techno-fixes constituted the first rejection for the *Limits to Growth*.

The second rejection was towards the holistic approach of the Club of Rome. The report refused the claim of a global and long-term impact of the economic growth on the environment can be foreseeable and argued that such problems might only be experienced on the national/local level and could be overcome with the efforts of national governments and collective action if necessary (OECD, 1979, pp. 61-62). The report also mentioned an impending “transition period” for the regulation of the economic, political and environmental concerns that is addressed, and accentuated that all nations – especially developed countries – must reform their institutions and policies to adjust the requirements of the “next 25 years” (ibid). Primary emphasis was put on the investments directed to the emerging and existing markets in biotechnologies to improve industrial agriculture, to promote the initiatives towards alternative energy resources, and also in information technologies and climate studies (OECD, 1979, pp. 63-64). Also, it was suggested that the developed countries should provide financial and technical assistance to the Third World in this transition period, especially with regards to agricultural reforms. Whilst at home, industrialized nations was suggested to take market-level measures to compensate the negative environmental impact of the agricultural activities (ibid). In short, the report concluded that “rather than physical limits”<sup>54</sup>, economic growth has “... political, economic, and social limits that had to be overcome by a mix of market-oriented structural reforms, environmental policies, and some redistribution” (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 45)<sup>55</sup>. The Interfutures report was crucial not only because it denied the urgency and the diagnosis of the – frankly, the physical finiteness of growth and the associated socio-economic ills of pursuing it – but also because it precluded the neoliberal mode of regulation on environmental issues and their sympathy towards the notion of “sustainable growth”. For obvious reasons, the report symbolized the “divorce” between the OECD and the Club of Rome, and also proclaimed the re-affirmation of the hegemony of the growth supporters in both the OECD and

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<sup>54</sup> “Even though mankind must concern itself increasingly with the impact of economic activities on the environment in all its forms, the economic growth of the countries of the world taken as a whole can continue during the next half-century without encountering long-term physical limits (...).” (OECD, 1979, p. 61)

<sup>55</sup> “Thus, the protection of the physical environment does not for the moment constitute an obstacle to the development of economic activities. In a number of cases, it can even make for a more harmonious pattern of growth that better reflects the aspirations of the population. This is a field in which governments, both of developed and of developing countries, must be ever ready to act, whether it be to finance research to improve the state of our knowledge, or to take conservation, or to solve local difficulties which can be considerable.” (ibid).

also in the public and international political scenes. Nevertheless, the legacy of King and Kristensen paved the way for the creation of new indexes in the 1990s<sup>56</sup>, that complement and measure “human development” and the “quality of life”<sup>57</sup> besides the share of per capita GDP. However, none of these developments prevented the complete disappearance of growth criticism from the discussions in the English-speaking world at the dawn of the neoliberal transition in the 1980s.

Meanwhile, the Club of Rome was not immune to this transition period. After their groundbreaking first report *Limits to Growth* in 1972, the Club’s inclination towards the use of computer modelling and data series for environmental projections steadily heightened. In each of the four reports<sup>58</sup> that the Club published in the 1970s after the *Limits to Growth*, their main concerns and standing points still remained relevant, but the intensity of their fundamental growth criticism has become more and more latent. Instead, they began to focus more on the environmental limits to growth and align with steady-state economics,<sup>59</sup> rather than the social and political limits that they stressed previously. Anyhow, the work of the Club throughout the 1970s was still in line with their initial theses on growth criticism and continued to be cautionary towards the pursuit of growth. Since the discursive analysis of these reports will be done extensively in the upcoming sections, we will move on with other decisive elements that triggered this “smoothing” in the stance of the Club. For now, we will unfold three points that played an important role in shaping the Club’s attitude and led to the absorption of their growth criticism by hegemonic blocs and discourses in the dormant phase.

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<sup>56</sup> This change in understanding was also coupled with the shift from the “sustainable growth” to “sustainable development” rhetoric in the 1990s, and it was primarily linked to the impacts of the neoliberal restructuring on various developing countries and especially in Latin America. The swift transition to the neoliberal free market economy and its novel regulatory and social paradigm was resulted with various economic and political crises in the 1990. Therefore, these measures on human development were a way of countervailing the devastating outcomes of these crises on the people of the effected countries.

<sup>57</sup> One of the most influential works in this period was developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum in the 1980s and 1990s, under the “Capability Approach”, which enriched the human development concept and re-framed many others like well-being and quality of life. They argued an individuals’ well-being and welfare can be better understood based on their “capability” to fulfil their wants and needs, rather than just being “free to do so” or based on their socio-economic status (Sen & Nussbaum, 1993; Sen, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Respectively, Mesarovic et al. (1975), Tinbergen, 1976, *Reshaping the International Order*; Laszlo et al. (1977,) *Goals for Mankind*; Gabor et al. 1978, *Beyond the Age of Waste*; Botkin et al. 1979, *No Limits to Learning*; de Montbrial, 1979, *Energy: The Countdown*. See, “Club of Rome. (2021, January 22). *Publications*. <https://www.clubofrome.org/publications/>”.

<sup>59</sup> Steady-state economics was primarily developed by Herman Daly, a pupil of Georgescu-Roegen and strived for “stable” growth rates to circumscribe energy output rather than necessitating a downscaling of the economy (Daly, 1973).

First, the Club's founding cadre was consisted of a group of wealthy, primarily European white-men; who were either businessmen, industrialists or senior engineers and scientists. The membership to the Club was based on direct invitations and there was no application process for the recruitment of new members. In that sense, it can be very well said that the Club had a highly private character, since the main cadre prioritized their personal connections and appraised the overall "profile" of the prospective members as equally as the ideational and professional congruence of them. Therefore, they represented an elite group of men, coming from the industrialized capitalist West, who have put their initial emphasis on the viability of their well-designed computer models (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 46). Here, it can be argued that the naming of the organization as a "Club" beside anything else could be considered a precursor for the "gentlemen's Club" that it will turn into. In addition to all this, their immanent connections with the OECD accentuated their privileged and Eurocentric point of view. In relation, the perspective of the Club to solve the *problematique* they put forward suggested a very top-down approach and modernist outlook. The Club was critical towards the promotion of Western modernization in addition to its growth criticism, and suggested an alternative perspective in their *problematique*, on what should be prioritized and be cautious about for the rest of the century on the global scale.

This approach was apparent beginning from the early speeches of Aurelio Peccei to the reports and public statements of the Club of Rome, in which they suggested how to undo and remedy the consequences of growth that the Third World experienced in the post-War political economic structure. However, their way of voicing and realizing these goals was no different than the essentialist and modernist approach of the post-War regulatory institutions that they criticized. As a result, the Club's point of view could not be differentiated from the top-down "neoclassical prescription writing" to the Third World, which they criticized for being both inadequate and Eurocentric and modernist to address the *problematique* that they defined. This pitfall of the Club enforced the coming of age of "liberal environmentalism", which can be considered as the most specific outcome and dominant perspective of the dormant phase. Primarily coined by the works and the approach of the OECD in the 1970s – which then represented the tension between King and the rest of the organization – this approach on environmentalism was characterized by:

"framing environmental problems in such a way as to make them seemingly compatible with continued growth and with the international free market regime, thus paving the ground for what has been characterized as 'liberal environmentalism'" (Schmelzer, 2017, p. 46).

Consequently, with the hegemonic takeover of the growth supporters in the OECD throughout the 1970s and the reflections of those debates and power struggles in the Club of Rome, the liberal environmentalist approach began to absorb the growth criticism in the Club as well. This brings us to the next point.

Second point is the sudden passing of Aurelio Peccei in 1984, which represented an important turning point in the Club's trajectory. Already distressed by the developments in the OECD and the upbringings of the transition period, the death of the "founding father" of the Club brought about both a vacancy of an influential leader and a change in content and methodology in the upcoming works (Mehr, 2014). Peccei's main influence was his "holistic approach" towards the identification and the analysis of the problems of humankind, namely the *problematique* of the Club, which emphasizes the "global interconnectivity" and the long-term impact of the issues that him and the Club defined. This holistic approach dominated the perspective and works of the Club beginning from the *Limits to Growth* and dissolved gradually after the third report of the year 1980, *Tiers-Monde: Trois Quarts du Monde* (Guernier, 1980). This was coupled with the overall ideational changes in the transition period, like 'liberal environmentalism' just mentioned and several other neoliberal imaginaries like knowledge-based economy<sup>60</sup> (Jessop & Sum, 2006, p. 8). In relation, the interest of the Club towards microelectronics and information technologies has steadily increased in the 1980s. This was not surprising given the Club's signature use of computer modelling and information technologies in modelling its *problematique* since its foundation. Later, in accordance with their new research interests, their holistic approach evolved into more case-based reports and lost its comprehensive scope. Moreover, together with the increasing dominance of the growth ideology and appraisal of free market logic, curbed the original growth criticism. In time, they adopted the sustainable growth discourse even more visibly rather than criticizing and warning against the ills of growth. Consequently, when the hegemonic takeover of the *growthism* (Parrique, 2019) in the new regulatory and ideational realm of neoliberalism was accompanied by the loss of a highly charismatic leader<sup>61</sup>, it resulted with a profound dissolution in the Club's way of addressing and studying their *problematique*. Therefore, as of mid-1980s, the Club has turned into more of a "think-tank", leaving its holistic approach and visionary character aside.

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<sup>60</sup> Also referred to as "knowledge regime" or "regimes of knowledge" (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015)

<sup>61</sup> Some scholars argued that Peccei was more like a charismatic leader and his wide-ranging connections and fundraising capabilities led the Club of Rome to become more of a "Club of Peccei". Thus, his sudden loss made the Club lose their fulcrum and eased their initial growth criticism and holistic approach of their *problematique* to be absorbed (Moll, 1991; Kanninen, 2013).

Third and the last point, can be read in two ways depending on where one reads it, as we will tackle the divergence *and/or* isolation of Georgescu-Roegen from the Club and from the mainstream growth criticism. This is an illustrative incident of how much the growth criticism of the Club was hegemonically altered. As we mentioned in the previous section, Georgescu-Roegen's radical growth criticism in the early 1970s was highly appreciated and credited by the *Limits to Growth* authors and eventually he was invited to the Club and became a full-time member in 1977. Their rapprochement was specifically prompted by Georgescu-Roegen's rebuttal against the critiques of *Limits to Growth* in 1975, in which he specifically supports the growth criticism in the report. However, as the Club drifted away from its fundamental growth criticism and the holistic approach towards its *problematique*, Georgescu-Roegen began to express his concerns and disturbance by this change in perspective and practice.<sup>62</sup> A considerable historical note here is that the originator of the steady-state economics, Herman Daly was student of Georgescu-Roegen's who developed his renowned steady-state economics based on his professor's interpretation of the law of entropy. He served as an important mediator who helped the works of Georgescu-Roegen to be acknowledged by the Club (endnote, Levallois, 2010, p. 5). Nevertheless, from early on, Georgescu-Roegen rejected Daly's steady-state economics and argued that avoiding the use of high entropic fossil fuels and preventing the exhaustion of natural resources cannot be achieved by a steady-state. Thus, the downscaling of the (industrialized) world economies is a must (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 177). Therefore, any idea that does not emphasize the absolute abandoning of growth was not reasonable and by any means acceptable for Georgescu-Roegen (Martinez-Alier et al. 2010). In his eyes, the Club's increasing sympathy towards a steady-state economy as opposed to emphasizing the need for downscaling was an outrageous "watering down" of the necessary growth critique (Gowdy, 2015). Moreover, he argued that the increasing computerization and quantification of the methodology in the Club's intellectual production shifted the attention from the social ills of growth and the much needed manifestation of certain public policy initiatives to be taken. In Georgescu-Roegen's words:

"... I had since long grown out of sympathy with the activity of the Club itself. [...After the report of the Meadows group, the Club began 'dancing' around the computers, instead of moving in force to take the banners against the production of armaments, against luxurious

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<sup>62</sup> As early as his membership to the Club was getting completed, he expressed that after the first report, "(...) the Club has taken a direction that is almost identical to that of standard economists, who claim that with their models and their computers they can bring about the economic New Jerusalem." Levallois (2010, p. 6).

waste of natural resources by the developed economies, against the dreadful inequalities among nations.”<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, the Club of Rome soon turned out to be a disappointment for Georgescu-Roegen, as an outlet which he could express his ideas for an urgent and radical systemic change and destroy the myths of growth. He could not compromise with the utmost trust and reliance of the Club to the computerized models and scientific (planet) management<sup>64</sup>, whilst he doubted the capacity of any mathematical or technical means to project social realities and environmental catastrophes (Levallois, 2010, p. 7). In this context, it can be said that he refused to play the role of “useful idiots” after he lost his belief in the Club’s intellectual production. In addition to this ideational divergence, Georgescu-Roegen was already an unorthodox figure to become a member, since he had a very different background than that of the Club’s founding cadre. Despite his high reputation in academic circles and interdisciplinary background, he lacked high-profiled international connections and networking skills. In relation, he was known for his acidity and quarrelsome character, and was not familiar or reliant to play by the rules of politics. Thus, he did not fulfil the “elite outlook” that was very much appreciated by the Club but was there for his excellent scientific credentials to boost the Club’s scientific profile. Hence, the changing outlook of the Club in the transition period accelerated the isolation of Georgescu-Roegen from the “main stage”, along with his growth criticism and profound contributions to the field of bioeconomics. As a result, the promising marriage between the Club and Georgescu-Roegen came to an end; which provided the former with more scientific credibility through Georgescu-Roegen’s career and the latter with a wider audience to voice his global concerns.

The rapprochement and the divergence of Georgescu-Roegen is a highly illustrative example of the changing stance of the Club of Rome as of *Limits to Growth*. It is also a showing example of how the “real” growth criticism was not even much welcomed in the Club as well and was open to be hijacked by hegemonic fractions both within growth sceptics and by growth supporters. Moreover, the process that discredited Georgescu-Roegen and his main ideas led to a series of major transformations in both the mainstream and heterodox currents. These transformations also paved the way for the emergence of second generation growth criticism

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<sup>63</sup> “Handwriting signed by Georgescu-Roegen, at the bottom of a letter dated 8 December 1981 from the US Association for the Club of Rome, enquiring about the non-payment of the membership fees for the current year (Box 6, File “Club of Rome”, NGRP)”. Extracted from Levallois (2010, p. 6).

<sup>64</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the emergence of this term see, Elichirigoity & Fernando (1999).

that we will discuss later. In relation, all of the three points that we discussed under the transition of the Club of Rome in the dormant phase showed us that the Club was inherently sensitive to the manipulation and the absorption of its growth criticism from the very beginning.

Anyhow, perhaps to re-emphasize, the formation of the Club of Rome was still of undeniable importance. Despite the criticism that the Club has developed might seem quite fitting in a period where the post-War labour process and regulatory framework has been vigorously questioned, it was also distinctive for several reasons. First, it could address to a wider and more heterogenous audience, compared to other groups (journals and organisations of heterodox scholars, thinkers etc.) who proposed a growth criticism. Second, it was founded by a major industrialist at the time and consisted of many “in-system” actors, which was again a peculiar characteristic for a growth sceptic organisation. However, as we extensively discussed above, the Club had its own restrictions and binding characteristics that limit the scope and the content of the criticism it has put forward. Later, as a result of the developments we discussed above, we see that the Club has lost its visionary character and evolved into an elite think-tank, compromising primarily technocratic cadres.

Together with the developments in the OECD that we discussed and the hegemonic takeover of the growth supporters in both organizations and in the public sphere; it can be seen that the “transition period” associated with neoliberal restructuring, successfully absorbed the growth criticism and transformed it into “sustainable growth”. In the next section, we will see how the growth criticism revived as “degrowth” three decades after it went dormant. With reference to our previous discussions in Chapter 1 and also to our upcoming discussions in Chapter 3, the second-generation degrowth perspective in the English-speaking world came to being in a “transition period” again. As it did previously, the ascend and descend of the growth criticism coincided a similar conjunction, where the translation of the term degrowth from its original *decroissance* in the year 2008 also marks the GFC, which cannot be reduced to a merely financial crisis. Therefore, in the presence of a Triple Crisis with an ever-worse ecological crisis this time, the revival of growth criticism and the burgeoning of the second generation is not a completely new story but is open to new possibilities as well as new challenges.

### **2.3. SECOND GENERATION: DEGROWTH BECOMING THE UMBRELLA TERM**

The revival of the growth criticism in the late millennium, after its 30-years-long deep sleep, marks a breaking point for many aspects of the liberal productivity model and its associated

regulations and institutions. Everything that neoliberalism has promised regarding the perks of economic growth, could not have prevented the *Triple Crisis*. However, as thoroughly discussed in Chapter 1, the period between 1980s and late 2000s had witnessed various organic and conjunctural crisis moments. Each of these moments were affirming the projections of the early growth critiques in the 1970s. Herewith, the return of the growth criticism was more mature in its *problematique* this time and more versatile in its content and scope.

As we have discussed, the growth criticism that marked the first generation left the main stage during the dormant phase. Nevertheless, it did not disappear completely. The “remaining” growth criticism, or rather say scepticism towards a full-fledged growthmania, continued to be tackled by several scholars and currents in the English-speaking world, but more dominantly in France and Francophone circles. In relation, the remaining growth criticism has developed and thrived in France with the contributions of heterodox scholars and intellectuals here and gained its primary theoretical framework in France as well. Later, the articulation of the French critique to the first generation growth criticism paved the way for the development of the second generation growth criticism. In this regard, it is vital to recognize the main continuities and discontinuities among the first and second generation growth criticism. By doing so, we will be able to see how the variety of these influences positioned the growth criticism in a more radical place compared to the first generation.

Here, to achieve this, we will continue to build up our discussion by taking Georgescu-Roegen as our vantage point. This preference is based on several reasons. First, there is a variety of multidisciplinary and multilinguistic discussions<sup>65</sup> in the 1970s and early 2000s, that we can trace the emergence of second generation. However, including each of these discussions would both complicate and disorient the contextualization and the main emphasis of this chapter. Second, there are a number of periodization attempts and chronological historicizations that have been tackled in the literature<sup>66</sup>, which have inspired and contributed this study as well. Nevertheless, neither their context nor main goals are specifically compatible to ours. On top of that, it has been prioritized to maintain the authenticity of our periodization in this chapter and to sustain the continuity among the generations we have previously discussed. Therefore,

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<sup>65</sup> Sutter (2017)'s linguistic discussion, the development of the term *decroissance* by the French intelligentsia, exchanging between the steady-state proponents and ecological economists, impact of 1968 ideas in France and so on; also the impact of UNCCC, eco-Malthusians etc.

<sup>66</sup> To name few that has inspired the periodization in this chapter: Alier et al. (2010)'s attempt to “mapping the intellectual influences” of sustainable degrowth in the Francophone and Anglophone thinking; Muraca and Schmelzer (2017)'s regional interpretation of the second generation roots; Parrique (2019)'s types of degrowth.

we continue our narrative in this generation with the story and the concepts of Georgescu-Roegen again, as we did in the first generation and in the dormant phase.

In addition, we identified four phases to see the emergence of the second generation growth criticism; the Phase 1 (1970s), Phase 2 (1980s - 1990s), Phase 3 (2000s), Phase 4 (2008 onwards). In Phase 1 we will focus on the birth of *décroissance* as a key term in the 1970s and how it was positioned in the English-speaking world in the 1980s. This phase will be relatively brief in length compared to the following phases since we dealt with majority of the developments in this period throughout the dormant phase and also in first generation. Therefore, we will primarily focus on the emergence of the term in France. In phase 2 we will unfold the early *décroissance* vs post-developmentalism nexus and the theoretical influence the latter provided for the developments in phase 3 We will also briefly go back to our discussion about the Club of Rome, to accentuate the ruptures between the growth criticism that *décroissance* put forward vs the Club of Rome did. In phase 3, we will look at the institutionalization process of the term *décroissance* in France. Then we will display its collaborations with various anti-system movements in Southern Europe and its dissemination in Europe through a series of conferences. In phase 4, we will delve into the second generation degrowth in detail, with its relay concepts from the previous generations as well as its new contributions and emphasises. As a result of this sub-periodization, we will be able to see the emergence of the second generation growth criticism as a both unique and also cumulative process.

**Table 2.1. Introduction to phases in second generation growth criticism**

	<b>Origins of growth critical discourse</b>	<b>Manifestation in the mainstream hegemonic discourse</b>	<b>Perspectives on growth</b>	<b>Key actors and institutions</b>	<b>Main turning points and decisive events</b>	<b>Scope of influence</b>
<b>Phase 1 (1970s)</b>	Georgescu-Roegen's bioeconomics; French <i>décroissance</i> ; Limits to Growth	OECD – Club of Rome affiliation	Bioeconomic “declining state” ( <i>décroissance</i> ); steady state	Georgescu-Roegen; Club of Rome; Gorz, Amar, Charbonneau, de Closets	Georgescu-Roegen The Entropy Law 1971; <i>Limits to Growth</i> and Gorz's <i>décroissance</i> in 1972	Primarily academic, English-speaking-world and France
<b>Phase 2 (1980s-1990s)</b>	Ecological economics and steady-state; post-developmental critique	Liberal environmentalism; sustainable growth and sustainable development	Sustainable growth vs. steady-state	Georgescu-Roegen, Daly, Illich, Castoriadis, Sachs, Escobar, Latouche	<i>Décroissance</i> becoming official as a term and with its context in 1979; early encounter with post-developmental scholars in 1990s	Primarily among international organizations, and intergovernmental conferences and academic, English-speaking world
<b>Phase 3 (early 2000s)</b>	<i>décroissance</i> expanding as <i>decrescita</i> in Italy, <i>decreixement</i> in Spain; <i>decrecimiento</i> in Catalonia; articulation with anti-sustainable development and anti-globalisation activist circles	Liberal environmentalism and sustainable growth/development; UN Millennium Development Goals	Sustainable growth vs <i>décroissance</i>	Latouche, Schneider, Flipo, Cheynet and Clementin, Bonaiuti, Aries; Research & Degrowth	Discussions on <i>décroissance</i> in journals and magazines; articulation with activist movements dissemination in Italy and Spain; and evolving into a “counter-hegemonic movement”	Primarily among activist circles and social movements, latently academic; France and Southern Europe
<b>Phase 4 (2008 onwards)</b>	Degrowth	Climate capitalism; green economy and green capitalism <sup>67</sup> ; Green Stimulus; Green New Deal	Green growth vs degrowth	Research & Degrowth in France; ICTA in Catalonia, activist groups	Degrowth becoming official as a term; recognition in academia and in the English-speaking world; articulation with ecological economics and environmental justice movements	Southern Europe, Germany, France, English-speaking world, Latin America

<sup>67</sup> Green economy as a transition strategy – Green capitalism as a new form of regulation and of societal natural relations (Brand, 2013).

### 2.3.1. Phase 1: Ecological economics and state-state vs. early *décroissance*

As the notions of sustainable growth and development took over the scene in the English-speaking world in the 1980s, the influence of the bioeconomic approach of Georgescu-Roegen remained only in the works of Daly on steady-state economics. In the late 1980s, with the pioneering initiative of Daly and Robert Costanza “ecological economics” was founded as a formal discipline and organized around the *Ecological Economics* journal (Costanza & Daly, 1987). They called out for “...a necessary dialogue between natural sciences and social sciences, more precisely, between economics and ecology.” (Beling et al., 2017). By doing so, Daly argued that ecological economics aims to initiate a Kuhnian paradigm shift<sup>68</sup> in economics, “to overcome the anomalies that were seen in ‘growthmania’ and to provide a suitable alternative” (Daly 1973 in Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 178), which is the steady-state. The field has accepted the works of Georgescu-Roegen<sup>69</sup> under bioeconomics as the foundation of the discipline<sup>70</sup> and advocated for “strong sustainability” compared to the “weak sustainability”<sup>71</sup> of environmental economics at the time (Martinez-Alier et al., 1998; Döring & Muraca, 2018). Moreover, they shared Georgescu-Roegen’s scepticism on mathematical modelling and techno-fixes to ecological problems. With this background, the research interests of the ecological economists have been the (bio)physical limits to growth, debates around population growth<sup>72</sup> and a recalibration towards a steady-state economics.

However, the influence of the works of Georgescu-Roegen on growth criticism was not limited with the English-speaking world. In fact, the second generation growth criticism owes both its terminological roots and its theoretical framework primarily to the French intellectuals in the

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<sup>68</sup> See more on Kuhnian paradigm shift for economics in Fine (2002).

<sup>69</sup> A formal invitation was sent out to Georgescu-Roegen in 1988 to join the journal’s Advisory Editorial Board, which he kindly declined in line with his strong discontentment with the term sustainability and discussions around it which we discussed earlier (Levallois, 2010, p. 1).

<sup>70</sup> The formation of the discipline was also in response to the Brundtland Report in 1987 that formally introduced the term “sustainable development”, which most ecological economists approached critically (Beling et al., 2017, p. 2).

<sup>71</sup> “From a weak sustainability perspective, our economic system is neither embedded into ecosystems nor dependent on them. Accordingly, the economy is seen as potentially limitless, and growth is encouraged in order to guarantee to future generations an increased capital stock. [...By contrast, ecological economists and advocates of strong sustainability draw on ecology, thermodynamics [...and systems theory to argue that our economic system is fundamentally embedded in natural (and social) systems and that growth (of populations, of economic activity, and of consumption) is necessarily limited by the biophysical capacities of the planet.” (Döring & Muraca, 2018, p. 17).

<sup>72</sup> This is a strong pillar in Georgescu-Roegen’s bioeconomics and a very contested debate area among ecological economists, degrowth advocates and eco-Malthusians. Since it does not have a direct relevance to our context, it will not be detailed. See a detailed discussion on demography and migration in degrowth and other respective disciplines in (Parrique, 2019, pp. 414-425).

1970s. For instance, the term ‘*décroissance*’ – French for degrowth – was used for the first time by André Gorz in 1972 in a debate<sup>73</sup> on *Limits to Growth*, referring to the Georgescu-Roegen’s “declining state” (Georgescu-Roegen, 1977; Demaria et al., 2013, p. 195). However, as thoroughly discussed in Sutter (2017) and Parrique (2019), this first reference did not correspond to what degrowth encompasses and what it connotes today<sup>74</sup>. More so, this usage was a direct translation for the French word “decline”, referring to a reduction in the scale of production and consumption (Parrique, 2019: 173). Yet still, this incident gained the term a recognition in France and from 1972 onwards, *décroissance* was began to be used by French scholars and intellectuals for the discussions around the *Limits to Growth* and growth criticism overall<sup>75</sup> (Amar, 1973; Charbonneau, 1974). Nevertheless, the term *décroissance* became official few years later, when it was used by Grinevald and Rens in a book titled “*Demain la décroissance* (1979)”. It was chosen with the approval of Georgescu-Roegen, who was also fluent in French, as a reference both to his declining state *and* to his critique of growth imaginaries (Parrique, 2019, p. 178). In relation, each author who referred to *décroissance* in this phase also implied that a criticism of growth economics cannot be thought apart from the criticism of the growth imaginaries (ibid). The growth imaginaries in this phase primarily referred to consumerism, productivism and commercialism; which will then be coupled with modernism and developmentalism in the next phase. For his key influence in the theoretical and terminological evolution of the term *décroissance*, Georgescu-Roegen is attributed as the “father of degrowth” (both as a concept and as a term) by second generation degrowth scholars (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 176; Sutter 2017, p. 1; Döring & Muraca, 2018, p. 4).

### **2.3.2. Phase 2: the emergence of *décroissance* and post-developmentalism nexus**

It can be seen that Georgescu-Roegen’s initial influence for the term *décroissance* was not limited with his (bio)economic approach, but also encapsulated a critique of growth imaginaries as well. In this phase, we will see that this aspect will be amplified with the contextual contribution of the post-developmentalists scholars and intellectuals<sup>76</sup> to

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<sup>73</sup> “Is the earth’s balance, for which no-growth [non-croissance] – or even degrowth [décroissance] – of material production is a necessary condition, compatible with the survival of the capitalist system?” (Gorz, 1972, translated by Sutter, 2017, p. 31).

<sup>74</sup> There is a comprehensive discussion on the linguistic origins of the term, as well as on the context that it has been developed and used for the first time in Sutter (2017).

<sup>75</sup> See for further discussions on the origins and the wide range of connotations of degrowth in (Parrique, 2019, pp. 171-233)

<sup>76</sup> These include Arturo Escobar, Gilbert Rist, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Majid Rahnema, Wolfgang Sachs, Ashish Nandy, Shiv Visvanathan, Gustavo Esteva, François Partant, Bernard Charbonneau, Ivan Illich (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 196).

*décroissance* (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 196). Here, we should remind that Georgescu-Roegen was significantly concerned about the mirage that the sustainable development promoted. He argued that the concept appears sensitive for the needs of the Third World, whereas in reality it provides a conscientious veil for the continuation of the economic growth and the Western lifestyle in the developed world (Georgescu-Roegen, 1986). His ideas intersected with the post-development scholars<sup>77</sup> at the time, who from 1980s onwards rejected the globalization of the socio-economic configurations of the developed world, arguing that such an attempt is a mental, cultural and *historical colonization of the imaginaries* of the people outside the global North (Latouche, 2009<sup>78</sup>; Demaria et al. 2013, p. 192; Beling et al., 2017, p. 2). As another reminder, Georgescu-Roegen argued that the steady-state model was more welcomed by the scholars of the developed countries because it suggests a “pause” in their existing life standards and practices. However, the same pause that the steady-state proponents suggested corresponds to “a life sentence to misery” for the Third World (Georgescu-Roegen, 1989, p. 167 in Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 178; Döring & Muraca, 2018, p. 20). We also mentioned previously that for Georgescu-Roegen a steady-state is not enough to reduce our energy and material output, and that “degrowing” the scale is a must. Thus, he argued that the steady-state is not feasible both ecologically and socially. On top of that, what Georgescu-Roegen’s argue is that any plan for a “decline” should first take place in the developed and industrialized global North. This approach also became one of the most decisive characteristics of the second generation degrowth, as they aim to unveil the “social unsustainability” sustainable development promotes (Latouche, 2007; Demaria et al., 2013, p. 210).

On top of that, we see that this point accentuates the separation from Club of Rome, which fall onto the same mistake of suggesting for a top-down and Western-led change as we discussed previously. Here, this specific aspect alone is an illustrative example of how the second generation had its initial roots in Georgescu-Roegen rather than the Club of Rome. As we discussed in previous section, the *Limits to Growth* and the following reports of the Club included a similar social criticism too, yet it was a significantly less dominant and got more and more latent in each report. In this regard, we see that despite the Club’s growth criticism was transformed and then absorbed by hegemonic actors in the dormant phase, Georgescu-Roegen’s survived and thrived. Here, Demaria et al. (2019) makes a special emphasis on this

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<sup>77</sup> Esteva (1987); Amin (1990); Sachs (1992); Escobar (1995); Rahnema (1997); Rist (1997); Latouche (1993) from [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/en/cias/wiki/p\\_Post-Development.html](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/en/cias/wiki/p_Post-Development.html)

<sup>78</sup> Latouche, S., 2009. Farewell to Growth. Polity Press, Cambridge/Malden.

aspect, differentiating what we call second generation degrowth here and the arguments of Limits to Growth and the Club of Rome in general. They first state that “[a]lthough the degrowth movement emerged in the same decade and was also spurred by the Limits to Growth debate, it is distinct” (Demaria et al., 2019, p. 434). Later they ground this claim with two explanations:

“First, while the Limits to Growth debate largely only ecological limits, degrowth debates express wider concerns with democracy, justice, development and/or Westernization. Second, the understanding of limits is subtly different. The Limits to Growth argument implies a *naturalness of limits*: an external and natural scarcity to which society should adapt, or risk crash. The degrowth literature – influenced as it was by French, post-Marxist political ecologies – instead, emphasizes *the social construction of limits*. From the degrowth perspective, limits are a locus of struggle in the pursuit of a post-capitalist world.” (italics by myself, *ibid*).

Demaria et al. (2019) also add that the emergence of degrowth was through grassroots movements, whereas the Club of Rome, as we also argue in this chapter, was different as it had an elite outlook. Moreover, despite the Club’s reluctance to use a developmentalist discourse, they could not go beyond the neoclassical prescriptions to the Third World. In accordance with the framework of their global *problematique* and the profile of its founders like King and Peccei, they go further and ask whether the Club’s main concern was “...to save the capitalist system from self-destruction” (*ibid*). Here, I must say that I do not agree with this view, at least not entirely. From my review of the Club of Rome’s profile and its works so far, my impression is that what the Club has prioritized was to keep the hegemonic power relations and hierarchies intact in the future too. Schmelzer (2017: 31) shows that King, Kristensen and Peccei<sup>79</sup> were as equally worried about “hippies and student revolts” as they were on environmental degradation and “technology-out-of-control” (*ibid*). So, rather than growth-oriented capitalist accumulation, the founding cadre of the Club were more with concerned saving the capitalist power relations/class structures.

Anyhow, the 1980s and 1990s was an interesting period for the emergence of counter-hegemonic discourses, as it was significantly dominated by the sustainable development discourse. Despite the impact of these discourses and critiques in this period seem subtle, the *décroissance* was deeply influenced by currents like post-developmentalism and anti-utilitarianism; as well as disciplines like economic anthropology and political ecology during

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<sup>79</sup> Also see Malaska & Vapaavuori (2005, pp. 4-16), for a lecture speech Aurelio Peccei in 1965, to get an idea of what the Club’s early and mature vision was more concerned with.

the 1980s and 1990s (Ayres, 1996; 1998; Gorz, 1980; 1994; Latouche, 1986; 1999). Building on the blocks of these thinkers, Latouche made one of the most substantial contributions to the *décroissance* in the early millennium, with his concept of “decolonizing the imaginaries”. Primarily influenced by the works of Cornelius Castoriadis (1975) and also anti-utilitarianist perspective of Ivan Illich (1973)<sup>80</sup>, Latouche (2003; 2009)’s decolonisation of the imaginary refers to:

“...emancipating from the ideology of growth and its associated sub-ideologies (e.g., economism, utilitarianism, rationality, progress, capitalism, development, productivism, consumerism, techno-scientism).” (Parrique, 2019, p. 226).

Such decolonisation is necessary for several reasons. First, imaginaries of growth that have been indoctrinated through various channels, i.e., modes of societalization, automatically associate growth and development with progressiveness, abundance and betterment. Whereas in reality, such abundance and betterment is made possible through the depletion and worsening of another; i.e. in the case of Third World as the “other”. Therefore, the real costs and consequences of growth and development must be clarified, and decolonisation of imaginaries on a global scale should be achieved, to open space for new concepts and trajectories, where countries and individuals are not pre-determined in their actions and decisions with the *hegemony* of growth imaginaries (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 33). In that sense, *décroissance* – i.e., degrowth – is a “counter-hegemonic movement” (D’Alisa et al., 2013) because it aims to dismantle both the imaginaries of growth and the institutions of growth like capitalism, accumulation, private property and wage-labour. Moreover, Latouche’s choice of word for decolonisation is no coincidence because he also wanted to make a reference to the “imperial mode of living” in growth economics and to the neo-colonial practices in the Third World (Parrique, 2019, p. 226). As Demaria et al. (2019) explains, for Latouche “...the decolonization of the imaginary from growth and development was not a metaphor, since for him development was ‘a concrete continuation of the colonial project’ (Demaria et al., 2019, p. 441)

In the light of this picture, the theoretical development of the *décroissance* from the 1970s onwards until the early millennium served as the main pillar for the second generation degrowth. We see that the primary reference of contemporary degrowth was the bioeconomic

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<sup>80</sup> Also influenced by two important postcolonial anthropologists Gruzinski and Althabe. See endnote in (Parrique, 2019, p. 226) for a wider explanation on these influences and respective works of the authors mentioned.

approach that Georgescu-Roegen introduced on the physical limits to growth. Also, with the influence of Georgescu-Roegen's socio-cultural and developmentalist critique, the seeds for the articulation of bioeconomics with the post-developmental approach was planted. In the millennium, this articulation provided the main context for *décroissance* and paved the way for it to become official as a concept. We also saw that after *Limits to Growth*, the Club of Rome was another fraction that the *décroissance* proponents wanted to differentiate from, as much as they want to from environmental (and partly ecological) economists that fail to openly reject the oxymoron of sustainable development. Thus, throughout this process, *décroissance* evolved into a revolutionary idea that aimed not only to abandon economic growth, but also decolonize the social imaginaries around growth. Later, as of early millennium, *décroissance* began to organize and operationalize as an activist social movement and entered into academia concurrent with the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.

### **2.3.3. Phase 3: the establishment of *décroissance* and the emergence of degrowth as a discipline**

The replacement of *décroissance* with degrowth was an illustrative process for the evolution of degrowth as a growth critical concept, as a social movement and as an activist slogan. The English word “degrowth” was adopted quite a while later in the late millennium and began to be used widely in academia as of 2008 (D’Alisa et al., 2014 p. 2). The reason why the introduction and the translation of the term in the English-speaking world took longer than it did in Europe can be explained in four steps. First, the dominance of the sustainable development rhetoric was stronger among the intellectual and transnationally influential cadres in the Anglo-American world, because of its “less-hazardous” proposals for the neoliberal accumulation strategies. Second, it was due to the wider influence of the intellectual production in English. Third, in relation with the first two, the absorption of the growth criticism was more successful in Anglo-American world than the rest of the world, where the counter-perspectives were modified and curbed under disciplines like ecological economics. Fourth, the development and the spread of *décroissance* in the early 2000s was still a niche process in France and Southern Europe and among activist circles, intellectuals and some renowned heterodox scholars and was still in a dissemination process there<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Prominent figures of the field at the time were Serge Latouche, Mauro Bonaiuti, Paul Aries and François Schneider.

The earliest steps of the nexus between *décroissance* and activism were taken in Lyon, France in 1993; when an environmental activist Michel Bernard asked Grinevald – who coined the term *décroissance* with Georgescu-Roegen in 1979 – to write an article in his magazine *Silence* on Georgescu-Roegen and his bioeconomics. Eight years later in 2001, and again in Lyon, two prominent figures of the degrowth movement Bruno Clémentin and Vincent Cheynet officially coined the term “*décroissance soutenable*” (sustainable degrowth) as a counter proposition to “*développement durable*” (sustainable development)<sup>82</sup> in their magazine *Casseurs de pub*. With this incident, it was seen that *décroissance* supporters will now actively oppose and response to the mirages of sustainable development with the term “*décroissance soutenable*”. This emphasis on the word *soutenable* was a conscious choice in the beginning, to accentuate the oxymoronic character of sustainable development, but was later simplified as *décroissance* again, including this sarcastic reference to its contextual and conceptual vocabulary.<sup>83</sup>

The year 2002 was a momentous year for *décroissance* and the second generation degrowth movement. In February 2002, an issue of *Silence* edited by Clémentin and Cheynet remarked *the* first benchmark for the year and the rest of the millennium (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 30). The issue was dedicated to Georgescu-Roegen, where Clémentin and Cheynet paid an homage to the *décroissance* of the 1970s in the introduction, reminding the key contribution of Georgescu-Roegen to the idea of *décroissance* and the vitality of his stance in contemporary world. However, the main significance of this issue was the contribution of Latouche with his article titled “Down with sustainable development! Long live convivial degrowth!”<sup>84</sup>. With this article, the articulation process of Latouche’s concept of the “decolonization of the growth imaginary” and the 1970s *décroissance* became evident (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 30; Parrique, 2019, p. 180). The same month in 2002, a conference called “Undo development, remake the world!”<sup>85</sup> was gathered in Paris with a wide audience of 800 people. The conference brought all figures of *décroissance* from 1970s onwards and post-developmentalists of 1990s together and it was especially important since it formalized the “marriage” between *décroissance* and

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<sup>82</sup> “The translation of “sustainable development” in French as “développement durable” (lasting development) and not “développement soutenable” (supportable or tenable development) makes it particularly problematic for critics of development” (Endnote 1 in Parrique, 2019, p. 179)

<sup>83</sup> In later years, some prominent figures in Southern European tradition (Martinez-Alier, 2010) continued to use the term “sustainable degrowth”, in reference to this first usage by the Lyon-duo, but later all English – and primarily French – literature adopted the term degrowth or *décroissance*.

<sup>84</sup> “A bas le développement durable! Vive la décroissance conviviale!” (Parrique, 2019, p. 180).

<sup>85</sup> “Défaire le développement, refaire le monde!” (ibid).

post-developmentalism. Hence, this conference was accepted as “the founding event of the degrowth movement” today (Demaria et al. 2013, p. 30; Parrique, 2019, p. 181)<sup>86</sup>.

The Paris and two Lyon conferences also paved the way for both the institutionalization of the movement in France and spread in Southern Europe. One of the prominent ones was Network of Growth Objectors for Post-Development (ROCADE)<sup>87</sup> which was founded in March 2003. In its manifesto, Latouche called out for a “decolonisation of our imaginaries and a de-economisation of minds” (ROCADE, 2003 in Parrique, 2019, p. 181, Parrique’s translation), so that a *décroissance* economy can be complemented and realized by a *décroissance* society<sup>88</sup> (ibid). The same manifesto also called out for: “resistance and dissidence against the growth society”, encouragement of the initiatives for “autonomous and convivial societies” for alternative living practices and emphasized the need to “fight for the decolonisation of the dominant growth imaginaries” in existing societies (ibid, p. 182).

Therefore, one of the first steps of *décroissance* becoming a counter-hegemonic movement was also taken with this manifesto. Meanwhile, environmental activists were already collaborating with the *décroissance* scholars and intellectuals, articulating with their own activist causes – like car-free cities, anti-advertisement protests and support for food cooperatives – in France. In addition, all the early *décroissance* figures were themselves activists mostly, so the connection between their intellectual production and activism was already intertwined.<sup>89</sup> In

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<sup>86</sup> Later in 2003, the book *Objectif décroissance* edited by the Lyon-duo Cheynet and Clémentin and another Lyon-based environmental activist Michel Bernard, attracted a wider audience and was translated into Catalan, Italian and Spanish. The heat of the book also attracted another symposium in Lyon, under the name “*La décroissance soutenable*” (sustainable degrowth), as it was first named by Cheynet and Clémentin in 2001; and again hosted many important figures like Latouche, Schneider, Aries and Grinevald as well as an audience of 350 people. Again in 2003, Cheynet and Clémentin founded “Institute for Economic and Social Studies on Sustainable Degrowth” in their native Lyon, and served as an important asset for the academic and activist spread of the movement (Parrique, 2019, pp. 180-183).

<sup>87</sup> “Réseau des Objecteurs de Croissance pour l’Après-Développement ou ROCAD” (ibid).

<sup>88</sup> Here, Parrique translates the Latouche’s original writing as “Degrowth is only possible at the condition of leaving the growth economy to enter a ‘degrowth society (ibid).” However, with regards to our terminological consistency so far, we prefer to stick with the term *décroissance*, until we introduce the term degrowth in later years.

<sup>89</sup> There was also a Degrowth Party (PPLD) in France, founded in April, 2006 including prominent activists like Cheynet and Clémentin. Pierre Rabhi also promoted sustainable degrowth in his presidential campaign in 2002 (Baykan, 2007; Parrique, 2019, p. 182) Prominent *décroissance* figures were active in French politics from 2001 onwards, criticizing the French Green Party’s support for sustainable development and also their ineffective stance on anti-productivism. *Décroissance* activists were also successful in prompting debates on *décroissance* among French Green Party and left-wing parties. For a detailed discussion of *décroissance* in politics, see Baykan (2007).

this regard, the millennial *décroissance* was referred to as “movement of activists”<sup>90</sup> (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 30).

In addition, since the Paris and Lyon conferences attracted post-developmental scholar circles from all over Europe, the bridge between *décroissance* and other activist and scholar circles in other parts of the Europe began to be built. Subsequently, in 2004 *décroissance* became *decrescita* in Italian<sup>91</sup> and articulated with the anti-globalization activists in Italy. In 2005, energy activists in Catalonia brought *décroissance* into their agenda and it became *decreixement*, a year later in 2006 it became *decrecimiento* in Spain<sup>92</sup>.

#### **2.3.4. Phase 4: The establishment of the second generation degrowth, new trajectories from 2008 onwards**

When the France-oriented millennial *décroissance* was introduced to the English-speaking world as degrowth in 2008, its fusion with the post-developmental context was consolidated and was present as an ecological activist movement in most of Europe. In this new phase, degrowth established more robustly as a counter-hegemonic movement and articulated with the environmental justice networks in the Global South. In addition, it has become a “trajectory” for alternative living practices, i.e., “nowtopias” (Carlsson, 2008), as part of the process of decolonizing the growth imaginaries in practice.

In 2007, Lyon-based *Research & Degrowth* was founded as a research collective and pioneered a series of international conferences, beginning with Paris in 2008. The term degrowth in English used officially for the first time in this conference, and afterwards *décroissance* swiftly disseminated in the international research arena at an ever-wider scale (Demaria et al. 2015, p. 30). Now as degrowth, the perspective was able to move forward from being a niche movement among intellectuals and activists, to an international academic community and research area.

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<sup>90</sup> A still prominent figure of degrowth Françoise Schneider for instance, went on a famous tour around France on a donkey, to spread the message of *décroissance*, which brought wider recognition to the movement around France, with the media attention it got as well (ibid).

<sup>91</sup> An important bridging actor was Italian economist Mauro Bonaiuti for example, who is an expert in Georgescu-Roegen’s bioeconomics. After the Paris conference in 2002, he played an important role in getting the book *Objectif décroissance* (2003) translated in Italian.

<sup>92</sup> There is also a vibrant degrowth literature in German under the term “*Postwachstum*” (post-growth) or “*Wachstumsrücknahme*” (growth-backwards). The German degrowth is also distinguishable for articulating the ecological feminism literature with the growth critical literature, and has also been successful in prompting growth critical debates within the German Green Party since the 1980s (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, pp. 185-189; Döring & Muraca, 2018, p. 26)

Since 2008, the literature on degrowth and its collaboration with social movements continues to expand and consolidate.<sup>93</sup>

Building on the blocks of each section we discussed, the second generation degrowth further emphasizes a few points which has been developed in the millennium and since the 1970s. Since we are speaking of degrowth in English now and also since we thoroughly discussed the evolution and articulation process of important actors, currents and institutions in this process, it is better to summarize what the second generation accentuates by using the “alternatives” or co-terms that refer to degrowth. Some of these terms refer primarily to what degrowth encompasses, yet some of them rather eschews using degrowth<sup>94</sup> and so on. Moreover, there is a variety of references in the literature in which one or more of these terms are used as an “umbrella term” that encompasses others, but there is also no consensus about the “hierarchy” among the terms. In relation, we will also mention some of the criticisms towards the choice of term degrowth, with different reasonings and concerns. In the light of these, the terms we will cover here are; degrowth, a-growth, post-growth and no-growth.

Degrowth has several – if not many – definitions, usually depending on which aspect of degrowth the author(s) wants to contextualize and emphasize. Since we already dealt with the vision of degrowth and its evolution process thoroughly, we will present and discuss the definitions that it accentuates more compared to the previous generations, in tandem with the alternative terms that we chose above.

From an ecological economics and bioeconomics standpoint, degrowth is “...an equitable downscaling of production and consumption” (Kallis et al., 2010), which aims for “...a socially sustainable and equitable reduction of society’s throughput” (Kallis et al., 2013, p. 59). In this regard, the second generation degrowth proposes a society with a “smaller metabolism” (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 32). However, as we already mentioned and emphasized, what degrowth wants to “degrow” is not only the scale of economic activity. Because for degrowth

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<sup>93</sup> Two years after Paris, the second conference was held in Barcelona in 2010, hosted by the research group Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA). Through ICTA, degrowth found a new home in Southern Europe, specifically in Catalonia, which still serves as an important hub in degrowth studies and activism. ICTA scholars provided a bridge between *décroissance* and degrowth in the English-speaking world as they re-integrated the ecological economics and steady-state with the now advanced *décroissance* (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 183). Moreover, they also bridged the environmental justice movements and networks in South America with degrowth perspective, which created a new sphere of alliance.

<sup>94</sup> It is interesting that among the scholars certain writing styles, sometimes even the use of hyphens, are illustrative for which current of thought the author come from or the criticism that they put forward. For miscellaneous other versions and explanations see (Parrique, 2019, p. 393)

advocates, "...growth is not only a material and economic process with social and ecological costs, but also a hegemonic idea that obscures more ecologically friendly and egalitarian alternatives" (Kallis, 2018). In this sense, degrowth does not only refer to a reduction in the scale of all economic activity, but also a *change* in the means and institutions of this economic activity. Hence, the emphasis is not only on a change in size, but a change in kind <sup>95</sup> (D'Alisa et al., 2014, p. 32).

Defined as a "missile word" (Aries, 2005; Demaria et al., 2013, p. 191; Kallis, 2017, p. 28), degrowth aims to challenge and change the existing economic practices as well as the imaginaries that surround and maintain them. In other words, it aims to replace the existing political economic structures and institutions that create and regulate the existing labour process, mode of regulation and mode of societalization; with new ones that function within ecological and biophysical limits and that acknowledge global socio-cultural differences and needs. In the light of these, "...degrowth challenges the hegemony of growth and calls for a democratically led redistributive downscaling of production and consumption in industrialised countries as a means to achieve environmental sustainability, social justice and well-being" (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 209).

In relation, another important agenda for degrowth is to re-politicize (D'Alisa et al., 2014, p. 36) issues around economy and ecology, and undo the de-politicization rhetoric of neoliberal regulation and sustainable development that prevailed in the past 30 years (D'Alisa et al., 2014, p. 118). The neoliberal technocratic discourse under the framework of sustainable development systematically de-politicized issues around ecological degradation, commodification of land and dispossession. This de-politicization took place through the undermining of environmental issues to the technical and scientific level and responses to them were shaped primarily as techno-fixes and/or market-based solutions. Sustainable development was tackled with the same apolitical attitude in the international political arena, in addition to the message that economic growth complements and empowers green solutions. Here, degrowthers "take sides" and argue that it does not try to replace sustainable development with "a better, greener or more inclusive" alternative. On the contrary, degrowth aims for "...another kind of society altogether, in which growth and development are not central metrics or signifiers" (Demaria et

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<sup>95</sup> "Degrowth does not call for doing less of the same. The objective is not to make an elephant leaner, but to turn an elephant into a snail. In a degrowth society everything will be different: different activities, different forms and uses of energy, [...]different allocations of time between paid and non-paid work, different relations with the non-human world." (ibid).

al., 2019, p. 432). Therefore, degrowth aims to decolonize imaginaries from concepts like development and concomitantly find alternatives *to* the idea of development as opposed to replacing it with a better or greener development (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 36).

Herewith, we should remind the post-developmental and anti-utilitarian stance of degrowth, which aims for “decolonizing the growth imaginaries” (Latouche, 2009). We have previously introduced the concept of decolonisation of growth imaginaries in phase 2 and elaborated on it at some level. However, we will re-emphasize it in this section every now and then. It is because this concept in many grounds shapes the core of the second generation thinking and millennial *décroissance*. Moreover, this concept formed the main nexus between post-developmental and bioeconomic pillars of degrowth since phase 2. In phase 4 of second generation degrowth, the concept of decolonisation of the growth imaginaries also became more integrated with the environmental and social justice movements in the Global South. An important post-developmental scholar Arturo Escobar argues that the decolonisation concept and degrowth perspective provides an important bridge for “...connecting development debates to questions of epistemic decolonization, social and environmental justice, the defence of cultural difference, and transition to postcapitalist and *postgrowth* frameworks.” (italic by myself, D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 58).

Therefore, employing concepts of degrowth perspective like decolonizing on imaginaries such as development, extractivism, economism and Western progressivism, provides instrumental tools for environmental justice movements in the Global South<sup>96</sup>. Such collaboration is feasible because “environmental justice movements include an ethical or moral dimension that goes beyond environmental conflicts merely involving distributional aspects [and also] ...problematize issues of participation, power and recognition” (Akbulut et al., 2019). In addition, both degrowth and environmental justice movements are essentially social movements which have roots in academia and are activist-led sciences. Hence, since they share similar “profiles” and socio-environmental goals, and strive for a “change in society’s structure, value and/or ecologies” (Akbulut et al., 2019, p. 3), degrowth movement is considered as an “ally in North” for global environmental justice movements (Herbert, 2019).

The decolonisation concept is also important as it opens up spaces for “outside the box” ways of thinking and practices, which is vital for materializing the so-to-say utopian aspects of

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<sup>96</sup> See Beling et al., (2017), Akbulut et al. (2019) and Herbert (2019) for detailed investigation of intersections between degrowth and environmental justice movements, along with discussions around common concepts like democracy, autonomy, justice and social movements Demaria et al. (2013).

degrowth. One of the most common criticisms towards degrowth perspective is that the societal change it proposes is heavily utopian and unrealistic in current conditions. In this regard, degrowth advocates defend themselves by arguing that utopian thinking is necessary for realizing practical changes (Kallis & March, 2015). “Nowtopias” (Carlsson, 2008) – materialized utopias – are an important aspect of degrowth thinking and for the question of “how to degrow?”. In macro level, nowtopian frameworks represent the projections of degrowth advocates for alternative “...social, environmental, and economic policies and institutions [that are] orchestrated to guarantee that while production and consumption decline, human welfare improves and is more equally distributed” (Kallis, 2017, p. 12). Some of these include political demands *within* this system like “[restructuring] financial institutions, resource and pollution caps and sanctuaries, infrastructure moratoria, eco-taxes, work-sharing and reduced working hours, basic income and social security guaranteed for all” (ibid).

In micro level, “nowtopias” represent projections *outside* the system (ibid), which some of them are currently practiced in Southern Europe by eco-communities<sup>97</sup> as well as degrowth activists. These practices are shaped around concepts and values like simplicity, communality, conviviality, sharing, democracy, autonomy, well-being and of course, sustainability. Many of these “nowtopian” practices include urban food gardens, eco-villages, networks of production and consumption food cooperatives and local renewable energy cooperatives<sup>98</sup>. In this regard, degrowthers warn that they do not want nowtopias to be perceived solely as rural, escapist projects. On the contrary, they emphasize that “degrowth is about the construction and, importantly, political defence of new “urban villages”, i.e. nowtopias in the city that aim to change the city itself.” (ibid, p. 14). Therefore, degrowth is also a movement that “reclaim the cities back”, that aims to re-structure, re-organize and in a way “decolonize the growth practices” from urban living. Therefore, “...degrowth refers to a multidimensional “exit” from the capitalist economy, meaning both an intellectual and symbolic rejection of the imperative of growth, as well as the development of non-capitalistic practices that defy the logic of profit and accumulation (e.g., local currencies, urban garden, consumer-producer cooperatives of

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<sup>97</sup> “Eco-communities can be considered as both material and immaterial commons because they manage land and physical resources communally while, at the same time, set norms, beliefs, institutions and processes that empower a common identity which in turn contributes to the preservation and reproduction of the community” (D’Alisa et al., 2014, p. 195).

<sup>98</sup> Similar practices were initiated in Catalonia after the Eurozone crisis hit Spain, like co-housing cooperative SostraCivic and local currencies like EcoSeny. Another one is Can Decreix, which is a degrowth-way-of local living experiment that is practiced by Research & Degrowth members in the French-Spanish border since 2013. See for more in Kallis (2017, p. 12) and Demaria et al. (2015, pp. 195-197).

organic products). Degrowth therefore represents “not an alternative, but a matrix of alternatives” (Kallis, 2013, p. 59).

A-growth, on the one hand, was first coined by Latouche in 2009, and was used next to degrowth, with reference to “a-theism”. In relation to his “decolonization of the growth imaginaries” argument, Latouche argued that the current economism is embraced as adamant as a religion, so that we should “un-believe the religion of growth and economy” (Parrique, 2019, p. 237; *ibid.*, p. 403). Despite still some French scholars use a-growth in this sense and as a synonym of degrowth, scholars like van den Bergh (2011) and Raworth (2017) re-framed the term in a completely new manner and detached it from Latouche’s connotation. They argued that bringing degrowth to the table of policy-makers is a troublesome and a futile attempt, whereas the “real enemy” is environmental pollution as opposed to economic growth (Neumayer, 2013 in Parrique, 2019, p. 404)<sup>99</sup> Therefore, they define a-growth as a “growth-neutral paradigm”, and rather than taking sides as pro or anti-growth, they support an “agnostic” stance towards GDP growth.

Their approach arises from a common misconception about degrowth – if not say misunderstanding. The reduction in the GDP growth is not a goal in degrowth – letting alone being the mere goal – but a likely *consequence* as a result of the reduction in production and consumption (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 210). Kallis explains the standpoint of degrowth with regards to GDP as: “Reducing such material flows would likely lead to a decrease in GDP as currently measured. However, *degrowth is not synonymous with recession or depression*, the terms we use for negative growth in a growth economy. Degrowth, instead, involves a rethinking of the organization of society signalled by terms such as limits [and] care” (italics by me, Kallis, 2017, p. 21). However, it is surprising that a-growth proponents miss out the fact that degrowth is as equally about the rejection of growth imaginaries as is about the reduction in the scale of economy, especially when the initial usage of the term by Latouche targets the emancipation from the growth imaginaries and institutions. Therefore, this approach is both oxymoronic and at the same time inaccurately reductionist on what degrowth encompasses and aims for.

There also have been discussions on degrowth from a similar line of thinking, which this time includes a crisis reading as well. Degrowth gained its name in English the same year that the

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<sup>99</sup> This argument is pretty much an oxymoron, given the primary cause of environmental pollution is in fact the (over)productive economies in the pursuit of economic growth, but let’s not dive into the discussion as we tackled these issues before.

liberal productivity model and the finance-oriented growth and accumulation regime went into its biggest crisis. The crisis was an organic one despite it seemed conjunctural, which fuelled discussions around the overall sustainability of a finance-oriented growth (see Chapter 1). In this picture, Lievens (2015) argued that the GFC had a dual impact on the new-born degrowth literature. First, since the absence of growth resulted with devastating outcomes on global economies and on people, it reinforced the perpetuation of increasing economic growth. Second, it showed how the existing system is economically and socially unstable and open to speculation, especially because it relies on finance-based accumulation and growth. Therefore, GFC created a so-to-say “antipathy” towards declining GDP scenarios, similar to the concerns on the term “degrowth” which we will discuss in a short while under post-growth.

However, GFC has also fuelled discussions towards the unsustainability of ever-growing economies, since otherwise resulted with an absolute catastrophe. In economic crises, economies shrink suddenly and is usually accompanied by a conjunctural crisis like the oil crisis in the 1970s. On the contrary, what degrowth suggests is a conscious and planned downscaling of the economy. Thus, it is different than an abrupt shrink in a growth economy because in degrowth, the reduction in the size of the economic activity is not an “error” to be fixed but a deliberate choice to be tackled through new institutional and political economic structures.<sup>100</sup> In other words, “[...degrowth does not mean a deliberate decrease of GDP, but merely *a-growth*, i.e. the liberation from a productivist obsession, in order to re-discover other human dimensions, first and foremost the relational one.”

Post-growth, on the other hand, is a widely used term in the English-speaking world<sup>101</sup>, in both academia and in international political spheres, mostly interchangeably with or complementary to degrowth. It is also used as an umbrella term under ecological economics, along with

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<sup>100</sup> “Sustainable degrowth is not equivalent to economic recession or depression, i.e. unplanned and involuntary economic degrowth within a growth-driven system; this has devastating social implications to which we are not oblivious. Sustainable degrowth denotes an intentional process of a smooth and “prosperous way down”, through a range of social, environmental, and economic policies and institutions, orchestrated to guarantee that while production and consumption decline, human welfare improves and is more equally distributed.” (Kallis, 2017, p. 12).

<sup>101</sup> The term became more popular in English after British economist Tim Jackson wrote his famous book called “*Prosperity Without Growth*” (2009). The book has gained immense popularity in a short while and is now one of the most known and cited works in the second generation literature. However, an interesting side-note is that at the time Jackson argued that along with Peter Victor, he was the only economist who study post-growth economies, showing that he was completely unaware of the development of *décroissance* and discussions in other languages from all over Southern Europe (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 175). Yet, he has been an important figure in spreading the word on degrowth (or post-growth as he prefers) in the English-speaking world. Another interesting sidenote about him is that he is a full member of the Club of Rome currently.

“beyond growth”<sup>102</sup>(Daly, 1996; Schmelzer & Eversberg, 2017; Akbulut et al., 2019, p. 2), which encompasses degrowth and a-growth. Despite it is conceptually and contextually on the same page with degrowth, the term misses out a huge point about what degrowth wants to denote. One of the most common criticisms towards degrowth – not necessarily theoretically, but terminologically – is that it has a sheer negative connotation. Many scholars have argued that because it highlights reduction, becoming smaller and evokes a retrogressive scenario, it is deeply unappealing and has a “killjoy” effect, which makes it politically and academically “unsellable” (Kallis, 2017, pp. 183-186; Parrique, 2019, pp. 396-397). In that line of thought, it is “suggested” that using post-growth instead of degrowth increases the potential of the perspective to reach a wider audience since the post- prefix has a progressive, positive connotation.

Here, degrowth supporters emphasize that the choice of degrowth is completely intentional, as was *décroissance* formerly, since these terms accentuate the stark message, they advocate for. Since degrowth is defined as a “missile word”, it deliberately aims to attack and undo the growth paradigm and imaginaries of growth. Degrowth wants to alter the imaginaries and perceptions that “bigger is better, more is better”. Accordingly, many degrowthers<sup>103</sup> reject abandoning the term degrowth in exchange of post-growth, just because the latter sounds more “progressive”. Arguably, progressiveness is also a default positive connotation that has been enclosed by growthist, developmentalist and modernist imaginaries. Thus, degrowth insist on being “a provocative slogan to challenge, and escape, the ideology of growth” (Asara et al., 2015 defining principles in Parrique, 2019, p. 226). The post-developmental current in degrowth also stand in alliance with the term, as it “strikes down the hegemonic imaginary of both development and utilitarianism” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 196)<sup>104</sup>. However, the concerns over the negativity of the term still continues and remains as a contested area among degrowth scholars.

In this regard, we also refrain from using post-growth interchangeably with degrowth or in exchange for it for a few reasons. First, post-growth has the potential to “water down” the deliberately more radical framework of degrowth, as the term is more aligned with the Anglo-

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<sup>102</sup> Daly, H. E. (1996). *Beyond growth: The economics of sustainable development*. Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>103</sup> Mostly ICTA scholars, like Demaria, Kallis and also early *décroissance* scholars like Latouche, Cheynet and Aries.

<sup>104</sup> Parrique argues here that using post-growth as opposed to degrowth might not be as useful as it is claimed, since the term post-development did not prevent the approach remaining marginalised since its emergence. He also playfully argues that “one can only wonder if de-development would had done better” (Parrique, 2019, p. 407).

American “steady-state<sup>105</sup> ecological economists” that we discussed previously. The term post-growth renders the main message of degrowth with regards to striving for a society with a “smaller metabolism” and instead puts the emphasis on the “post” aspect. However, referring to a post-growth society without achieving or even beginning *the* transitions to a degrowth society can be misleading. Second, post-growth has been a “go-to” choice for conference titles by intergovernmental institutions and in governmental policy-plans in the last couple years<sup>106</sup> along with “beyond growth”. This can be interpreted in two ways; on the one hand, one can argue that the second generation degrowth began to find seats in the main tables, and it is a progress for the movement as it could make itself visible in the mainstream. On the other hand, given the “suspicious record” of intergovernmental organizations in hijacking growth critical messages and replacing them with system-friendly alternatives, one can see post-growth as a risky term for degrowth to be hijacked – again. Third, in relation to the discussion we tackled on *a-growth*, the term post-growth is used by these mainstream actors with reference to a “no-GDP” context more than “no-growth” contexts. So, alternative uses – or in this case misuses – like these have the potential to degrade the scope of degrowth perspective solely to abandoning GDP as a measure and serve as a way of hijacking its main message on economic downscaling and decolonizing growth imaginaries

As for no-growth, it is not associated with a line of thought among degrowth or in growth sceptic literature in general but is used as a “state of zero growth”, as in “no-growth economy” mostly. Therefore, as opposed to a-growth or post-growth, it does not propose an intentional use as an “alternative” for degrowth but is used for descriptive purposes mostly. In relation, despite there are references as “a-growth society, degrowth society, post-growth society” in the literature, there is no reference to a “no-growth society” that I have encountered with. This

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<sup>105</sup> Here, we should add that in his later writings, Daly (2010) emphasized that the steady-state is not necessarily incompatible with capitalism, since it still foresees an economy based on private property and markets but a one that is regulated by a heavily interventionist social-democratic state (Trantas, 2021). In this regard, Lawn (2011) postulates that it is possible for companies to profit without growing in size and output, such as: first, “[...]by producing better quality products and selling the same quantity of output at a higher price” and second, “by producing the same quantity more efficiently” (Trantas, 2021, p. 234). Here, it can be seen that how the second generation degrowth perspective (despite at varying degrees among scholars and traditions) is diverged from this approach, as the criticism of the capitalist system itself – with regards to both economic growth and also growth imaginaries – is quite harsher in degrowth to reconcile with what the steady-state proponents suggest. It is an important emphasis for which Trantas should be appraised for, which many authors within degrowth and steady-state perspectives fails to explain this plainly.

<sup>106</sup> Post-Growth Conference” at the European Parliament in 2018, “German Federal Environment Agency” report on “precautionary post-growth” again in 2018 (Parrique, 2019, p. 496), also “Beyond Growth Conference” in Helsinki in 2019, which was covered under the section called “Beyond GDP” in European Commission’s website. See, Beyond GDP - Events. (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2021, from [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond\\_gdp/events\\_en.html](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/events_en.html)

backs our claim that it has been used for a descriptive statement for a non-growing economy. An example of a more extensive and comprehensive use of the term referring to the realm of degrowth is by Jessop (2012), which he studies “no-growth economies” in relation to the GFC and *Triple Crisis*, in tandem with several Green New Deal suggestions. Similar to Lievens’ (2015) argument we discussed above, Jessop argued that GFC “has opened space for sub- and counter-hegemonic imaginaries [and] projects”, which the ecological aspect of the *Triple Crisis* is also more intensively brought into discussions. He also touched upon the ills of developmentalism created in the Global South by saying that “[there can be no quick fix to the crisis and more imaginative work remains to be done to promote a *no-growth, solidarity economy* that allows for economic and social justice in the ‘Global South’” (Italics by myself, Jessop, 2012, p. 23). Here, it is unclear why he chose the word “no-growth economies”, citing the term from Quebecois degrowth scholar Yves-Marie Abraham (2011), as opposed to a direct reference to degrowth. This is worth asking because it is clear that, despite he used no-growth economies as an umbrella term which also encompasses degrowth, he made solid references to the social pillars of second generation degrowth such as growth imaginaries, noneconomistic worldview and developmentalism.<sup>107</sup> Anyhow, we see that no-growth has been employed in a descriptive manner with an emphasis on the non-growing-economy part of degrowth, rather than its wider societal propositions.

Herewith, we wrap up this chapter to continue our discussion on second generation degrowth in Chapter 3. Now, we will discuss degrowth in comparison with the alternative green imaginaries. In addition, we will delve more deeper into our research question in this thesis and look for possible trajectories which (one of) these green accumulation regimes might hijack and absorb degrowth’s main criticism on growth economics and growth imaginaries. In this regard, it is important to remember Chapter 1 for the systemic and conjunctural dynamics that triggered the emergence of the growth critical perspectives so far. So that we can articulate the evolution of the degrowth perspective in the past 40 years with what we will discuss in the upcoming sections.

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<sup>107</sup> “Small-scale trial-and-error experimentation and the collection of best-practice have a critical role to play here in designing and implementing a no-growth strategy and in providing evidence that another, noneconomistic, ecological-friendly world is possible.” (Jessop, 2012, p. 23).

## CHAPTER 3

### DEGROWTH, GREEN NEW DEAL (GND) AND GREEN CAPITALISM vs. THE TRIPLE CRISIS

This chapter will discuss the degrowth perspective in tandem with alternative green accumulation regimes, i.e., green capitalism and the Green New Deals (hereafter GNDs). We will compare and contrast each regime in terms of their economic, ecological and political strategies for addressing the *Triple Crisis*. To do so, we will analyse the configurations and policy proposals of such “green imaginaries” for the techno-economic paradigm, mode of regulation and the mode of societalization. We have already discussed the revival of the degrowth perspectives extensively in Chapter 2. There we saw certain external and internal actors’ role in defining the conjuncture. In addition, we also saw the impact of these actors *within* the degrowth perspective, in determining and dominating certain terminologies, concepts and discourses. In this chapter, we will analyse the actors and fractions behind green capitalist and GND scenarios to identify the power relations and conflicts of interests behind their proposed strategies and approaches. To do so, we will look at the RA units of analysis - techno-economic paradigm, mode of regulation and the mode of societalization – that each of these three imaginaries aim to modify in response to the *Triple Crisis*. As we are speaking of a multifaceted crisis, we will employ the “variation-selection-retention concept” of CPE tradition<sup>108</sup> (Jessop, 2012), as it provides an illuminative perspective for the emergence of economic imaginaries in crisis situations. Herewith, we will contemplate on the proliferated imaginaries like green capitalism, GND and degrowth after the GFC (the *variation* stage), discuss which imaginary “can be potentially *selected* as the basis of imagined recoveries” (the *selection* stage) and which one(s) can *retain* as the dominant imaginary in the post-crisis social and economic formation. We will do such analysis with the help of our RA units of analysis, to illustrate the relevancy and the limits of these ideas and strategies. These two primary tools will also help us the (many) overlapping and diverging aspects of these green imaginaries, so that we can shed a light on which will be selected and retained in the last instance.

Here it is important to mention that, this chapter will aim to find points of convergence between GND and degrowth perspectives, rather than clustering these approaches in opposite camps.

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<sup>108</sup> “[Crises] disturb prevailing metanarratives, theoretical frameworks, policy paradigms, and/or everyday life and thereby open the space for proliferation (variation) in crisis interpretations, only some of which will be selected as the basis for ‘imagined recoveries’ that get translated into economic strategies and policies – and, of these, only some will prove effective and be retained and consolidated” (Jessop, 2012, p. 10).

There are no clear-cut distinctions between green capitalism and GND, especially because the GND proposals varies considerably depending on the (N)GO that has authored them. It is because the institutional context of the respective organization and the path dependencies of the country it has emerged in have been decisive elements for the contextualization of each GND proposal. In addition, the timing of proposals vis a vis the 2008 GFC has been an important indicator for their contextualization, especially in regard to their emphasis on *recovery* or the *reform* of the economy, and the means to achieve these different ends. Accordingly, whilst some of the proposals of the GND tend to overlap more with green capitalist ideals, some of them challenges and opposes the green capitalist leanings, yet it is still hard to distinguish them clearly. Hence, it is important to keep in mind that the “lines” between green capitalism and GNDs proposal are more blurred than the lines between degrowth and the former two. In relation to this, GNDs stand in a middle ground: on the one hand, it can easily be hijacked by green capitalism. On the other hand, it can serve as a Trojan Horse for the degrowth by providing an entry point to mainstream politics. The outcome will naturally be defined by the version of the GND that will prevail in real politics. To note, this will correspond to the selection stage in our formulation of different periods.

Therefore, which fraction do the GNDs supporters are currently aligned, and could be in the future is an important discussion. Lastly, degrowth can be hijacked and absorbed by both of these strategies as an “anti-accumulation regime”, as we have already stressed in our research question. Thus, it is vital to identify tactical-alliances and related discourses which may absorb their original economic growth criticism and growth imaginaries criticism; whilst at the same time, look for alliances that may give degrowthers a seat at the table for climate mitigation and social justice discussions. In relation, we will delve deeper into our research question in this chapter and look for possible trajectories which (one of) these green accumulation regimes might hijack and absorb degrowth’s main criticism on growth economics and growth imaginaries, for the sake of being the *retained* strategy.

First, we will make a terminological elucidation with regards to some fundamental vocabulary that we will tackle; i.e., green economy, green growth, green capitalism. Then, we will introduce stages of variation, selection and retention for green capitalist imaginaries. In variation and selection stage, we will give a background of the GNDs and green capitalism scenarios, on their genesis, evolution, current stage and at which points they overlap. We will also bring degrowth into the discussion as the main defiant variant to compare and contrast with the stance of each green imaginary on the main issues with regards to the Triple Crisis.

By doing so, we will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each imaginary in terms of their potential to become “the” hegemonic alternative in the current interregnum, which will bring us to the retention stage.

In this regard, our primary RA framework will accompany our parameters to better disclose the techno-economic, regulatory, and societal aspects of each configuration. We will also use several other tools and approaches from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Semiotic Analysis of the Cultural Political Economy (CPE) tradition, in addition to the variation-selection-retention concept, to help us illustrate the main points of convergence and divergence among green imaginaries. Lastly, we will assess the position of degrowth in this new paradigm in terms of its strengths to challenge the capitalist imaginaries of other two green imaginaries, as well as its weaknesses which might lead to its assimilation by such ‘alternatives’.

**Table 3.1. The techno-economic paradigm, mode of regulation and mode of societalization of the respective green imaginaries**

	<b>Techno-economic paradigm</b>	<b>Mode of regulation</b>	<b>Mode of societalization</b>
<b>Green capitalism</b>	Information technologies combined with craftsmanship	Competitive state, market forms of regulation (Candeias, 2012), binding international agreements, updated sustainable development	Green capitalist-elite (Candeias, 2012),
<b>GND</b>	Fordist departmentalisation <sup>109</sup> , green jobs and high-standard union jobs	Regulatory state, green and progressive tax reform	Sustainable consumption culture, supporting SMEs and local businesses
<b>Degrowth</b>	Green jobs, reduced work-hours, work-sharing, solidarity economics, care work, “worker-controlled production system” (Barca, 2019), “production for use, not exchange”	Regulatory state & welfare state, green and radical progressive tax reform,	Voluntary self-limits (autonomy), becoming “prosumers”,

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<sup>109</sup> Department 1: Investment capital, Department 2: Consumer capital; one of the most unique aspects of the Fordist accumulation regime was its attempt to balance these two departments. Current GND proposals also seem to drive from this accumulation strategy.

**Table 3.2. Key characteristics of the green imaginary variants**

	<b>Perspective on growth</b>	<b>Key countries, actors and institutions</b>	<b>Political background</b>	<b>Hegemonic power transition</b>	<b>Political Implications (social-fixes, government spending)</b>	<b>Approach on climate mitigation</b>
<b>Green capitalism (GND 1.2)</b>	Growth, green growth	US, global (fossil) elite	Right-wing, authoritarian neoliberals	Transnational fossil elite to green energy elite	Creation of pseudo-representation channels and inclusiveness, no redistribution	Techno- and market-fixes, limited public investments and subsidies, binding international agreements for carbon taxes and caps, eco-modernism
<b>Green New Deal (GND 1.1-2.0)</b>	A-growth, Green growth (“it is necessary to fund ecological transition” Hickel et al.,2020)	US, UK, EU, international policy-makers, (N)GOs	Liberals, social democrats, Greens, eco-modernists(?)	Financial and fossil elite to green energy and “political elite/cadres”	Mechanisation, Just Transition, investments on clean energy, techno-fixes (decoupling), redistribution	Binding international agreements, intense public investments and indicative planning, eco-modernism
<b>Degrowth</b>	No-growth	(Southern) Europe, Global South	(radical) mosaic left, activist-led (scientists), grassroots movements	Abolition of the existing elites and “elite-making structures”	Progressive taxation, radical redistribution, Just Transition, pluralistic/inclusive representation channels	Drastic reduction in energy output and throughput, transition to a no-growth economy and society

### **3.1. GREEN IMAGINARIES TERMINOLOGY 101: BLURRED LINES AND FAULT LINES**

Before we tackle concepts like green economy, green growth and green capitalism, it is better to clarify the ontological relationship between them, since it is hard to track down a consistency in terminology or conceptualization in policy reports. This stems primarily from the fact that each time an organization (or an agent in general) uses the terms green growth, green economy, and even GND<sup>110</sup> they gave them a novel or better say “modified” connotation, which resembled the previous usage but also diverged from it. Here, there are some instructive pillars of thought that is helpful to use as a beacon to identify the main characteristics and frameworks that shape these concepts and distinguish them from both degrowth and each other.

First of all, the concepts green economy and green growth are two fundamental variants of a green capitalist configuration, whether is its formulated around a GND or not. These two concepts and in relation green capitalism are heavily ingrained with the notion of ecological modernisation (also called eco-modernism) (Tienhaara, 2014, p. 194; Kallis, 2017, pp. 47-57.), which is bifurcated in two main pillars; growth and technology. The growth pillar of the ecological modernisation is engraved within the idea of “decoupling”, which is the “notion that technological innovation creates efficiencies that allow growth to continue with declining material throughput.” (Tienhaara, 2014, p. 188) Decoupling can take place in two ways – absolute or relative. The absolute decoupling is the situation where the resource impact in economic activity is reduced on absolute terms (environmental impact decreases as GDP rises); whereas in relative decoupling, economic activity can be performed with less resources and thus with less impact on the environment (so as GDP increases, environmental impact will increase too, but not as swiftly and uncontrollably (ibid; Koch, 2011, p. 122; Jackson, 2009, p. 48; Pollin, 2018, pp. 8-9). Decoupling is also the most contested aspect between the GND/green capitalist imaginaries and degrowth supporters, which degrowth supporters claim it is theoretically and empirically impossible (Koch, 2011, p. 122; Kallis, 2017, pp. 84-88; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Parrique et al., 2019; Trantas, 2021, p. 231).

Technological optimism shapes the second pillar of ecological modernisation, since technological improvements serve as the main source to realize the green/clean energy transitions. On the one hand, advancements in microelectronics, nanotechnologies and ICTs

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<sup>110</sup> Although GND is more comprehensive compared to other terms and is regarded more as a policy proposal rather than an “approach” or “perspective” which would suffice for other green terms.

provide the backbone for the required green transitions in the green sectors that we will mention in the following sections. On the other hand, green economy and GND proposals accentuate the return to craftsmanship in techno-economic paradigm, that is accelerated with the combination of information technologies and knowledge-based economies with labour-intensive mode of production. Therefore, the fundamental technological optimism in ecological modernisation does not only shape the approach on prioritizing economic growth, in general, and in financing the green transition, in particular. The same technological optimism also has the potential to pave the way for a new techno-economic paradigm in the future.

### **3.1.2. Variation stage: The evolution of the Green New Deal(s)**

In the light of the theoretical framework that we covered just above, in this section we will unfold and discuss the varieties of green economic imaginaries, i.e., the GND proposals. Various scholars came up with ways for distinguishing several GND proposals from each other and to display the convergence points with green capitalist ideas, based on which transitory aspect they emphasize – i.e., recovery or reform (Brand, 2013; Tienhaara, 2014). To mention a few, Tienhaara (2014) makes a distinction between “Green Stimulus GNDs” and “Green Economy GNDs”, based on the role of the state and the market, perspective on growth and the role of technology in some early GND proposals. Mastini et al. (2021) makes a periodization and identifies two versions of the GND – GND 1.0 and GND 2.0<sup>111</sup> – by making a comparison between the early NGO and GO reports in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 crisis and the US House Resolution 109 (HR 109 hereafter) in 2019. Candeias (2012), identifies green capitalism and GND as two different projects of a “green transformation”, yet he also agrees with the idea that these projects are overlapping, and they are not mutually exclusive. The variety of the GNDs that is studied by these authors emphasizes its mutative character and how GNDs can amalgamate with both the green capitalist discourse (e.g., GND 1.0) and the social-liberal (ibid: 11) GND (e.g., GND 2.0) discourse.

As we mentioned in the introduction, whilst the late GNDs challenge and reveal the green capitalist endeavours, the early proposals of the GOs and NGOs have in fact proposed the main framework for green capitalist configurations. As Mastini et al. (2021) suggested, the early GNDs that were proposed by GOs shaped the main policy framework for a green economy transition and emphasize green growth. Whereas the American GND (HR 109) that was

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<sup>111</sup> “Figure 1 - Time diagram with landmark events of the New Deal, of the GND 1.0, and of the GND 2.0” in Mastini et al. (2021: 2).

proposed by progressive fractions within Democrats in 2019 emphasizes the “creation of high-quality union jobs, [...] expanding welfare state, [...] fostering environmental justice [...] and repairing historic oppression of vulnerable communities” (Mastini et al. 2021, p. 2). The most common feature between these two phases/versions of the GNDs is the – despite at varying levels – belief in technological progress for achieving decarbonization.

GND 1.0’s can also be divided into two groups amongst each other as; “recovery-stimulus reports” of the years 2008-2009 (GND 1.1 as one might call it) on the one hand, and “reform reports” of the years 2011-2012 of the other (e.g., GND 1.2). What is different between these two groups of reports is that in the first group, the need for an immediate and collective response to the post-crisis economy is more predominant and urgent. Therefore, the content of the reports differed in addressing some urgent tribulations like increased unemployment, shipwrecked financial sector and economies; with a green emphasis, since the crisis-causing system was also degenerated the atmospheric carbon levels and ecosystems simultaneously. On the other hand, the GND 1.2 reports were more elaborate on a green economy reform and green jobs and financial regulation were now re-directed to the importance of green investments towards technological improvements in microelectronics to enhance smart grid technologies for new green infrastructures, energy efficiency, market-fixes like price adjustments for “internalizing externalities” and sustainable consumption practices. These reports were then coupled with individual reports that primarily focuses on green growth, as the key *engine* for these transitions, and also the *type* of growth that will emerge as result of these transitions.

Now, we can delve into the details on the origins and the main framework of the GNDs and begin inspecting the varieties of the GND proposals that burgeoned in the aftermath of the 2008 GFC. The term Green New Deal (GND) has first come into the mainstream usage with a New York Times op-ed in 2007<sup>112</sup> (Friedman, 2007), but prior to that it has been circulating in academia and in political discussions since the 1990s<sup>113</sup> (Mastini et al., 2021). The term and the primary framework of the GND was inspired by the economic recovery package known as the “New Deal (ND)” of the Roosevelt administration in the US, which was designed in the

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<sup>112</sup> The op-ed suggested “the candidate [that is] able to put forward an ambitious and credible energy and environmental agenda would have a clear advantage” and “called the plan a GND, because like the original [ND] it would be a ‘broad range of programs and industrial projects to revitalize America’” (Mastini et al, 2021, p. 2)

<sup>113</sup> It was used in a study by Czeskleba-Dupont et al. (1994) initially and also in the book “*FDR and the Environment*” in 2005 (Henderson & Woolner, 2005) with a similar framework to what it refers to today.

aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression. Influenced by the works of British economist John Maynard Keynes at the time, the ND policies prioritized an economic recovery which was led and supported by the state with a series of public investments, instead of a market-regulated recovery (NEF, 2008, pp. 12-13). The ND policies strived for promoting employment with massive state-funded infrastructure and construction projects, to boost and stabilize the aggregate demand and to “keep the crisis-hit economy going”. Several acts and legislations were put in action with regards to labour market like the Social Security Act (1933)<sup>114</sup> and National Labour Relations Act (1935)<sup>115</sup>, to protect the rights of private sector workers against employers in the post-crisis conditions and to ensure them with social safety nets such as insurances in the case of unemployment. In addition to these, the famous Glass-Steagall Act was enacted in 1933 – as one of the first legislations in the ND period – to regulate financial activities in order to prevent another financial speculative crisis in a devastated economy (Aşıcı & Bünül, 2012)

Similarly, the development of the ND in a post-crisis conjuncture, the GND framework has emerged as a policy-set to address the economic and social downturn occurred after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. The same Keynesian approach to recovery was adopted in the GND, especially with regards to the emphasis on a state-led recovery process (this time at the global scale) and on the importance on public investments (UNEP, 2009, p. 3; Aşıcı & Bünül, 2012, p. 12). However, the GND differentiates from the original ND on several important aspects. First, whilst the ND was born in the US and was designed by policy-makers, the GND was presented primarily as a “global remedy” by international civil society actors. Initial proposals of the GND were designed by NGO members, green party representatives and intellectuals, i.e., the Green New Deal Group under the New Economics Foundation’s (NEF). In 2008, this group came up with a report called “A Green New Deal” and the next year their framework was adopted by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a report called “A Global Green New Deal (GGND)”. From that point onwards, GND has become a key policy framework, for other GOs like the OECD as a “conscious” post-crisis policy response. These reports present the first *variations* of the GND proposals and the green economy framework in general.

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<sup>114</sup> From, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Social Security Act | History & Facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved May 31, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Social-Security-Act-United-States-1935>

<sup>115</sup> From, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.-b). *Wagner Act | Summary, History, & Facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved May 31, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wagner-Act>

Both the NEF and UNEP reports identified a multiple – precisely triple – crisis or crunch. Whilst the NEF Group’s GND report (2008) focused on the financial crunch, climate crunch and the coming global energy crunch<sup>116</sup>; the UNEP tackled a more detailed “multiple crisis” including food and water crisis in addition to the same financial, climate and energy (oil) trio (UNEP, 2009, p. 2). In Barbier (2009)’s report for UNEP (subsequent to the original UNEP report), he defined the dimensions of the multiple crisis as fuel, food and financial crisis (ibid: 5). Here, despite their variations in defining the crisis pillars, all these reports stressed that the recovery should include interventions to make the system more ecologically and socially sustainable. The emphasis is put especially on *not* going back to “business-as-usual” methods of carbon-intense production and finance-driven economy, which resulted with a highly speculative financial bubble, drastic levels of carbon emissions and loss of millions of jobs around the world.

In relation, financial (re)regulation is also a vital point for the GNDs, as it was for the NDs. As the detonator of the 2008 GFC, downsizing the financial sector and regulating financial activities at the national and international level is suggested as one of the most vital steps to be taken in the post-crisis GND. To do so, NEF (2008, p. 23) suggested forced demerger of large banks and finance groups (“small enough to fail” instead of “too big to fail”), low interest-rates tied to credit and capital controls (also for green investments to become more affordable), imposing ecological and wealth taxes, and restrictions on capital flows (speculative, hot money flows) and disclosure of tax havens (NEF, 2008, pp. 25-26). This approach on financial regulation has also been a distinctive aspect for GND reports in the following years, because some of them remained more neutral on their approach to financial reforms, whereas others considered regulating and downsizing finance as a key focal point for any transition from the existing system (Tienhaara, 2014, pp. 194-195).

In this regard, the main goals of a GND are described as: “1) ...reviving the world economy, saving and creating jobs; 2) [reduce carbon dependency and ecosystem degradation, putting economies on a path to *clean and stable development* and 3) further sustainable and *inclusive growth*, achievement of the MDGs, and end extreme poverty by 2015” (italics by myself, UNEP, 2009, p. 5; Barbier, 2009, p. 8). This brings us to our second point in which the GND

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<sup>116</sup> “The global economy is facing a ‘triple crunch’. It is a combination of a credit-fuelled financial crisis, accelerating climate change and soaring energy prices underpinned by an encroaching peak in oil production. These three overlapping events threaten to develop into a perfect storm, the like of which has not been seen since the Great Depression. To help prevent this from happening we are proposing a Green New Deal.”(NEF, 2008, p. 1).

diverges from the ND. The ND-era economic stimulus and job creation through massive construction projects have resulted with drastic water and air pollutions, ecological degradation and immense rates of carbon emissions of which its impact is most relevant at the moment. Apparently, such an industrial and energy-dense economic stimulus plan is by no means affordable at the moment. Nonetheless, such large-scale projects in the GND proposals are still part of the agenda. This time, their focus is on building a whole new green infrastructure for a “more environmentally-sustainable economy”. These include projects such as “energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy infrastructures and technologies, sustainable transport [and] agriculture” (UNEP, 2009, p. 6).

These projects are also instrumental in creating green jobs (also called “green-collar jobs”), since most of them are labour-intensive and require both skilled and semi-skilled workforce (Renner et al., 2009, pp. 22-26). Green jobs define the jobs in green sectors such as “agriculture, manufacturing, research and development (R&D), administrative, and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality” (World Watch Institute, 2008). However, there are several other qualities for a job to be attributed as green besides its sector. These qualities are safe workplaces with decent conditions, as well as decent wages, job security and gender equality (ibid, p. 3; Aşıcı & Bünül, 2012, p. 300). Therefore, what is aimed to be achieved with green jobs is not only generating more employment in sectors that are more environmentally friendly, but also addressing the deteriorated work conditions under neoliberal techno-economic paradigm.

At this point, GND aims for a “just transition”, to prevent job loss and deteriorating life standards whilst downsizing energy-dense sectors and converting sectors like the arms industry. To do so, GND (especially GND 2.0) emphasizes that the aimed green transition should be a just transition, which do not create grievances and injustices in this transition period but promote socially and environmentally just sectors with employment opportunities and working conditions. Just transition is one of the most important concepts regarding the GND and also degrowth, as it has the potential and capacity to merge climate and environmental justice movements with the labour movements all over the world (Candeias, 2012, p. 19). It is a salient bridge between both class dynamics and also the Global North and Global South, as it acknowledges the hardships of historically vulnerable and disadvantageous groups in a green transition. It also poses the most comprehensive and instrumental “base” for creating legitimacy and consent for a green transition, which might also serve as a “filter” for the social and environmental promises of green imaginaries that we speak of. It is because a green/clean

energy transition is not necessarily “anti-extractivist” or “anti-dispossessionist”, since many clean energy options like biofuels (palm oil etc.) indeed require resource extractivism and environmental damage, especially in the Global South (Akbulut et al., 2019, p. 3) Hence, the suggested scope and the means to achieve the just transition proposal in GND and green economy reports is an illustrative aspect for assessing how socially and environmentally just the suggested transition in these imaginaries actually are.

In addition, green public investments to the green sectors are seen vital, since they constitute the backbone of the post-crisis economic recovery and green transition. For example, UNEP (2009) report suggested governments to direct at least 1% of their GDP to green sectors as public investments (which only four countries in the G20 have fulfilled in the year 2009). The most important sectors which were identified for these investments are smart grid technologies, green public transportation infrastructures and recycling markets for materials like aluminium, steel, paper and also consumption goods. The green investments in suggested green sectors are the key driver for achieving decoupling, therefore, it is strongly emphasized in both the GND 1.0 and GND 2.0. The post-crisis conjuncture is also seen as an opportunity for “leapfrogging”<sup>117</sup> for various sectors, to enable a faster and more solid transition in climate stabilization via the digitalization of the economy<sup>118</sup>, IT and telecom industries, management strategies and also an extra economic stimulus for clean energy sector (Renner et al., 2009, p. 14)<sup>119</sup>. To fund these green projects, governments are encouraged to operationalize fiscal and monetary instruments such as creating microcredit schemes, time bound tax incentives and also prioritize a “green tax reform” to accelerate emissions reduction and prevent fossil fuel consumption (NEF, 2008, pp. 7-14; Barbier, 2009, p. 18; UNEP, 2009, p. 10; Kapoor et al., 2011). New regulatory frameworks for international finance system is also iterated and accentuated several times as well.

In addition, it is suggested for developed countries to withdraw trade barriers to enable developing countries access clean energy technologies. Providing international aid and

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<sup>117</sup> “The leapfrogging opportunities available to policymakers and businesses today are typically found in three broad areas: the development and introduction of green technologies, advances in efficiency, and changes in management practices, especially the shift to a service economy.” (Renner et al., 2009, p. 14).

<sup>118</sup> Also referred to as “Turning the Digital Revolution into a Green Revolution” (Renner et al., 2009: 18).

<sup>119</sup> An interesting “sector” to be invested in which was suggested was titled “Nature’s Infrastructures” in Renner et al. (2009). This term refers to the investments needed for ecosystem protection and is described as: “Ecosystems are “natural infrastructures” that provide trillions of euros’ worth of clean water and air protection [...] among many other services. [...] ecosystems provide 16-54 trillion dollars (12-42 trillion euros) of services to the world’s economies [and] given their value, investment in protecting ecosystems merits attention in any Green New Deal.” (Renner et al., 2009, pp. 13-14).

technical assistance to the developing world is seen as a key objective for the GNDs, especially to catch up with millennial development goals (MDGs) and address poverty in the developing world through “green stimulus projects” in all these early reports (Barbier, 2009, pp. 11-15; UNEP, 2009, p. 14; Renner et al., 2009, p. 14; NEF, 2008, pp. 4-9). Herewith, these proposals also accentuate the importance of assisting the developing world for their green transition as well, especially for overcoming their “capital gap” and “skills and technological gap” (Bünül, 2011, p. 13). The UNEP (2009, p. 12) calls for collective action for developing an international policy architecture that puts the “...emphasis on action in the areas of international trade, international aid, a global carbon market, global markets for ecosystem services, development and transfer of technology, and international coordination for a GGND”. Refraining from trade protectionism is also iterated several times (Barbier, 2009, p. 18), especially for avoiding retaliatory measures from trading partners as a result of “discriminatory use of stimulus funds to support domestic industries at the expense of foreign companies” (UNEP, 2009, p. 13) which could sweep the world economy further into recession. For this, it is suggested that the discussions over GGNDs should be kept vibrant in “...major international forum(s) where today’s leaders of the large economies meet, so that they may decide wisely” (UNEP, 2009, p. 17) on the next steps for building a green economy and finding a so-to-say “green way out of the crisis” at the global scale.

### **3.1.3. Selection stage: structural, agential and discursive selectivities of GND variants**

Not long after the proliferation of different *variations* of the GND proposals (NEF, 2008; World Watch Institute, 2008; Pollin et al., 2008; Barbier, 2009; UNEP, 2009, p. 14; Renner et al., 2009), subsequent reports with GO-origins again have followed. However this time, the reports had a more latent mention of the GND as an urgent recovery proposal, and instead were more focused on transitioning to a green economy (UNEP, 2011; OECD, 2011; World Bank, 2012). This point marks the *selection* stage in our periodization, where the certain aspects of the early proposals are *selected* as the basis for further elaborating on the concepts of green economy, green growth and decoupling on the one hand, and environmental justice and social justice on the other. This bifurcation in the “base concepts” also represent the divergence in GND 1.0 and GND 2.0 of Mastini et al (2021). Although we also consider time as an undeniably effective indicator, our periodization contextualizes this divergence primarily on a conceptual/discursive level rather than a time scale, since some of the GND 1.0 concepts overlap with later reports like the European Green Deal (EGD). Here, we will also use our GND 1.1 and GND 1.2 categorization here, since the reports that we will discuss in this section

corresponds to the GND 1.2 category that we identified above. We will also add degrowth as another variant of green imaginaries, and present the points where it converges and diverges with the GND proposals; besides the obvious growth defiance. The reason why we tackle degrowth perspective in the *selection* section rather than the previous *variation* section is because: first, we tackled its claims as a green imaginary extensively in the previous chapter already and second, because in addition to being another green imaginary variant, it also poses an important ground for *selection* for the GNDs and green economy proposals in consideration. Therefore, we will look at degrowth's "responses" to the GND configurations and green capitalist ventures in this section, and how it emerges as a selection among variations with these responses.

But before that, we will review the GND 1.2 reports, namely the OECD (2011), UNEP (2011), WB (2012) reports, which can arguably be seen as the texts where green capitalism is most blatantly manifested. These reports<sup>120</sup>, perceive green growth as a lifejacket and as a focal point for the green transition. The OECD explains green growth as:

"...fostering *economic growth and development*, while ensuring that natural assets *continue to provide the resources and environmental services* on which our well-being relies" (italics by myself, OECD, 2011, p. 4).

Following this explanation, the sources of a green growth strategy are summarized in OECD (2011, p. 5) as: 1) productivity, 2) innovation, 3) new markets, 4) confidence (for investors), and 5) stability (in macroeconomic terms). In the first instance, these five points do not seem any different than a usual growth strategy. Green growth is indeed not much different than a growth strategy in its essence either, as first; the reports exclusively express that the recover increasing growth rates as soon as possible after the GFC, and second, green growth<sup>121</sup> is seen as the key source to finance the green transition and the conditions for well-being.

In these GND 1.2 reports, market-fixes are much more prioritized and despite still present, all public procurements have a much more latent and "invisible" function in regulating the green economy (UNEP, 2011, pp. 2-4; OECD, 2011, pp. 8-9-22). This aspect is different compared

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<sup>120</sup> Titled "*Towards Green Growth*", "*Toward a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*" and "*Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development*", respectively.

<sup>121</sup> The UNEP report describes green economy instead of green growth on its behalf, (or "eschews the language of green growth in favour of green economy" as Kallis and Hickel (2019, p. 2) puts it) and explains green economy as: "[an economy] that results with improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities [...and a one] which is low carbon [...] and socially inclusive (UNEP, 2011, p. 1).

to the GND 1.1 reports that we discussed, where the public investments and economic recovery initiatives were repeatedly accentuated as the main source of recovery and transition. Hence, there is a move away from the “regulatory state” of the GND 1.1, since the state is retracted as a subsidy provider and externality-fixer<sup>122</sup>, and acts more as a “competitive state” with much more reliance on market dynamics and innovation. In addition, in all these reports the term (G)GND is either used once or none at all, or very few references are being made to them in general.<sup>123</sup>

In this regard, green growth can also be seen as the main basis for creating consensus from the existing power bloc (i.e. fossil and tech-elites). Through green growth, all elite interests and existing power structures can be retained and transferred into the new green economy structure without causing major disruptions in the existing accumulation, regulation and societalization strategies. This can be deduced from the absolute reliance on market-fixes, where regulatory interventions on the government side such as “tax and competition policy, innovation policies, incentives to use natural resources efficiently and make pollution more expensive” are only advised to “complement market instruments” (WB, 2012, p. 8).

Another important aspect in the GND 1.2’s is how issues regarding inclusivity and sustainable development will be tackled. The WB states – or rather confesses – that “growth has not been inclusive enough” (WB, 2012, p. xi), which the OECD and the UNEP disappointedly agree as well (OECD, 2011, p. 5; UNEP, 2011, p. iv). Nevertheless, in the following texts, neither organisation comes up with a thorough critique for the reasons behind this, and their respective reports continue by saying that green growth is the necessary strategy for getting back on the track of sustainable development and achieving SDGs and MDGs<sup>124</sup> (OECD, 2011, p. 7). In this regard, it seems like these reports cannot (or prefer not to) escape from the dire consequences of the GFC and put special emphasis on social issues such as employment and poverty. Herewith, the issue is rather seen as a matter of unsustainable and wasteful use of the

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<sup>122</sup> The UNEP (2011) puts comparably more emphasis on public investments and fiscal and regulatory policies similar to GND 1.1, yet still it has a more latent mention compared to the UNEP (2009) report.

<sup>123</sup> UNEP (2011) considers GGND as an “early output of the United Nations Green Economy Initiative”, which helped green economy as a concept to gain visibility (ibid: 2). Others did not have any direct in-text reference to the GNDs – OECD (2011, p. 16) used it once whilst referring to the “Korea’s Green New Deal” and the WB did not refer or cited a previous report at all.

<sup>124</sup> In the foreword of the WB report, then-VP Rachel Kyte emphasized that green growth is “necessary, efficient and affordable” to take developing countries out of poverty and get to the levels of prosperity that they aspire (WB, 2012, p. xi).

“natural capital” (OECD, 2011, p. 4; UNEP, 2011, p. 6; WB, 2012, p. 7)<sup>125</sup>. At this point, the reports argue that by directing public and private green investment in natural capital sectors (i.e. forestry, agriculture, freshwater and fisheries), technological innovations and “incentives to use natural resources efficiently and making pollution more expensive” (OECD, 2011, p. 8), the natural capital can be used for efficiently and sustainably. Hence, in green economy and green growth strategies, environmental and social externalities can be avoided and concomitantly, economic stability (and accumulation) can be maintained in an uninterrupted manner. The GND 1.2 reports claim that green economy and growth is not a replacement for the sustainable development, but a subset of sustainable development and a strategy to achieve it (OECD, 2011, p. 5; UNEP, 2011, p. 1; WB, 2012, p. 2). However, neither the way they frame the green economy nor growth are in fact novel or substantially different from sustainable development itself anyway.

Interestingly enough the timing of these reports coincided with the UN(FCCC)’s Rio+ Conference in 2012. It would not be so wrong to argue that such reports were decisive in shaping the outcome of this meeting. The Conference itself marked a significant point of departure from the “previous” sustainable development paradigm (rhetorically more than practically) and symbolized the upcoming “new” sustainable development framework which is shaped around green economy and green growth concepts this time. The main theme of the Rio Conference was designing a new institutional framework to regulate and complement the green economy for sustainable development, to eradicate poverty and protect the environment<sup>126</sup>. The outcome document of the Rio Conference titled *The Future We Want* gathered the main points towards these goals, most of which can be found in the GND 1.2 reports<sup>127</sup>. Hence, the Conference rose to prominence as a key event not for its content primarily, but for its symbolic role as a high-level political forum for announcing and introducing the world with the green economy concepts as the new strategy for achieving sustainable development.

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<sup>125</sup> The environment is frequently attributed as “natural capital” which encapsulates all ecosystems and “ecosystem services” that provide “human well-being, a supplier of sustenance for poor households and as a source of new and decent jobs” (UNEP, 2011, p. 22).

<sup>126</sup> From United Nations. (n.d.). *Future We Want... Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1298>

<sup>127</sup> From *Rio+20 - The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*. (n.d.). Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/international/rio-20>

As a result, green economy became a buzzword that can mean anything or everything related to sustainable structural transformation, as it happened with sustainable development before. In this regard, some of these terms can be traced back as the reincarnation of “previously failed concepts and strategies”, i.e., sustainable development we just mentioned (cf. World Bank, 2012). What one ought to focus on at this point is to identify how these new(er) terms are hijacked by these reincarnated terms (same people with new clothes) and try to evaluate and understand them with their both original and re-articulated old forms. At this point, Brand (2012) argues that green economy poses the potential to become the “next oxymoron” after sustainable development. It is quite ironic here, that the discussions over green economy have boosted after the Rio Conference in 2012, exactly 20 years after the Earth Summit in 1992, which took place in Rio as well.

Here, it can be argued that the hegemonic socio-economic/growth paradigm have made a progress in terms of questioning the impact of growth since the sustainable development, given that economic growth is at least at some level is being questioned and that a green adjective was needed to be added in front of it. However, one can also argue that sustainable development has also gone through the same process, in which the adjective “sustainable” was added in front of development at the time. Yet, it is seen that the associated socio-economic paradigm of sustainable development which dominated the past 20 years not only failed at achieving sustainability, but also set the stage for the eruption of (another) systemic crisis. Brand argues that the same outcome is very likely to happen for green economy, as their initial motive, related actors and set of goals are strikingly similar with the sustainable development paradigm (ibid, p. 28). However, he also adds that green economy can be considered more “attractive and relevant” compared to the potential of sustainable development 20 years ago for several reasons. First, technological improvements in the energy sector, microelectronics and nanotechnologies are far more available and accessible compared to the sustainable development period. Second, green investments are far more attractive in the post-crisis setting, since the over-accumulated capital in the past 20 years is in search of novel investment opportunities, that are now available for sectors like agriculture, ecosystem protection and infrastructure. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the intrinsic crisis tendencies of the neoliberal environmental and financial (de)regulation have reified in a more blatant way than ever with the GFC, hence the floor is relatively more open to discussions for both recovery and reform (ibid, p. 29).

Almost a decade later from these reports, the European Commission (EC) have launched a Communication called “European Green Deal (EGD)” in 2019 (European Commission, 2019). The primary framework was identical to the UNEP, OECD, WB reports, however neither green economy nor green growth was used in the text. Nevertheless, in the introduction part, it is specifically stated that the EGD is a “*new growth strategy* for the EU”, to transform it to a “...modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy [with] no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use” (European Commission, 2019, p. 2 in Trantas, 2021, p. 229). This definition actually describes what previous GND 1.2 reports identified as the green economy. However, because green economy and green growth were used interchangeably in these early reports, the EC have preferred to present the same concept under EGD banner. In this regard, the EGD rises to prominence as a variant that symbolizes the continuation of the GND 1.2 narrative, as a primary challenger for the GND 2.0 narrative that has become prominent in the late 2010s. Hence, despite the EGD can be undermined as a “regional” variant of several GNDs and green economy/green growth imaginaries, it in fact is an explicit carrier of the GOs-oriented GND 1.2 reports of the early 2010s. It can also be argued that the EGD and accordingly Europe presents a “testing ground” for the green capitalist GND variants for creating legitimacy for these “modified sustainable development” configurations<sup>128</sup>.

The late 2010s, however were dominated by a new GND framework, which we tackle as GND 2.0, still based on the Mastini et al. (2021)’s contextualization. This new perspective on GND roots for a stronger public investment and state leadership for decarbonization, to get faster and more large-scale outcome (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 3). In this regard, GND 2.0 can be interpreted as an upgraded version of early GND 1.1 proposals, with more emphasis on a Keynesian, state-led/funded transition, an expanded welfare state and Just Transition; that were overlooked or abandoned in GND 1.2 for the most part. What makes the GND 2.0 an upgraded version of the GND 1.1 is its emphasis on bottom-up and grassroots policy-making – which we will detail

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<sup>128</sup> An interesting sidenote here for this thesis, is that fact that the Club of Rome co-authored a report in 2020 with several other NGOs called “A System Change Compass: Implementing the European Green Deal In A Time of Recovery”, which summarized and endorsed the EGD report of the EC in 2019. It is an important event for us to see how the Club of Rome evolved into an organization that allied with and endorsed hegemonic – in this case green capitalist – environmental agendas.

later on – and also on climate mitigation, which was pretty latent in GND 1.1 as those reports were focused primarily on recovering from the GFC<sup>129</sup>.

As we discussed previously, there was a substantial reliance on ecological modernization in GND 1.2 proposals – which reincarnated as R&D funding, carbon pricing and taxes, and re-direction of investments for climate mitigation at policy level. On the contrary, the GND 2.0 opposes an environmental policy-making that is based on market fixes, which undermines environmental issues to “externalities”, that aims to fix them through the creation of “proxy markets” for environmental services and by adjusting production and consumption activities (ibid). In response, the GND 2.0 suggests a type of “command-and-control environmental regulation” which promotes government action for reducing and regulating environmental impact on various levels (ibid).

Moreover, the GND 2.0 has significantly more emphasis on climate change and environmental issues in general. Contrary to the GND 1.1 and 1.2, the GND 2.0 interpret the climate crisis concomitant with the social crisis. In this regard it supports a pluralistic approach to solve crisis, which can be realized with the redistribution of both economic and political power for decision-making (The Economist, 2019). Hence, the GND 2.0 puts the emphasis on a bottom-up, grassroots and pluralistic approach on the decision-making side and monitoring environmental and social justice struggles, as opposed to the top-down regulation of transnational network groups as in GND 1.0s.

This can be seen openly by looking at the organizations and political parties that roots for a GND 2.0 framework. One of the most prominent organizations that carry the banner of GND in a GND 2.0 context is the Europe-based Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25) that was formed in 2019, which is a variant of the “GND for Europe Campaign” that combines Europe’s communities, unions, parties and activists for environmental justice (DiEM25, 2021). The movement includes prominent figures like Yanis Varoufakis and Jullian Assange; intellectuals like Slavoj Zizek, Noam Chomsky and scholars from ecological economics tradition like Naomi Klein and James K. Galbraith (ibid). Another one is US-based think tank called the New Consensus that came together in 2019 again, which aims to “develop and promote GND on a WWII scale mobilization, to fix America’s most pressing economic and environmental problems” (New Consensus, 2019). New Consensus can be interpreted as a

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<sup>129</sup> Remember here that GND 1.1 and 1.2 divergence is our extended periodization based on the Mastini et al. (2021)’s GND 1.0 and GND 2.0 contextualization, in which they tackled only GND 1.0 as a single stage that refers to what we described as GND 1.1.

combination of the Keynesian emphasis in the GND 1.1 approach with the GND 2.0 values on environmental justice and social-democracy emphasis.

These grassroots initiatives were coupled with two important political actions in the year 2019. One of them is the Decarbonisation and Economic Strategy Bill that became effective through the pioneering initiative of the UK's Green and Labour Party. The other one – which is arguably the most popular one - is the HR 109 that was presented by the progressive US Democrats in 2019. These two bills exemplify the most concrete political representations of the GND 2.0 framework, and have been (is still) challenged by fossil-elite networks both at the national and international level. Later in 2020, Bernie Sanders have brought the HR 109 one step further in his presidential campaign, by promising “to ban imports and exports of oil and gas, mountaintop mining and fracking”, along with restricting drilling activities on public lands (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 3). These proposals were then coupled with the “GND supply-side policies to directly restrict the extraction and distribution of fossil fuels, in line with the ‘keep it in the ground’ slogan of the climate justice movement” (ibid).

In the light of these, it can be said that there is a so-to-say “progress” in the GND variations and base of selections, in terms of proposing a more concrete and comparably more radical strategies to tackle climate change and issues around social justice. Herewith, it can be argued that the dominant discourses and strategies of the GND 2.0 framework were *selected* based on more radical left-wing and pluralistic perspective, after the early 2010s' GO-oriented GND 1.0 proposals failed to establish the legitimacy towards their plans around revived version of sustainable development, through green capitalistic economic and political strategies. Here, it should be noted that the GND 2.0 proponents still aim to finance their proposals through green growth and mention green economy in their works. However, they significantly diverge from the GND 1.0 proposals on how they conceptualize and more importantly aim to *realize* the green growth and green economy. As we discussed previously, for the GND 1.2 proponents green growth is *the* new growth strategy, which in and on itself is a *goal* to realize and maintain. Therefore, all the surrounding political economic strategies in the GND 1.2 proposals are first and foremost designed to achieve green growth, and sustain the growth rates at an accelerating rate in a market-based green economy. Whereas in the GND 2.0, as it can be seen in HR 109 for example, there is *no* specific mention of green growth as a policy objective; and instead, it is presented as an *instrument* to provide fiscal support for bigger goals such as boosting employment and realizing a just transition, providing a job guarantee, expanding welfare state and also climate change mitigation.

For some degrowthers this “progress” in GND 2.0 should be regarded a strategic threshold; for two reasons: First, such shifts in (mainstream green) rhetoric and policy proposals increase degrowth’s chance to take place at the table; hence enhances its visibility and accessibility in the short-run. Second, it fosters its capacity to infuse (even colonize) the GND with degrowth priorities and values; hence further radicalizes the GND in the long-run. This point brings us to the position of degrowth in this selection stage. Here to re-emphasize, we contextualize degrowth as a variation of green imaginaries. However, despite degrowth is considered as another green imaginary variant, we did not cover it in the variation section above, since we tackled its variation characteristics in Chapter 2. Hence, we will discuss it here with its selection side, as it is both a selected green imaginary and encapsulates concepts that are selected in this process. It can also be considered as a selection because it increasingly gains more recognition and rises as a strong challenger for other green imaginaries<sup>130</sup>.

We have already discussed what degrowth proposes in terms of a socioeconomic transition – a comprehensive decolonization from the growth economies and imaginaries – however, what it “materially” proposes in the short-term resembles very much like what GND scopes. The key differences between degrowth and the GND variants is, first: how they aim to finance the green transitions and the new green paradigm and second, the fundamental strife on techno-fixes and decoupling.

In respond to these key differences, degrowth initially aims to build an economy that is not reliant on growth for financing this transition, and – in the most simplistic way - argues that there is enough money in the system already to tackle such change. Hence what is different in degrowth from the GND is that degrowthers do not believe there needs to be further or ongoing growth to create or direct the needed investments to the green sectors that will pioneer the green transition. What is needed instead is new mechanisms and policies to recalibrate redistribution and where investments are directed to. Kallis (2019) warns here by reminding that increasing GDP levels – by either growth-as-usual or green growth – will not only result with increasing clean investments but also with increasing dirty investments. In fact, 1% rise in GDP creates 0.5 to 0.8% rise in emissions, thus if the GDP growth continues to rise by 3% every year, the global economy will be twice in size in 2043 (ibid). Accordingly, this brings up the challenge

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<sup>130</sup> Recently degrowth perspective has been discussed and responded by several prominent figures coming predominantly from mainstream neoclassical traditions, media outlets (the Guardian, Independent, The Economist) and transnational organizations (i.e., the Post-Growth Conference in European Parliament in 2018 and Beyond Growth report of the OECD published in 2020).

of creating a renewable energy structure that will completely back an economy that is double the size of the existing one, a goal that is even for the fieriest eco-modernists would doubt on achieving.

So, what degrowthers argue is that the smaller the economic output and the size of the economy, the easier it is to decarbonize it (Kallis, 2019, p. 1; Hickel & Kallis, 2020, p. 469). And since decarbonization is by no means a “choice” anymore and an absolute necessity for the survival of the planet and what it inhabits, insisting on maintaining the existing system and the pursuit of growth “ad infinitum and ad absurdum” makes things only worse, and worse for good. In other words, degrowthers say that trying to stay in a growth economy whilst aiming for a radical and urgent decarbonization – setting aside all other environmental and social ills that the growth economy causes – is an incompatible goal anyway. Here, despite degrowthers are usually the ones who are criticized for “kicking the can down the road” on efforts for creating a swift and effective climate mitigation plan, by demanding a cumbersome full-fledged system change; it appears that the ones who actually does so are the growthers who try to reform a system that is inherently in mismatch with the climate goal. So, what degrowthers argue that is since the process of “going green” is already highly likely to reduce the GDP growth, it is better to let it keep in that way rather than fighting for maintaining and increasing growth and thus re-create patterns that has led to the climate crisis. Accordingly, what is fundamentally different from a GND (2.0) framework and degrowth is that whilst the first one is still in growth economics, the latter’s methods and ultimate aim is to alter the capitalist growth and its imaginaries.

However, this brings the question of how to finance the clean energy transition in a degrowth economy. Mastini et al. (2021) unfolds three strategies for public investments that are not financed by economic growth. First strategy is reallocating public expenditures from destructive sectors like the arms sector and fossil fuel subsidies; which will be coupled with the savings acquired by the reduced expenditures in areas like public health, defence, unemployment benefits and climate change adaptation as a result of a successful green transition (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 6). Second strategy is coming up with a radical progressive taxation scheme to expropriate private and corporate savings. This progressive taxation would include harsh (up to 100%) wealth taxes for the top income groups, e.g. implementing a total wealth cap (ibid; Buch-Hansen & Koch, 2019). Such progressive taxation would also pave the way for curbing poverty and inequality and also impede consumerism. Third strategy is instituting a sovereign money system where money creation is decommodified and re-arranged

as a common good, that would be debt-free and thus did not depend on GDP growth for repayment (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 6).

In the same line of thought, degrowth accentuates the public ownership of the energy sector, especially to ensure the majority of the public investments goes to clean energy transition in a shrinking economy (Kallis, 2018; Mastini et al., 2021, p. 7). The public ownership in energy is quite important because investments for such a transition will have significantly slower rates of returns compared to the ultra-swift returns of investments in the financial sector. Hence, leaving one of the most – maybe the most – important aspect(s) of transition in the new economic paradigm to the discretion of the market forces and dynamics is by any means a risk that can be taken. In relation, public ownership of the primary infrastructures and the assisting role of the public development banks in this regard is accentuated as well, since the transition to green infrastructure systems are also an indispensable feature for the green transition (ibid; Eskelinen, 2015)

Another aspect that degrowth and GND 2.0 (and also 1.1) intersects is the emphasis put on Just Transition. The reallocation of the workers employed in brown sectors<sup>131</sup> to the green sectors and also creating further job opportunities is a key objective in degrowth as well. A job guarantee is a key proposal for degrowth especially as it ensures a “living outside the sphere of capital accumulation” (Alcott, 2013; Mastini et al., 2021, p. 7). However, there are a few important distinctions in degrowth for achieving this objective. First, these employment opportunities are not created by further (green) growth but by the methods of redistribution of wealth, investments and resources at hand. Second, through policies like job guarantees, degrowth aims to provide the required workforce for care and community services, as well as for environmentally sustainable projects (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 7). This would also help to change in the focus on production activities as well, and enable the majority of production to be made not for exchange, but for use (ibid). Third, a job guarantee would ease to realize some of the more radical proposals of degrowth i.e. work-time reduction and work-sharing at a large scale (Kallis et al., 2013) and to give remarkably more presence to labour unions and workers organization in the decision-making process. In this regard, Just Transition incorporates many of the fundamental proposals of degrowth to transform the techno-economic paradigm and also some features of societalization towards their values and understandings. Hence, since the ultimate goal of degrowth is to establish a “truly democratic, worker-controlled production

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<sup>131</sup> The term “brown sector” is a metaphor used for the fossil fuel industry, as a reference to the colour of crude oil.

system” (Barca, 2019 in Mastini et al., 2021, p. 7) Just Transition renders a lot more meaning to degrowthers than it does to GND proponents.

These strategies are part of what Mastini et al. (2021) calls a “GND without growth”, which aims to reconcile degrowth concepts with GND (2.0)’s suggestions. By doing so, degrowth can be included in hegemonic green imaginary discussions and eventually (hopefully) hijack their suggestions towards degrowth objectives (ibid, p. 8). A GND without growth is an important venture in our selection stage since it combines the selected features of GND 2.0 and degrowth. Herewith, it rises as a potential retention strategy against the (more) green capitalist GND variations that we discussed, and thus we can consider it as a “GND 2.1” in a way. Yet a “GND 2.1” is also a double-edged sword, because despite GND 2.0 is “the most promising social and environmental legislation that is worth fighting for” (Heron, 2019), it is still open to be hijacked by other GND variants with stronger green capitalist-orientations i.e. the EGD most recently (Mastini et al., 2021, p. 8). Nevertheless, the possibility of being hijacked by hegemonic actors and strategies is a bigger threat for degrowth already. Siding with the GND has, on the one hand, the potential of serving as a gateway for degrowth concepts; but, on the other hand, has the potential of watering down the degrowth’s growth criticism and absorb it as a perspective and social movement altogether (ibid). Hence, at the end of the day, it is suggested for degrowth proponents and activists from all fellow movements – labour movement, social and environmental justice movements and so on – to be neither completely sceptic nor completely sympathetic with the GND proposals (ibid).

**Table 3.3. Variation, selection and retention stages of respective green imaginaries**

Variation	Main reports and manifestations	Main goals	Means to achieve (green) growth
<p><b>GND 1.0</b> (green capitalism)</p> <p><b>GND 1.1</b></p>	<p>NEF (2008) Pollin et al. (2008) UNEP (2009) + Barbier (2009) World Watch Institute (2008) + Renner et al. (2009)</p>	<p>Introducing GND banner, creating stimulus to recover the economy and curbing unemployment with green jobs (e.g., Just Transition), keeping finance in check, addressing climate change</p>	<p>Reviving the economy through green public investments, green infrastructure projects and green jobs, re-regulating finance to prevent instability</p>
<p><b>Selection</b></p> <p><b>GND 1.2</b></p> <p><b>Main selectivities (base concepts):</b> green investment opportunities for market/private actors, eco-modernist emphasis for climate mitigation and modifying “economic recovery” to “green growth strategy”</p>	<p>OECD (2011) UNEP (2011) WB (2012) European Commission (2019) + UN Rio+</p>	<p>Transition to a green economy, achieving and maintaining green growth, reliance on market-fixes, “internalizing externalities”, techno-fixes for climate change</p>	<p>Private-public investments and Market-dominated green transitions, subsidizing green sectors and the emergence of proxy markets (i.e., for recycling and externality mitigation), new clean technologies</p>
<p><b>GND 2.0</b></p> <p><b>Main selectivities (base concepts):</b> Just Transition, predominance of public investments to finance the green transition, progressive taxation, environmental and social justice emphasis retrieved from rising grassroots movements</p>	<p>Policy pieces i.e., UK Labour and Green Party’s Decarbonization and Economic Strategy Bill (2017-19); the US Democrats’ HR 109 (2019) Movements i.e., DiEM25 (2019) and various environmental justice movements; think-tanks i.e., New Consensus (2019)</p>	<p>Just Transition, clean energy transition, (re)emphasizing welfare state, “command-and-control environmental regulation” i.e., policy measures and international agreements to mitigate climate change, promoting social and environmental justice</p>	<p>Massive public investments for green sectors (especially renewables), absolute/relative decoupling, “higher levels of GDP, higher levels of clean investments” (Pollin, 2018 in Kallis, 2019, p. 1)</p>
<p><b>Degrowth</b></p> <p><b>Main selectivities (base concepts):</b> Just Transition, (radical) progressive taxation, environmental and social justice movements</p>	<p>International Degrowth Conferences, academic texts, opinion pieces in books, magazines, journals and activist outlets</p>	<p>Abandoning growth economics and decolonizing growth imaginaries, Just Transition, comprehensive welfare state, progressive taxation, abolishing dirty sectors (fossil, armament) and replacing them with green sectors shifting from “industrial production to social and environmental reproduction” (Mastini et al., 2021: 7)</p>	<p>No-growth/post-growth economics</p>
<p><b>Retention</b></p>	<p>Green capitalist green economy, GND (2.0) based green economy, GND without growth</p>		

### **3.1.4. Retention stage: projections and commentary for the retained green imaginary(ies)**

In the previous sections, we have presented the green imaginary variations and the selection dynamics among the concepts and the imaginaries themselves. Here, we will share our final comments and projections for the green imaginary selectivities that can be potentially *retained* as the new hegemonic socio-economic paradigm and accumulation regime.

So far, the GND variants that we discussed in the variation and selection stages shows the venture of creating a *consensus* to reaffirm the legitimacy for the novel techno-economic paradigm, mode of regulation and mode societalization in the post-crisis order, with a “green and inclusive twist”. Accordingly, we initially saw the GND 1.1’s urgent response to the economic and social crisis after the GFC, by coming up with recovery-stimulus strategies to curb massive unemployment and re-regulating finance as the detonator of the global crisis. In addition, all respective reports identified a Triple Crisis, where the rising carbon emissions are tackled as the second major and urgent problem to address in the existing system. Here, despite there is a systemic analysis and criticism for the speculative nature of the finance-driven economies and the role of the current economic paradigm in boosting carbon emissions, this Triple Crisis and its impasses were still considered as a conjunctural crisis and were refrained from addressing the organic crisis tendencies that caused the financial bubble to occur and burst in the first place.

Yet still, with the wider acceptance of a Triple Crisis in economic, social and environmental terms, the GND 1.1 reports were followed by another round of top-down “prescription” suggesting, that became more vivid in the neoliberal governance style in GND 1.2. The GND 1.2 reports argued that the economic and social ills of the crisis can be overcome with a new growth strategy – e.g., green growth – and market-based policies, that acknowledges the urgency of climate crisis and the degradation of the environment (or the natural capital as they prefer to call it) and their concomitant damage on social inclusivity and livelihoods.

The GND 2.0 then notably shifted away from this green capitalist narrative and came forward with stronger social-liberal characteristics, which prioritized the public investments and state regulation to actualize social and environmental justice. To do so, GND 2.0 emphasized the importance of a Just Transition more robustly at the social level, and was significantly less market-reliant in terms of ecological fixes and climate mitigation plans at the environmental level.

Recently, the degrowth perspective began to rise as a prominent challenger of all these green imaginaries, by claiming that the inherent growth imaginaries should be abolished once and for all, in addressing and providing remedies for the Triple Crisis, without trying to maintain the existing socioeconomic growth paradigm, but by trying to change it all together. Herewith, we now arrived at the point for discussing the main question of this thesis, which is why degrowth could not be hegemonic despite its claims and concepts regarding ecological and social injustices influenced a vast literature on ecology for over four decades and after two main crises of hegemonic accumulation regimes.

Here, as the research question itself is the question of how degrowth could not *retain* in the previous socioeconomic configurations, we will discuss the short-term and long-term prospects for degrowth and what are the strengths and weaknesses of degrowth in the existing conjuncture. Yet, we should remind that we will leave some key comments to the conclusion that will follow the Chapter 3, thus the evaluation of degrowth will be limited to its contextualization in this chapter specifically. But first, we will elaborate on the future prospects for green capitalist alternatives, as well as for the GND variations as we discussed in this chapter.

To begin with, in reference to the variation and selection stages, it appears that all green capitalist alternatives face with the same challenges that their predecessor, sustainable development has faced with in the past thirty years. On the one hand, in the light of the commentaries of Brand (2012) that we discussed above, the treasured green economy framework of the GND 1.2 reports share many of the handicaps of sustainable development, and has the potential to become an (*the*) oxymoron in the new socioeconomic paradigm. In fact, as the reports themselves accentuated, the green economy is configured as “a subset” of sustainable development, and aims to fulfil the SDGs that has been ill-proceeded in the past 20 years. Nevertheless, we can argue here that the GND 1.2 framework has had troubles to reaffirm the consensus with a message that predominantly aims to “update” sustainable development. This can be seen more clearly from the fact that the GND 1.2 has failed to carry its main selectivities to the next GND variation, the GND 2.0, as prioritizing market-fixes over public investments and the disregard of Just Transition did not survive the filtering out process of selectivities to the next variation. In addition, the neoliberal governance of the GND 1.2 was replaced with institutional fixes in the GND 2.0.

Here, we should remind that the EGD of European Commission (2019) rises as a critical venture to revive the green capitalist core of the GND 1.2, yet it appears that it will – at least at some level – try to do so by having to come up with closer narratives to the GND 2.0, rather than openly challenging or replacing it. Instead, as the respective actors of the GND 1.2 are very much accustomed to do, it is possible that the EGD would modify and manipulate much of the Keynesian welfare-state emphasis, as well as the environmental and social justice aspect of the GND 2.0 at the transnational networks/international regulation level, if not at domestic politics/national regulation level.

The GND 2.0, on the other hand, stands at the epicentre of the tug-of-war between the green capitalist GND 1.2 and the growth-canceller degrowth. It is a strategy that is either going to be absorbed by green capitalist GND 1.2 or will be rooted as a politically feasible entry-ticket for environmental and social justice movements and degrowth, and will be tried to be pushed by these groups more to the left-side of the scale. At the present day conditions, the GND 2.0 appears as the most eligible and attractive imaginary which has the potential to appeal a wider-range of audience at the international level. It can do so with both the Keynesian premises and the ambition to change the balance of forces. While the GND 1.2 aims to reproduce the existing power bloc by transforming the fossil to the green(tech) elite, the GND 2.0 challenges the position of the former.

Here, before we present our own commentary, we can use two concepts to look at the prospective instrumentalization of the GND 2.0 in the tug-of-war between GND 1.2 and degrowth. First, Mastini et al. (2021, p. 8) postulates that the GND 2.0 can be interpreted as a “revolutionary reform”, a concept that is put forward by Gorz, which refers to the reformative actions that will automatically bring together a revolutionary system change, if to be properly materialized. The realization of the suggestions posited by the GND 2.0 – without being hijacked, manipulated and modified by the hegemonic actors and strategies within the GND 1.2 – could trigger such a revolutionary process for the existing power relations and mode of regulation. Mastini et al. (ibid) continues by saying that degrowth can be considered as a revolutionary reform as well, a problematic approach I find and will detail later, and for that reason; GND 2.0 is an exceptionally useful channel to be used to align with to initiate the fight for a much comprehensive systemic change. Yet, as we mentioned previously in this chapter, this is a contested topic among degrowthers, as some of them argue that such an alliance would only ease the process of degrowth to be swallowed by capitalist imaginaries, since GND 2.0 is still in growth economics. Others would say that degrowth *is* a revolutionary attempt itself, and

thus is one – if not multiple – steps further from being reform that will bring a revolution *with* it.

On the other hand, Trantas (2021, p. 227) argue that sustainable development and its contemporary manifestation green economy, or what we contextualize here as GND 1.2, is a “passive revolution” case, a *par excellence* he stresses, and thus provides us with a multi-layered discussion here. Trantas uses several Gramscian concepts and perspectives to exemplify his argument, which are very well-fitted to our contextualization and discussion in this retention stage. Gramsci’s passive revolution is a bourgeoisie strategy of passively restructuring social relations in a period of weak hegemony, when the popular participation is maintained yet popular interests could not be “organically integrated” in the hegemonic projects and visions (Jessop, 1983; 2016 in Trantas, 2021, p. 226). In other words, as Sassoon (2000) described quite manifestly, passive revolution is the attempt to preserve control over political and economic power, via series of compromises over different social interests and, most importantly, via neutralizing and/or absorbing any antagonistic group, strategy or idea that presents a threat for the success and perpetuity of the passive revolution at hand (Trantas, 2021, p. 226). In addition, passive revolution stands at the crossroads between a “war of position” and a “war of manoeuvre”<sup>132</sup>, where both the means of soft power of the war of position and the hard power of the war of manoeuvre are used to control the social basis (ibid, p. 226).

Accordingly, Gramsci posits that ND in the US in the 1930s can be considered as a case of passive revolution, as it involved a restructuring of capitalism through more intense state intervention in economic and social realms via various political forms (Gramsci 1971, p. 119 in Trantas 2021, p. 227). In the same line of thought, Trantas argues that this definition applies to sustainable development<sup>133</sup> quite fittingly, as it displays the capability of dominant groups to impose their “hegemonic visions, state projects and accumulation strategies” over masses and the ways in which they try to assimilate the demands of subaltern and opposing forces as well as suppressing their “radical potential into politically harmless elements” (Trantas, 2021,

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<sup>132</sup> In Gramsci’s conceptualization, a war of position occurs in a weak hegemony, where consensus and consent over the (counter)hegemonic agenda is created through persuasion and propaganda. Instead, a war of manoeuvre occurs in an “expansive hegemony” where the counterhegemonic movements are strong enough to topple the existing hegemony, through either coercion or democratically and became the new hegemonic bloc themselves. However, these two might take place concurrently sometimes, especially in times of passive revolution.

<sup>133</sup> As is defined in the 2030 Agenda of the SDGs in the UN General Assembly Resolution in 2015 and “in other regional and national contexts” (Trantas, 2021, p. 227).

p. 227). In this regard, very similarly to our position in this chapter, Trantas argues that sustainable development that has revived in the form of EGD might try to implement this over degrowth as a rising defiant concept and movement. Again in a way that supports our upcoming claim here, he warns that this is very likely if degrowth cannot ground its proposals among significant social categories and also relevant political actors, it will remain “largely voluntaristic and apolitical” and thus, will be easily hijacked by hegemonic discourses and power blocs that are already trying to discredit it as a utopian and inapplicable concept (Trantas, 2021, p. 235).

On the other hand, GND 2.0 is a deviation from the passive revolution that Trantas defines as EGD and sustainable development, and us as GND 1.2. Instead, we argue that GND 2.0 has its own potential to become a passive revolution, by attracting the “hearts and minds” of the social categories that demand social and environmental justice, along with some other social categories i.e. small and medium property owners<sup>134</sup>, which would have *pertinent effect* (Poulantzas, 1968) on the course of the climate and political struggle. In such a scenario, degrowth would be left completely barehanded to fight against the hegemonic imaginaries, as the GND 2.0 would rise as an alternative that gives similar promises as degrowth, but coated with the dream of continuous green growth. Given the similarity of the GND 2.0 suggestions and their political appealing and feasibility compared to the degrowth’s pledge for abandoning growth, degrowth would be hijacked in an instant. In such a scenario, the only way out for degrowth would be to emphasize the vitality of abandoning growth for the very sake of planetary boundaries and the utmost urgency of climate change, in which the talks over the possibility of (any) decoupling is out of discussion. And in such case, at the very biophysical/bioeconomics core of degrowth, it would very much likely too late to discuss further techno-fixes and any promise that the eco-modernists or the neoclassicals in general put forward, as the carbon offsets would already be at a catastrophic point.

Here, the shift of emphasis from a holistic criticism of growth imaginaries to the irrationality and impracticality of decoupling may not be welcomed by some degrowthers, as it might be considered as a “retreat” from the second generation degrowth to the first generation degrowth, where the emphasis was on biophysics. Such disapproval would be very likely and also at some level understandable, since second generation actors would not want to set aside the long way that degrowth has come since the articulation with the post-developmental critique and

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<sup>134</sup> Small and local businesses, local propriety class and small-mid size local industries.

accordingly the birth of *decroissance* literature/movement in the 2000s. However, emphasizing its “origins” with the theoretical vocabulary of two decades of social critique would be the most valid first step to be taken, to be a *retained selectivity*, rather than trying to be “the” *retained imaginary*. In other words, degrowth needs to continue advocating for degrowth and even more so for “de-green-growth” simultaneously, to prevent its assimilation by its “closest ally” among green imaginaries. Otherwise, it will be harder for it to justify and legitimise its revolutionary claims against the GND 2.0, which suggests similar policy options with a familiar and more appealing framework for people to identify and align with more easily and without the burden becoming a full-fledged revolutionary. Therefore, in the current conditions, the success of the GND 2.0 would mean the failure of degrowth as a selectivity and retained imaginary.

To sum up all we discussed in this retention stage and to come up with projections over which imaginary(ies) will be the *retained imaginary* in the mist of the Triple Crisis, we will look at how these green imaginaries are in fact aiming to and able to create and navigate “change in size and change in kind” in the existing socioeconomic paradigm. This bifurcation can be interpreted under the structures of reproduction (*morphostatis*) vs. transformation (*morphogenesis*) (Archer, 1998), which manifests over social relations in transition periods from pre-existing structures to subsequent social structures and interactions (ibid, p. 376) In the light of this analysis, we will identify three possibilities for each of the three imaginaries and then comment on which one is most likely to be the one that “survives” the selection stage and retains as the new hegemony.

The first retained imaginary can be a “green capitalist GND 1.2”, where the elite dominance and also inter-elite struggles would prevail the strongest. Accordingly, the reproduction (*morphostatis*) of the fossil elite as a green-tech elite would be the most prevalent identifier, along with the most upheld version of eco-modernism and thus the dominance of techno-fixes towards climate mitigation. In this regard, the GND 1.2 would be the green transition that contains “least transformation (*morphogenesis*)” among other green imaginaries, GND 2.0 and degrowth. The *morphostatis* emphasis of the GND 1.2 would also neatly display itself with the reproduction of sustainable development as the green economy, that is financed by again newly reproduced market-based strategies and actors. Lastly, it would be displayed through the re-regulated “greened financial sector” (with new green investment opportunities and also new features i.e. green bonds etc.), where the economy is reproduced as a “finance-friendly economy” rather than a solely finance-oriented economy.

In the light of these, despite the green capitalist GND 1.2 strategies lost their predominance and the legitimacy of their main message – reviving sustainable development with green growth – significantly since the early 2010s, the green capitalist GND 1.2 is still on the game with powerful strategies like the EGD recently. One of its strengths is the wide-ranging concessions it can put forward and its reproductive capabilities of the established power relations via transnational networks and via the global fossil, financial and tech elite. Hence, in case it will miss out the chance to be the retained imaginary in the last instance, the GND 1.2 will still remain present as a challenger selectivity against the Keynesian-left core of the GND 2.0, as a more vigorous representative of the interests of the global elites and the hegemonic power relations compared to the social-liberal GND 2.0. It is also likely that GND 1.2 will constantly try to push the GND 2.0 outside of the “public domain” in terms of investments and welfare state expenditures, and will try to absorb it via dragging it to the “private domain”.

The second retained imaginary can be a “social-liberal<sup>135</sup> GND 2.0”, which would again reproduce certain aspects within the hegemonic actors and power relations, yet it has a bigger potential of transforming notable features in techno-economic paradigm and mode of regulation. In current circumstances, a social-liberal GND 2.0 prevails as the strongest retention scenario, as it contains and able to instrumentalize both the elements of reproduction (*morphostatis*) and transformation (*morphogenesis*). The social-liberal GND 2.0 is also able to present *concessions* and create pertinent effects on the side of both various social categories and hegemonic actors, thus is able obtain the *consent* of both groups to consolidate its hegemony. One of its strongest, perhaps the strongest, features is its pledge for prioritizing a green energy transition and Just Transition, that will be financed through expansive public investments and green growth. This pledge addresses almost all three aspects of the Triple Crisis equally and interrelatedly, i.e., economically: a non-speculative and growing economy, socially: new and better employment opportunities and ecologically; climate mitigation and green energy transition that is not left to the discretion of market forces for investments. Therefore, the GND 2.0 promises more features of *morphogenesis* for the existing finance-oriented market economy, neoliberal regulation and mode of societalization, via:

1) prioritizing public investments and socializing the energy sector, 2) progressive and green taxation, 3) taking responsibility of creating employment and better working conditions and a

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<sup>135</sup> Social-democrat GND 2.0 can be an alternative usage here, yet since the GND 2.0 primarily originates in the US as opposed to the continental Europe, it is preferred to be address it as “social-liberal” instead of “social-democrat”, to emphasize its US origins.

more union-friendly approach, 4) supporting small-businesses and local industries and encouraging sustainable consumption practices and lastly 5) recognizing the struggles and vulnerable or historically disadvantaged groups. As a result of these transformative initiatives, and its increasing popularity in the current political environment, e.g., the newly-elected US president Biden's emphasis on the GND, it appears that the social-liberal GND 2.0 is the most likely retention scenario to be realized.

The third retained imaginary can be a GND without growth, where degrowth successfully managed not to be sacked by the GND 1.2 and assimilated by the GND 2.0. In such a scenario degrowth would ally with the latter and could dissuade it to abandon green growth in exchange for degrowth. As degrowth aims for an ultimate and total transformation (*morphogenesis*) of the existing system and the imaginaries around it, it refuses any form of reproduction of the social relations that is relevant at the moment. To achieve so, degrowth sees GND 2.0 as a starting point to begin the transformation through revolutionary reforms. However, there are immense risks to that, primarily the risk to be hijacked before seeing the light of day on political level, that we already mentioned and stressed several times here and in previous chapters. Those risks arise primarily from the fact that other green imaginaries have the so-to-say "privilege" to instrumentalize more tools and channels to impose their hegemonic visions, as well as the ability to give concessions if needed. Thus, the other two imaginaries require less challenge in order to be realized compared to scenarios including a degrowth transformation.

Nevertheless, there are also risks that arise from the parts that degrowth – at least yet – lack to explain and also project, that makes it significantly vulnerable in the political scene. In this regard, we now at a point where we should discuss and take into account the inner problems and weaknesses of degrowth to become hegemonic. So far, we have predominantly addressed the hardships of degrowth that arise from the reason that degrowth being a counter-hegemonic perspective. Degrowth indeed has to overcome more limitations than other imaginaries, especially in terms of reaching a wider audience and/or to transmitting its main criticism in the mainstream. However, at the point that we arrived right now, one should also acknowledge the theoretical and practical gaps *in* degrowth, that we have rather latently mentioned before. Moreover, as we will see, most of these gaps and inadequacies have been inherited from previous generations of degrowth that we discussed, which makes degrowth similar in a way

with the sustainable development paradigm, as it also could not overcome the handicaps of its predecessor versions have faced with in the past<sup>136</sup>.

The initial gap that we will address is both an ontological and practical one, which is the lack of transition strategies in degrowth. Although degrowth is a perspective and movement that aims for a complete and utter *transformation* in the current growth-oriented socioeconomic paradigm, it notably lacks the strategies and policies for the very *transition period* that will bring about and realize that transformation. Degrowth has been a quite fruitful and miscellaneous field for imagining and designing alternative worlds, yet the transformation it strives for sounds more like a projection for a “future society”, where growth imaginaries and practices are already decolonized. The academic texts<sup>137</sup> and opinion pieces on degrowth used the expression “degrowth transition” as a default phrase where the transition has already taken place and the transformation is materialized<sup>138</sup>.

It is also warned often for the part of reader that one must assess and think about degrowth strategies “outside of growth imaginaries”, yet despite those strategies and the degrowth vision are thoroughly explained, how will we “get there” is often missed out. Hence, degrowth in a way “jumps into transformation” and skips the real challenging part that will make it *retain* as the new hegemonic vision, which is the transition phase. The closest strategy of degrowth that can be attributed as a transition strategy is the “revolutionary reforms” that we discussed based on the work of Mastini et al. (2021), and arguably it is the most recurrent – although not necessarily with reference to the exact term – vision in degrowth works for a transition. Here, I argue that it is in fact the most dangerous strategy for degrowth, for several reasons. First, we do not agree with the idea that degrowth is a revolutionary reform. Inasmuch as, if it to be considered as such, I believe that this would only ease its assimilation by other retention possibilities, that can provide *concessions* and able to “play by the rules” of the existing system, even whilst changing it. Degrowth *is* a revolution, and it should be treated as nothing less than

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<sup>136</sup> Yet still, the handicaps that degrowth and sustainable development are different by nature, as one of them is a hegemonic vision that could dominate the socioecological imaginaries in the past thirty years and the latter is a counter-hegemonic perspective that aims to decolonize the former’s socioecological and economic imaginaries.

<sup>137</sup> For example, Parrique (2019, pp. 666-694) has a full chapter titled “Transition Strategy”, which he further details and models the transformations that he covered in the previous five chapters - in fields of policy-making, property, money and work in degrowth. Nevertheless, what he discusses in this chapter is how the transformation in speak will help to transform the next step in the respective subject matter, but all of these and the associated “transition strategies” that he mentions are again a world where morphogenesis is complete and where we already transitioned into a degrowth society.

<sup>138</sup> Also see Kallis (2017, pp. 23-24) for such contextualization. For a more detailed terminological discussion on the misuse of the terms transition and transformation, see Brand (2013).

that. Revolution is indeed a thornier endeavour to tackle compared to penetrate into the system through revolutionary reforms. However, anything less than a full-fledged system change in the form of a revolution – that we will clarify what we mean by that and how it can be realized – would have more serious consequences in terms of the ideals that degrowth wants to realize. However, demanding less or treating degrowth as something less than a revolutionary venture is also problematic, as it would open the way for its absorption itself before any effort of other contesting imaginaries comes into play.

This brings up the second problem that degrowth encapsulates, and it is the abstention of degrowth (proponents) to associate itself with eco-socialism and with socialism in general. Here, to clarify, the emphasis on degrowth is different that of socialism<sup>139</sup>, as the former targets the pursuit of economic growth and growth imaginaries as the base unit to be abolished, whereas the latter puts class antagonisms and dynamics at the heart of the struggle and where the system change should/would begin in. In addition, despite being quite conservative over growth due to planetary boundaries, eco-socialism is not explicitly or necessarily “anti-growth”, whereas degrowth is against all forms of economic growth being either capitalist or socialist. On top of that, as we covered all through Chapter 2, degrowth has not historically born out of as a variation of eco-socialism and had its own way of emergence among various strands of Marxist and bioeconomics traditions. However, these reasons are still not enough to justify why second generation degrowth seeks alliances with imaginaries that still play by the rules of the system, i.e. GND 2.0, and is this reluctant to search for alliances in the socialist bloc, even when the key disagreements on key issues are acknowledged.

In this regard, one can rightfully argue that a GND 2.0 has more political and thus practical relevancy for influencing real politics and eventually becoming hegemonic alternative, and thus justifies the reason why degrowth is more sympathetic towards GND compared to eco-socialists, who do not have much currency in the current real political conjuncture. Moreover, there are also Marxist and eco-socialist critiques of degrowth, by blaming degrowth for “abandoning the battlefield” with its escapist ideals and apolitical stance, and shifting the attention from real issues around class struggles and dynamics of accumulation, to issues around economic growth, ethics and values on lifestyle (D’Alisa et al. 2013, p. 215; Parrique, 2019, pp. 425-426). Hence, it can be said that there is a certain “bad blood” between eco-socialists (and Marxists) and degrowth that should be overcome or at least be settle on, yet this

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<sup>139</sup> Latouche (2007) argues that capitalism is a sub-category of growthism, not vice versa.

is still not an adequate reason to avoid from forming alliances against contesting green capitalist (despite at varying degrees) imaginaries in the struggle for becoming the retained imaginary. At this point, in accordance with my argument above regarding degrowth being/requiring a revolution to fulfil its transformative nature in the transition process, I suggest that an alliance with eco-socialists would be an important move for degrowthers to realize this, rather than waiting for their “turn to shine” on the main stage with GND 2.0 and through revolutionary reforms.

The third problem of degrowth that we will discuss finally is the lack of clarity in the role of the state and the mode of regulation in its configurations. It is safe to say that this is the most disregarded aspect in degrowth, and one of its weakest points which plays a part in all the problems that discussed above as well. This view is shared and supported by D’Alisa and Kallis (2020) strongly, in a paper where they discuss the inadequacy of the theorization of the state for the transition and transformation stages of degrowth in the literature so far. In this regard, they provide a literature review of Anglophone and Francophone strands of second generation degrowth over the works that have studied or mentioned over state formations in a degrowth transition using Wright (2009)’s systemic transformation visions that are: ruptural, interstitial and symbiotic<sup>140</sup>. As a result of their analysis, they find several approaches from both Anglophone and Francophone traditions that fall into each category of transformation visions, yet symbiotic metamorphosis comes forward as the predominant narrative, which showed itself in the “revolutionary reforms” suggestion of Mastini et al. (2021) that we tackled extensively in this chapter. In response, D’Alisa and Kallis suggest that the state projection in degrowth can be better understood from a Gramscian perspective, adopting his concept of “integral state”. In this conceptualization, political society and civil society are considered as organically integrated units that complements each other. In this sense, D’Alisa and Kallis suggest this approach is crucial to discuss state configurations, as it prevents overestimation of grassroots action at the civil society domain and concomitantly the underestimation of the struggle and institutional changes required at the political society domain (D’Alisa & Kallis, 2020, p. 6).

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<sup>140</sup> “*The ruptural strategy* consists of a frontal attack on the state, aiming to the construction of new emancipatory institutions after existing state institutions have been dismantled. This is the logic of revolutionaries. *Interstitial metamorphosis* instead is focused on the promotion of horizontalist alternatives within the crack of the capitalist system, building the new in the cracks (interstices) of the old but outside the state. This strategy is in line with anarchist visions of building parallel systems in the civil society arena around self-management. *The strategy of symbiotic metamorphosis* envisions a coevolving trajectory of transformation based on compromises with the dominant political-economic forces [...] This approach is in line with a more reformist social democratic political tradition” (italics by myself, D’Alisa & Kallis, 2020, p. 2).

Although their work addressed the underestimation of the state theory and the political challenges of the transition stage most vividly in the degrowth literature so far, D’Alisa and Kallis again only suggest another tool for degrowth to adopt for future work and does not come up with solid configurations themselves.

Furthermore, the strategies and visions in degrowth scenarios on the role of state and the mode(s) of regulation resembles both a Keynesian state and also a socialist state, but it is neither in particular. It is a regulatory state indeed, in terms of pioneering and realizing the strategies that it puts forward, and also in terms of regulating those policy changes especially in the right aftermath of the transformation. Yet it is also a strongly democratic, pluralistic and reformist state where means of representation are more diversified and proliferated (Parrique, 2019, p. 482).. The problem here again is that the clarification of what will be those representation channels, how will they function and will be better functioning than the existing ones. Here, what came closes to visualizing such scenarios is the strongly localist nature of the states<sup>141</sup> in degrowth; where the states are divided into local sub-regions with local currencies, local production and consumption and local units of political representation, so political representation is easier and more direct for citizens (Parrique, 2019, p. 642). Yet still, the role or the limits of the state in a degrowth transformation is not clear enough to foresee the political challenges that might occur in degrowth on the side of the state. This is a problem that D’Alisa and Kallis addressed also, which is presented as a dichotomy in degrowth scholarship. It is because there are many anarchist strands in degrowth (which corresponds to the interstitial metamorphosis in Wright’s terms) that aims to abolish the state and all hierarchical structures as we know it completely. However, the degrowth transition *and* transformation requires a state that is deeply involved in pioneering and regulating the transition, and underestimate the parts where enforcement is required especially with regards to imposing restrictions on issues around climate change and decarbonization (D’Alisa & Kallis, 2020, p. 5).

The ownership of private property and modes of production is another point that needs clarification. The property ownership in degrowth is based on the socialisation of privates, in various forms<sup>142</sup> (Parrique, 2019, pp. 521-522-523) but is heavily based on values that are both

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<sup>141</sup> This localism is referred to as a “cosmolocalism” and it is expressed and accepted in most degrowth projections, which is describes both the organization of the economy and the projections over borders in degrowth. Such cosmoloalst states are in favour of a “relative protectionism” where the design processes are global and manufacturing is local and is also referred to as a system with a “federalist solidary re-localisation” (Parrique, 2019, p. 522)

<sup>142</sup> “...where private ownership turns into trusteeship, the Gandhian notion of property where any possession that exceeds personal needs is rendered available to the community” (ibid).

cherished and also accentuated in degrowth such as solidarity, collective trust and social conscious. The expanse of role and the jurisdiction of public authorities, mostly in the form of municipalities, vary in these forms of ownership, yet they are all socialized and are open to use and sharing based on need. These suggestions apply to both private properties and also certain public objects and commons as well. The ownership of the mode of production is even more at abyss. The modes of production will be state-owned, but since voluntary simplicity and minimalism are settled as the base values on the societal level, there will be no need to fulfil the needs of a (hyper)consumerist society and the production will take place based on needs. However, who and what type of state/governments/politicians/representatives will decide on the individual needs and who will decide on the quality and the quantity of the production activities is a big open question. It is needless to say at this point that these visions are deeply future-oriented and skips the role of the state both in the present, transition and also in the transformed degrowth society. If these suggestions are being found realizable or even get started in a GND 2.0, to be internalized and consolidated after a process of revolutionary reforms in the long-term, I must confess that this is either a big naivety or worse, a hypocrisy, in degrowth as these would take more time than a “try-and-error” phase of decoupling that degrowth rightfully pleas for in terms of the carbon levels. An absolute decoupling is only possible in a no-growth economy, which should be brought to life as swiftly as possible, yet waiting for revolutionary reforms to create the *morphogenesis* that is needed to transition into one is degrowth’s biggest internal misconception.

The fact that these aspects are not clear and/or less developed at this point arises many vital questions, that needs further clarification and also new configurations for degrowth both as a transition and also projection. If degrowth is a “third way” – neither capitalist nor socialist, but a third way on its own– than it also needs to come up with a through socialism critique. What I see is that degrowth wants both abolish capitalism and also socialism, but in the current realities this is an immense task with a very little time. If degrowth is more aligned with eco-socialism – for obvious intellectual inclinations and similarities – than, as J. Bellamy Foster (2010) argues, it needs to more openly say that it is an eco-socialist/post-developmental variant and look for alliances within its bloc. So, to not be absorbed, it needs to ally with eco-socialists rather than GND 2.0, to realize the urgent system change it strives for.

All these reasons make a GND without growth is an unlikely retained imaginary selectivity. As we also mentioned before, degrowth also lacks symbolic or material *concessions* to offer to hegemonic power blocs and also imaginaries that it wants to articulate with i.e., GND 2.0, to

survive in the transition period that either or that way will take place in the conditions, methods and imaginaries of the existing socioeconomic paradigm. Hence, neither a GND without growth nor a full-fledged degrowth transformation is likely to be a retained imaginary, unless a degrowth revolution does not take place and challenge all other selectivities that we discussed altogether. Even in that case, such revolution needs a detailed transition *and* transformation strategy, where new alliances are formed and wider social categories are attracted at the global level, i.e., labour movement, feminist movement and social and climate justice movements.

## CONCLUSION

In the beginning of this thesis, we asked why degrowth could not be hegemonic over the past five decades it has prevailed. The simplest answer to that would be neither the time nor the perspective itself “was not ripe” yet. To provide a more sophisticated and detailed answer though, we delved into the history of growth critical perspectives in tandem with the conjunctural and organic crises of the Fordist accumulation regime. To do so, we have attributed generations to degrowth in our periodization, in order to analyse the inherent handicaps and external impediments of each generation degrowth has experienced. Herewith, we aimed to make comparisons with the contemporary second generation degrowth that is on the run for becoming a retained imaginary. In the first generation and partly during the dormant phase, we have unfolded the power struggles and personal relations of the certain actors and groups on the absorption of growth criticism. There we saw impact of hegemonic actors and discourses over the (predominantly bioeconomic) growth criticism, mostly manifested in the relationship between the OECD and the Club of Rome and concomitantly between Georgescu-Roegen with the Club.

The first absorption of the growth criticism took place with the takeover of the sustainable development discourse and neoliberal environmental governance, but it was already heralded and accompanied by the change that the Club experienced in profile, perspective and methodology in the early 1980s. As the growth criticism of the Club has increasingly drifted away from the initial holistic approach to global problems and shifted towards a more elitist, technocratic and depoliticized outlook; key actors like Georgescu-Roegen and more radical and comprehensive growth criticisms “fell from grace”. The first generation growth criticism has never been a part of party politics, but was only a part of discussions in transnational networks and academic circles, thus there were no political strategies or agendas that could be inherited from this early generation.

The next two decades were defined by such approach on tackling environmental and social issues and corresponded to the period what we called the “dormant phase”. Yet, the growth criticism continued to flourish among heterodox schools and among anti-globalization movements in this period anyhow, which gave its early seeds in the early millennium in the form of French *décroissance* movement. Here, we saw a more advanced version of the growth criticism which has articulated with strands i.e., post-developmental and also with anti-globalization movements in Europe. The occurrence of the activist pillar of degrowth was an

important benchmark in the early 2000s, however the French intellectuals that carried the banner in this period did not come up with a solid transition strategy towards *décroissance* or ways to exist and challenge the political again. In fact, there was an attempt in French politics where degrowth actors formed a party and had a notable influence over the French Green Party's agenda, yet it was a short-lived and crippled experience which remained unique to a brief period and did not result with much input for its successor degrowth to inherit from.

Second generation degrowth, on the other hand, faces with several trajectories in the current post-GFC Triple Crisis conjuncture, which took another turn recently with the crisis related to the pandemic. Degrowth arises as an important variant of green imaginaries which was able to excel with its selectivities so far on discussions in academic and activist circles. However, given the fact that we are now in an interregnum stage, degrowth still falls short as its predecessors did before, on coming up with a *transition* strategy to realize the *transformation* it strives for. The avoidance of the degrowth proponents on being part of the political struggle on real stages exacerbates this even more, as this frames them as a marginal and utopian “intellectual activity” that cannot engage in political action/struggle. Therefore, the many ground-breaking and vital claims of degrowth remains unheard, or suppressed rather easily by hegemonic actors, as it cannot enter in political discussions and fails to address class-relevant struggles.

This incarnates itself as two weak(en)ing strands for degrowth; the first one is the lack of concessions that they can offer compared to the other green imaginaries that it is contested with. The second one is their vague position as a “third way” – associating with neither capitalism nor socialism. Here, we already addressed the abstention of degrowth from allying with eco-socialists in Chapter 3, and the risk of getting hijacked by the social-liberal GND 2.0 if it is chosen by degrowthers as an “intermediary strategy” to enter into the political scene. We hereby add now, that the most crucial challenge degrowthers must tackle in the near future is that finding ways to exist in politics on their own, or through political allies on the left side of the scale. Yet, this poses another challenge since the open advocacy of degrowth can be considered as a “suicide” for a political party in the existing political scene. Some recent examples<sup>143</sup> who have openly supported post-growth economies have shared and promoted for similar values with degrowth (Kallis, 2017, p. 33). However, it was seen with Podemos in Greece, and the New Left in Ecuador and Bolivia, these radical left parties and figures who get

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<sup>143</sup> Podemos and Syriza in Greece, Spain's Equo and Europe's Greens (before EGD) in Europe, and the New Left in Latin America (Kallis, 2017, p. 33).

acquainted with degrowth visions have abandoned these ideas when “they get closer to power” (ibid). However not only political dynamics and power struggles have occurred this distancing, but also the economic crises in these respective examples have hindered the growth critical messages directly. One rather successful example was presented by Kallis (2017, p. 34) though, which is *Barcelona en Comú*, that has won the elections of the city with no mention of growth in its party programme. Yet, Kallis accepts that this is a rather unique example which results from the rooted tradition of solidarity economy and base of degrowth civil society in Barcelona (ibid). Thus at this point, the question is how to generalize such examples on wider national, regional and if possible international scales among party politics and voter bases, and how to prevent even the “degrowth sympathizer” radical left parties to abandon degrowth in a conjuncture that is still rooted in growth economics and party politics around it.

This aspect puts forward another dilemma about degrowth, which is that its inability to give concessions to take part in negotiations at the political scene. The only concessions that degrowth might offer would only make it less radical and less of a revolution, which would again correspond to the absorption of their fundamental growth criticism and social transformation they want to actualize. In this regard, degrowth should explain their vision on the new techno-economic paradigm and associated mode of regulation in the transformed degrowth society. This question has been equally disregarded as theorization of the state and because of this, the visions and actions of degrowth remains as ethico-political demands that cannot exist and be supported in the political scene. Herewith, we see that the main reason that degrowth could not be hegemonic is because that they could not answer these fundamental questions in the past and still limping to do so in the present. This makes them fall short of coming a with a “hegemonic project” of their own and lead to their absorption by other hegemonic actors and projects in the transition process. To overcome these chronic theoretical and political shortcomings, and create an opportunity for degrowth to be present as a hegemonic vision that can eventually be able to challenge other hegemonic visions at the political domain, it should first and foremost *politicize* itself. Otherwise, the electric that it has created and is sourced by among grassroots movements will fade away before being able to make their voices heard and obtain consent and consensus from social classes.

As our final words, the newly-elected Biden administration carries new prospects for degrowth as well as the GND 2.0, which rises as one of the top agendas that is pursued and prioritized by the administration at the moment. It is important for degrowth to find ways around the incumbent growth discourse, which can now – at least rhetorically – able to integrate ecological

and social problems whilst addressing many vital issues around free healthcare, improved employment conditions and new job opportunities. These proposals have a special appeal for people all around the world, as the organic crisis tendencies of the existing system are again revealed with a conjunctural crisis, a global pandemic this time. The pandemic that the world is facing for a year and a half now opened the economic, regulatory and social configurations of the existing paradigm into question in terms of their legitimacy and practicality/feasibility. Here, similar to the argument presented by Lievens (2015) that we discussed in Chapter 2 with regards to the impact of the GFC over post-growth scenarios, we argue here that the current pandemic brings about two possible attitudes towards degrowth. First, the degrowth perspective have an attractiveness as a critical and reformative (ideally revolutionary) approach, since the system and the foundational elements that constitutes it have been meticulously dissected and questioned. Yet it should engage in political and ideological domains of the struggle more robustly, to further justify the relevancy and inclusivity of its visions and arguments on a class basis, and succeed as the main counter-hegemonic discourse. Second, degrowth has an equally unattractiveness as people tend to favour growth-oriented strategies in times of crisis, thus the “ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive” green growth of the GND has an immense potential revive this “rally-around-the-flag” effect over growth. This would directly assimilate the growth criticism of degrowth and marginalize it as a movement and perspective if it cannot survive politically. The political and epistemological marginalization of degrowth would automatically threaten the validity and urgency of their claims over the irrationality/impossibility of absolute and/or relative decoupling of growth from climate crisis, which would have dire consequences for all inhabitants of the world. Thus, which side will degrowth fall of this tightrope – or pass through it completely – will show us the potential of second generation degrowth to become hegemonic or go into another dormant phase as a recurrent pattern and open the way for the dominance of green growth strategies to tackle the climate crisis. At the end, it boils down to the question of whether degrowth will be bold enough to politicize and revolutionize the growth paradigm, or remain apolitical and become marginalized.

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