

From Anthropology to Social Science Fiction

Re-transforming *formal capitalist* logic of provisioning into an *objective-material* logic under the perspective of a degrowth society

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Abstract

Karl Polanyi distinguished capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of provisioning. Following Polanyi, pre-capitalist provisioning carries the meaning of the 'objective-material' (the dependence of men from others and nature in provisioning) whereas capitalist provisioning goes back to a formal logic of provisioning characterised by the rational choice between different possible uses (Polanyi 1979). In recent years, economic sociology was concerned with discovering social logic in capitalist societies. Convention theory first distinguished between six patterns of social action (Boltanski/Thévenot 1991), whereby Boltanski and Chiapello (2003) later diagnosed a dominance of justifications referring to market logic, which is now again contested due to the hegemonic crisis of neoliberalism and the apparent crisis' of capitalist forms of formal logic provisioning. In this contribution I discuss whether in today's societies there are approaches to establish institutions that tend to replace market institutions in the sense of capitalist formal logic of provisioning by modes of provisioning focussing on the 'objective-material' meaning. Which justifications tend to overrule market based justifications? Here, I focus on concepts emerging from the degrowth movement because of the need for an ecological, social and economic transformation (Ötsch 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Whereas Eric Olin Wright discusses strategies for transformation (reform, interstitial transformation, revolution), and whereas further authors focus on the material transformation of the economic system, in this contribution, I focus on qualitative justifications and conventions aiming to overcome capitalist institutions by replacing its dominant logic. I assume that within today's movements there are diverging justifications that may be analysed in more differentiated categories than in Boltanski/Thévenot cité of civil society, using Polanyis categories of provisioning as point of reference. I compare different approaches from mayor compilations on degrowth (Alisa et al. 2014; Brand et al. 2012; Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften 2015; Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie 2016) and distillate six key notions of movements that identify contrasting drivers of

change, namely buen vivir, the commons, anti-utilitarianism, conviviality and autonomy, sufficiency, radical ecological democracy and criticism of capitalism. I discuss whether the movements' justifications are linked to conventions and whether they have the capacity to move society towards 'objective-material' ways of provisioning. I conclude that most movements have characteristics of convention and appealing justifications that may contribute to shift the landscape of provisioning if these elements are combined in a complementary way. However, there are strong counter forces that may use contradictions within movements and indeterminacy to split movements and misuse and reinterpret justifications.

Key words: *degrowth, capitalism, modes of provisioning, justifications, conventions.*

Karl Polanyi's achievement is not only the reconstruction of the implementation of capitalism, its crisis and double movement, but – from a point of view of a degrowth society – his reference to pre-capitalist forms of provisioning. This becomes crucial, if one identifies capitalism as a driver of growth and the overuse of nature – as Polanyi did – by drawing the attention to the commodification of land (Polanyi 2011[1944]: 243). In today's understanding one would merely speak of the commodification of nature. Karl Polanyi distinguishes capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of provisioning. Following Polanyi, pre-capitalist provisioning carries the meaning of the '*objective-material*' provisioning that takes into account men's dependency from others and nature and that aims at fulfilling needs (Polanyi 1979: 209f). In contrast, capitalist provisioning goes back to a notion relying on the '*formal logic*' of provisioning characterised by transactions characterized as the rational (or economic in a narrow sense) relation of ends and means or the rational choice between different options for one's means (Polanyi 1979: 210). '*Objective-material*' ways of provisioning is oriented towards non-economic institutions (in the formal logic notion of the economy), such as religious or political motives.

Eric Olin Wright (2010) distinguishes three main strategies for transforming capitalism, namely reform (classical Social Democratic strategies to politically steer markets), ruptural change (revolution) and interstitial transformation (transformation from a niche). In the light of old *New Labour* and decreasing popularity of real existing Social Democratic parties, reforms within existing political systems do not seem to reach far enough to tackle today's multiple crisis of capitalism. Up to now, neither political party in power in rich countries has convincing solutions regarding growth and the rebound-effect (or *Jevons' Paradoxon*). Strategies of ruptural change are discredited due to historical experiences concerning undemocratic state managed socialization of the means of production and political discreditation of ruptural strategies. Among, technical problems concerning a ruptural change towards a democratic planning economy are not solved, such as information gathering

and processing in complex systems (a problem that leads to a non efficient distribution of resources) and missing incentives of lower levels of producers to fulfil and not to manipulate planning – even if capitalism is either “inefficient, unjust and alienating” (Corneo 2016, 2014: 142-180). Indeed, interstitial change on the level of the firm is more accepted and new forms of solidary economy arise and spread, such as *Gemeinwohlökonomie*. Nonetheless, after a while, alternative projects that target to change capitalism from a niche often (but not necessarily) conventionalise and adapt to firms which prioritize profit making (Ötsch 2014; Fabricius 2012; Notz 2011). Alternative firms are located within a context shaped by ‘normal market prices’ serving as orientation marks for consumers, competition and decreasing purchasing power of lower and middle income groups, in a way the scope of action of alternative firms is limited (more see Ötsch 2014 and Ötsch 2016b for a critique of the niche strategy of the transition movement).

Promoters of transition strategies argue, that a combination of strategies is necessary to deepen change, for example by multiplying connections and interactions between the micro, the meso and the macro-level (Geels 2002). Wright point to the fact that “*all actually existing contemporary economic systems are complex configurations of capitalist, statist, and socialist forms ... emancipatory transformation should not be viewed mainly as a binary shift from one system to the other, but rather as a shift in the configuration of the power relations that constitute a hybrid*” (Wright 2010: 367). A multilevel shift on different levels of the capitalist system towards a more sustainable economic system might technically be possible. Nonetheless, the proposed approaches to reform the economic system, to socialize parts of the economy (except banks’ and car builders’ economic problems) and to work or consume in the field of alternative firms only are supported by a small part of citizen, even if a majority is dissatisfied with the economic system.

As a consequence, it seems useful not only to promote technical changes of structures of economic systems seen as harmful, but also to include considerations concerning people’s motivation to act. Here, I propose to draw on convention theory, because it brings together structural and action based considerations, respectively principles, norms and their fitness (from the point of view of political philosophy and legal science) and practices and rightness (from the viewpoint of social science) (Boltanski/Thévenot 2014 [1991]: 31). On one hand, Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (2014: 33-34) criticise theories based unilaterally on culture or social groups (as cultural relativism). Instead, people would use different patterns of behaviour depending on the specific situation. On the other hand, the authors question theories of rational choice for their inappropriateness, because they consider objects as sole ordering force. Following Boltanski and Thévenot, in situations of uncertainty, people decide according to conventions, which in turn imply justifications. A convention is a

superordinate common principle serving as reference to put objects and subjects in interrelations¹ (Boltanski/Thévenot 2014: 197). Rainer Diaz-Bone and Robert Salais define conventions as “*‘hypotheses’ formulated by persons with respect to the relationship between their actions and the actions of those on whom they must depend to realize a goal. When interactions are reproduced again and again in similar situations, and when particular courses of action have proved successful, they become incorporated in routines and we then tend to forget their initially hypothetical character*” (Storper/Salais 1997: 16 quoted by Diaz-Bone/Salais 2011: 8–9). Boltanski and Thévenot (2014: 222-286) distinguish between six patterns (or *worlds*) of social action, namely the *cité inspirée* (among others associated with inspiration, epiphanies, creativity, love and passion), la *cité domestique* (hierarchy, fixed place or rank in the society, tradition, good behaviours), la *cité de l’opinion* (fame and regard from the others), la *cité civique* (priority of the collective, citizen rights, politics and civil society), la *cité marchande* or the market (competition, value measured by prices, desire for material goods, commercial success) and the *cité industrielle* (efficiency, efforts/output, rationality, expertise, appropriate organisation). Acting according to the convention is seen as promoting the common good among those who share the convention in that situation. Boltanski and Chiapello (2003) later assume that actors increasingly prioritized market based conventions (in reference to management literature). That proposition is contested due to the hegemonic crisis of neoliberalism (Faust/Thamm 2015) and the apparent crisis’ of capitalist forms of formal logic provisioning. Some observers point to a shift from financialized to authoritarian capitalism, the return of religions or nationalist justifications. On the other hand, there is a recent boom of degrowth in social movement groups concerned with searching new forms of living and ways of provisioning in the sense of *objective-material* ways of provisioning.

In the following I discuss, which justifications can be found in the field of social movements searching a transition towards *objective-material* ways of provisioning. What are corresponding practices and do these approaches have the potential to become a convention? May the reference and implementation to non-market based conventions be a driver of change, respectively could they be combined with approaches focussing on structures of the economic system? This approach is first test, whether a recourse on justifications and conventions may contribute to improve civil society's strategies. I do not apply Boltanski and Thévenots methods one-to-one, but apply them freely in accordance to the subject of degrowth movements. Here, I use compilations on degrowth movements and relevant key text authors involved in these movements or politics. In a further stage it

¹ E.g. person a) is more known as person b) according to the convention of the opinion.

would make sense to look closer at movements and the also use different qualitative methods (for some interviews about activists' motivations and visions see Ötsch 2016a).

I proceed as follows: I use four main sources giving an overview about degrowth movements, their aims, backgrounds and practices to identify main approaches. The chosen sources are the encyclopaedias “*Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*” (Alisa/Demaria/Kallis 2014), “*ABC der Alternativen 2.0*” (Brand et al. 2012), “*Atlas der Globalisierung. Weniger wird mehr*” (Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften 2015) and the database “*Degrowth in Bewegungen*” (“degrowth in movements”) (Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie 2016). From this literature, I try to reconstruct most diverging justifications of the movements and discuss whether they can be understood as conventions inhibiting destructive growth. Finally, I will discuss the potential for a shift towards objective-material ways of provisioning using a focus on justifications and conventions.

The compilations on degrowth and alternative movements contain the following contents:

- “*Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*” (Alisa/Demaria/Kallis 2014): 8 entries on lines of thought, 22 core notions of degrowth, 17 action focussed approaches and 4 suggestions for alliances.
- “*ABC der Alternativen 2.0*” (Brand et al. 2012): 86 keywords (key notions, lines of thought, movements, projects and institutions).
- *Atlas der Globalisierung* (Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften 2015): Analyses, suggestions and discussions on growth induced problems, green economy, growth related crisis and conflicts and degrowth.
- *Degrowth in Bewegungen* (Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie 2016): 33 movements, currents and initiatives that stand for “emancipatory claims, *buen vivir* for everybody and engage theoretically or practically in providing positive alternatives”. The overviews describe the movements' key ideas, their actors and activities, co-operations, strategical questions and visions.

From these sources, I selected those movements and approaches (listed in table 1), which target a transition towards *objective-material* forms of provisioning, As an additional criteria, the concepts should - in principle – be generalizable in a way they could be applied in different contexts (leave out movements concentrated on partial issues and single issue movements). I also eliminated concepts that are too broad and do only indirectly relate to questions of degrowth (such as ‘liberty’ or ‘emancipation’)².

² Respectively, that could take up questions of the environment but do not do it necessarily and that do not explicitly relate to it, even if there are higher chances to change to way of provisioning in those conventions (e.g. in the case of ‘anarchy’ or ‘radical democracy’).

Table 1: Movements and approaches aiming at *objective-material* forms of provisioning

<i>Degrowth in Bewegung</i> (Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie 2016)	<i>Atlas der Globalisierung</i> (Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften 2015)	<i>Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era</i> (Kallis/Demaria/ D’Alisa 2014)	<i>ABC der Alternativen 2.0</i> (Brand/Lösch/Opratko/Thimmel 2012)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buen Vivir • Commons-movement • Degrowth • Demonetarization • Radical ecological democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degrowth as <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) critique of technological optimism, doubts about decoupling, degrowth of the global north; 2) search for concrete utopias to growth and socio-ecological transformation of the north (p. 116). • Sufficiency, local and regional economies and self-supply. Consumers → prosumers (121). • Socio-ecological transformation focussing on capitalist growth pressure, marketization and privatization. Commons, solidary economy, working time reduction, basic income, maximum income (121). • Eco-socialism (121). • Feminist economy: provisioning, buen vivir, cooperation (122-3). • Buen vivir • Sharing • Commons • Subsistence / self-sufficiency 	<p><i>Part 1: Lines of thought</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-utilitarianism (Mauss etc.) • Bio-economics (Georgescu-Roegen etc.) • Steady-state economics (Ecological economic, Daly etc.) • Political ecology <p><i>Part 2+3: The core / the action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy (and conviviality). • Commodification vs. De-commodification/Commodity frontiers • Commons • Conviviality • Depoliticization vs. “the Political” • Decolonization of Imaginary. <p><i>Part 4: Alliances</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ubuntu: care; promoting life; sharing; the living, the living dead, the yet-to-be-born (p. 358-360) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buen Vivir • Commonismus / Commons • De-commodification • Feminist Economics • Counter-hegemony • Critique of Capitalism • Conscious construction of societal relationship to nature • Ecosocialism • Parecon • Post-Development • Post-Extractivism • Radical Transformation (Poulantzas <i>plus</i> focus on societal relationships to nature) • Umsonstökonomie (for free economy) • Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften (caring economy): Caring/foresight, cooperation, buen vivir.
<p>Partially transition towards <i>objective-material</i> forms of provisioning:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic income movements • Solidary economy • Transition-Initiatives • 15M – from an autonomous perspective • Attac • Ecovillages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoliberal-conservative critique of growth (degrowth forced by poverty in the north). • Socio-ecological reforms and organisations (Seidl/Zahrnt). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critiques of Development. • Environmentalism (Cult of Wilderness, Eco-efficiency, environmental justice). • Dematerialization: Carbon and resource caps. • Feminist Economics • Care: Feminist economics, bioeconomics, happiness, socio-environmental justice, work-sharing etc. • Neo-Malthusian birth control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deceleration: on the individual level and social-ecological time politics (p. 76-7) • Critique of Globalization • De-globalisation; Politics of Scale. • Economic Democracy; Parecon (Participatory Economics) • Empowerment: Social struggles and social resistance (appropriation, refusal, occupation, takeover, civil disobedience) • Environmental Justice

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nowtopians: making one-self independent from wage labour, using creativity and technique for non-market aims, recycling (313-317) • welfare institutions without growth (job guarantee, basic income, work sharing, care, co-operatives)(55) • Money and credit institutions: community currencies, public money to finance degrowth, debt audits.(56) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Social Rights • Interventionism • Liberation Theology / Church from below • Post-Colonialism • Public goods and services • Radical Reformism • Regionalization: Keynesian approaches, planning and further reaching forms such barter circles and time banks • Revolutionary Realpolitik (Luxemburg) • Vier-in-Einem-Perspektive (4 in 1: interlacing of fields of politics. 4 hours of paid labour, 4 h reproductive work, 4 h cultural self realization, 4 h political work). • Social-ecological Transformation • Solidary economy • Sufficiency Economy
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Following the movements' descriptions, most approaches are multidimensional, even if they focus on one main issue. That means, most movements refer to democratic decision making and some kind of solidary economy or provisioning. The notion of *buen vivir* is taken up from every compilation; a big number of movements refers to it, such as to the *commons*. All compilations broach issues raised by *feminist economics* (care, cooperation, *buen vivir*). Most approaches also point to a revaluation of the social and the necessity of some kind of counter-hegemony. Nonetheless there are different views concerning main drivers for unsustainable growth and the deducted fields for action. Depending on the approach the main identified causes for growth are approximately categorized (more specific see listing below): The 'wrong' or missing moral or values (esp. *sufficiency*), deficiencies in democratic decision making, the control of technique and missing autonomy (*conviviality and autonomy*), power relations (*feminist economics, critique development, commons*) together with the structures of capitalism (*critique of capitalism, commons*), culture, power and capitalism (*counter-hegemony*), the predominance of capitalist criteria instead social acting (*anti-utilitarianism*). Approaches like *buen vivir* relate to multiple causes (culture, dominance, capitalist institutions, values). Some approaches question problem analyses and the deducted measures to overcome growth of other movements. These are seen as misguided, as symbolic act or even as harmful. In the following overview (table 2), I try to cluster the approaches by contrasting different problem analysis and the resulting foci and practices.



Table 2: Degrowth movements, their approaches, norms and practices

The mapping should give a preliminary approximation and overview of the respective movements, their claims, ideas and practices. As most approaches are multidimensional (that means they relate e.g. to politics, such as to culture and the economy) it presents an approximate overview, that does not lay any claim to completeness. In the following, I take out six key notions of movements that identify contrasting drivers of change, namely *buen vivir*, the *commons*, *anti-utilitarianism*, *conviviality and autonomy*, *sufficiency*, *radical ecological democracy* and *criticism of capitalism*. Loosely following Boltanski and Thévenots' categories, I list their a) justifications, respectively notions of greatness (what promotes the common good?); b) key subjects, objects and practices; c) investments and d) tests and institutions seen as negative counterpart.

Buen vivir (Acosta 2012)

- *Justifications / greatness*: The commonitarian, new vision (rich and complex), building up and reproducing *buen vivir* in strong connection to nature, value in use (instead of accumulation).
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: The excluded as actor working out alternatives; nature.
- *Investments*: Understanding the diversity of elements from which human actions related to *buen vivir* depend (knowledge, the rules of ethic and spiritual behaviour towards the environment, human values, a vision of the future etc.).
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Western world-view, capitalism, anthropocentric logic of capitalism and real existing socialisms. Linear way of development featuring progress obsessed with production. Richness in the sense of accumulation and poverty as lack of goods.

The Commons (Helfrich 2012; Ostrom 1999)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Sustainable use, cooperation, self-determination of rules and norms. Participation and use of personal and local and specific knowledge. Need-oriented production. Overcoming thinking in dichotomies of the individuals vs. the collective and the market vs. the state.
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: The commonist, community of users (from small groups to the world community), the prosumer.
- *Investments*: Active engagement in the management, care, maintenance and development of the commons (commoning). Preconditions for success (Ostrom 1999: 235): 1) clearly defined limits (manageable size); 2) clearly defined equally applicable rules; 3) forums for collective decisions; 4) control of compliance; 5) sanctions; 6) mechanism for conflict resolution; 7) negotiated rules and 8) economic organisations embedded in the community. Polycentric forms of governance in the case of big/complex systems.
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: The private, the state with no adapted competence, the monopoly, free riders, the enclosure (intervention from third parties). No compliance with the preconditions (listed under 'investments').

Anti-utilitarianism (Romano 2014) / *Umsonstökonomie* (economy for free) (Habermann 2012)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Crucial importance of the social bond compared to self-interest. ... "there is no other foundation of ethical norms other than the law of happiness for individuals and their communities" (Caillé 1989: 13). Realizing the plurality of human aims (Romano 2014). Free cooperation of people; giving (beyond barter) following the principle of openness (as opposed to collectives); using without owning – sharing and releasing resources (Habermann 2012).
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: The gift, Demonetarization, la dépense, "radically unconditional" basic income, citizens realizing themselves, well being (Romano 2014). Free shops, dumpster diving, *Volxküchen* (kitchen for the people), free association of cooperating people (Habermann 2012).

- *Investments*: Well being, aiming happiness instead of utility (Romano 2014). Cooperation, reciprocity is not necessary on the short term, but on the medium and long term (Habermann 2012).
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Overcoming the framework of holism and methodological individualism. Utilitarianism reduces the human being, lack of alternate (non-utilitarian) social life patterns. GDP, well having (vs. well being) (Romano 2014). Returns, the charitable, the logic of property, competition (Habermann 2012).

Conviviality and Autonomy (Kallis/Demaria/D'Alisa 2014)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Good life as self-limitation: living simple and limiting our footprint, liberates from the paralysis of unlimited choice, equality and democracy by limited scale. Autonomy as a) freedom from large technological infrastructures and the centralized bureaucratic institutions (Illich 1973); b) freedom from wage labour (Gorz 1982); c) the ability of a collective to decide its future in common (Castoriadis 1987).
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: The consciously autonomous person or community, nowtopians (no labour work). ‘Tools which are understandable, manageable and controllable be their users’ and projects that signify a degrowth imaginary (vacant lot gardening, pirate programming, bicycle repair shops) involve voluntary work and are shaped directly by their participants (Kallis/Demaria/D'Alisa 2014: 49)
- *Investments*: Social choice of limits, asceticism, self-determination and governance.
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Wrong choices. Monopolized technological infrastructures, centralized bureaucratic institutions (public or private) and experts → non-egalitarian and undemocratic hierarchies (Illich 1973). Wage labour. External imperatives and givens (the laws of religion or economics) (Castoriadis 1987).

Sufficiency (Tinsulanonda 2001)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Self-reliance and prudence as collective social values, moderation, the “the middle path”, “self-support and self-reliance, having enough to live on”, knowledge and “prudence in the application of knowledge”, “symbiosis and harmony between man and his natural environment”, “collective national resilience” by “moral fiber” (Tinsulanonda 2001).
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: Getting back to basics. Agriculture “as a buffer against external shocks” (Tinsulanonda 2001). Alternative model for development, partly self-supply for inhabitants of the countryside, cooperatives for financial investments. Gross National Happiness (Schaffar 2012). Re-orientation towards regional and local economies, self-supply and subsistence. Prosumers (Schmelzer 2015: 121).
- *Investments*: “...strengthen the moral fiber of the nation, so that everyone, particularly public officials, theorists and businessmen, adheres first and foremost to the principles of honesty and integrity” (Tinsulanonda 2001).

- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Vulnerability due to flows of finance from the exterior. “...economic development being defined and understood too narrowly, which resulted in extremes and excesses. ... Unrelenting quest for material wealth seemed to have undermined compassion and caring, which in turn weakened the social fabric, community bond, and traditional values”. “... insatiable appetite for wealth and wasteful consumption” (Tinsulanonda 2001).

Radical Ecological Democracy (Kothari 2016)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Ecological sustainability and wisdom (ecosystems, species, functions, cycles, resilience). Social well-being and justice; sufficiency as deliberately chosen simplicity and asceticism. Democracy (direct, representative, economic). Autonomy and self-determination.
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: Self-government. Social movements and networks, activists, thinkers. Combination of individual and collective autonomy, reciprocal responsibility, rights and duties. Participation of everybody. Food sovereignty. Collectivization of resources and work. Guarantee of basic rights. Foundation of collectives and firms to better negotiate. Collectively managed media (films, radio) from marginalized groups to overcome stigmatization. Transformation of private ground to commons. Fighting for rights of the oppressed and better services and living conditions. Direct democracy on the lower level, representative democracy at higher levels (accountable to the basis), economic democracy (esp. on the local level), non-monetary forms of provisioning (e.g. barter), knowledge commons.
- *Investments*: Social struggles, self organisation, building up organisations and institutions.
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Western model of development; fetish of growth. Damages despite of growth (pollution and inequality), joblessness, shortages of public goods, privatization, hierarchies, ecological suicide.

Criticism of Capitalism (Candeias 2012 relating to Rosa Luxemburg; Schmelzer 2015)

- *Justifications / greatness*: Extending the scope of action for the left. Realistic politics promoting a long term transformation (Candeias 2012). Pushing back of market mechanisms, socialization of core fields of the economy, dismantling of power constellations. Social and ecological questions are interconnected (Schmelzer 2015).
- *Key subjects, objects and practices*: Revolutionary Realpolitik, reform and revolution. Participatory *Mosaiklinke* (diverse left) (Candeias 2012). The Commons, solidary economy, radical reduction of working hours, basic and maximum income. Also: Ecosocialism (Schmelzer 2015).
- *Investments*: Fights against harmful social and ecological dynamics of capitalism (Candeias 2012). Social movements and individuals (Schmelzer 2015).
- *Tests and negative counterparts*: Accumulation of capital and its dynamics. Reforms as fragile compromise that might be lost again. Need for innovation and the production of an increasing surplus value leads to permanent growth → limits of social institutions and pressure towards nature. Day-to-day politics (Candeias 2012). Multiple crisis due to capitalist growth-dynamic, commodification and privatization (Schmelzer 2015).

A justification will probably have more performative effects in society, if it is related to subjects or objects, organisations and institutions and practices. So, this conglomerate gets a convention serving as orientation or routine for actors. That is why a movements' strength depends (among other reasons) from the existence and linkages between different elements forming a convention. Could conventions emerging from the examined degrowth movements push a transition towards objective-material ways of provisioning?

It is striking, that the notions of *buen vivir* and the *commons* are already linked to conventions in the sense that they merge concepts promoting the common good with practices linked to routines and habits. Both partly go back to historical practices of non-capitalist forms of provisioning. Elinor Ostrom (1999) examined the functioning of the commons building upon several thousand research objects from different countries and cultures. Thus, the *commons* could also be understood as a reliable transferable concept of governance, that unifies the political, the economic and care. In comparison to public services and goods, the commons can be exclusive. They may be misused to justify the removal of public goods and require participation, competences and time resources from the involved. On the other hand, commoning implies empowerment. Especially in the field of knowledge and culture (free software, music, pictures, construction manuals) it becomes apparent, that civil society uses the concept of the *commons* to develop new institutions featuring *objective-material* ways of provisioning.

The concept of *buen vivir* is not a traditional convention of native people. Indeed, it was first mentioned in 2000 at the occasion of an event called 'Diálogo Nacional' in Bolivia. It was then promoted by the German development agency *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)*, taken up by Simón Yampara and Javier Medina – intellectuals assigned to the 'Aymara-Elite' with a background in anthropology (Altmann 2013: 102). The concept was further developed, integrating elements of natives' conventions, appropriated by politics, integrated in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia and later used by indigenous associations to critique the governments' unsustainable politics (ibid. 103-108). So, the notion was first merely empty, a counter-notion to traditional western development policies and set up as a frame which allows to be filled in a process, tied to core ideas and indigenous practices and giving a certain explanatory authority to groups, which have been treated disparagingly until then but they might think and act more easily in accordance to *objective-material* ways of provisioning.

The justification of *anti-utilitarianism* mainly seems to be featured in rich western countries. The idea of a total *anti-utilitarianism* is different from other justifications or conventions, that refer to mutual

dependencies and duties, rules and contracts for interactions that ensure cooperation in the long run. Practices either rely on the excess of rich capitalist economies or on demands towards politics (public services for free), but the concepts blind out these institutions, although they deliver resources and they do not provide concrete suggestions for a transition towards an *anti-utilitarian* society. Practices are strong symbols against utilitarianism and marketization (or fall under the category of the ‘social’ such as care) and promote being as a worth in itself.

Up to now, justifications and practices concerning *conviviality and autonomy* are known by a special community, focussed on technical questions. Up to now, open work places, hacker spaces etc. are spaces especially used by middle class men concentrated on technical problems for itself. Some authors miss a critique of power and criticise the disregard for reproductive work of that approach, even if the principles of *conviviality* and *autonomy* could potentially facilitate the transition towards a degrowth society by re-transforming the means of production to commons (Kratzwald 2014). Critique concerning the monopolization of techniques related to emancipatory concerns such as autonomy are not very present in the recent discussion, compared to conspiracy-led criticism of the monopolization of technique by a supposed world elite (‘chemtrails’ etc.). Nonetheless, due to increasing unemployment and discussion on the control of data and advanced and cheaper techniques, problems raised by *conviviality* and *autonomy* movements might become more apparent within the next years. Due to the practical character of the practices these may appeal a bigger number of persons. As innovative techniques are also an anchor for competition of sites, the original justifications of the movement could be lost, if there is little consciousness about systemic questions of power and market institutions.

Such as *buen vivir*, the notion of *sufficiency* was also recently conceived, namely in contrast to western financialized capitalism and presented as an idea featured by the king of Thailand to the Asian Crisis of 1997/1998. The concept highlights individuals’ social qualities, communities’ autonomy and resilience. Individuals are required to behave in accordance to the moral of *sufficiency* – an ideal that seems to be linked to Buddhist ideas of asceticism. Regarding practices, there are little concrete suggestions about how to put the concept into practice, except proposals to re-concentrate on agriculture in the case of Thailand (Schaffar 2012). As a proponent of sufficiency for rich countries, Niko Paech (2012) suggests individuals to deliberately reduce working hours and use the time gained for self-supply (a concept that is difficult to realize for persons with medium or low income) and to politically feature local economic circuits. In light of the ecological crisis the aim to be sufficient seems to be justified, but nonetheless, sufficiency is also seen as instrumentalized elite discourse to deprive and appease ordinary people without offering public support or systemic solutions

drawing on the causes of growth (Schaffar 2012). When the responsibility for degrowth is solely submitted to individual behaviour and moral without providing supporting institutions, this will probably overburden individuals and lead to resignation and burn out (see also Kliemann 2016 in relation to eco-villages).

The justification of *radical ecological democracy* is also a counter model to capitalism-led growth which derives its force from the argument that poor people of poor countries have nothing to lose and much to gain, because growth does not trickle-down, but leads to more pollution, inequality and the retreat of the public. The justification also aims to ecological sustainability, social well being and justice and sufficiency. Practices related to *radical ecological democracy* are multiples and are most radically put into practice in rural communities, where a multidimensional approach containing direct democracy, provisioning, culture, education and the elaboration of a common moral can be achieved. Movements of *radical ecological democracy* are also engaged in struggles, which are put in the tradition of Gandhi's resistance.

Criticism of capitalism derive their justification especially from showing up failures of market dominated economies. They propose a big number of detailed alternatives, reforms and practices. Despite of analyses accurate in principle, *criticism of capitalism* does only serve as justification for a minority. This might be the case because the justification is mainly based on negative impacts of the existing system without offering an appealingly positive vision. This certainly has to do with historical references seen as negative. Among, relationships between capitalism, commodification, social inequality and environmental damages are abstract and not perceived by many citizens, thinking merely in categories based on actors and individual behaviour.

Justifications linked to broad concepts such as sustainability, self-determination and cooperation seem to be widely accepted. Concepts such as *buen vivir*, the *commons*, but also *sufficiency* transport at the same time widely shared justifications, that are linked to practices and seem realizable but also transport visions of a better future (linked to past practices). As the concepts are fuzzy, they leave space for different appropriations and the identification of different groups and persons. This might be compared to Frédéric Lordons concept of an *idée simple* – a guiding principle which is recognized in relevant contexts. Due to its indeterminacy, the *idée simple* unfolds a special power because a big number of contents and agendas can be subsumed. The party, which is not acting according to the idea must provide reasons (Lordon 2000: 158). However, a broad idea may be misinterpreted. This is often the case when economic or other relevant interests are targeted. There is a danger that justifications become decoupled from practices, are only used in a symbolic way and hide underlying processes of marketization, as it is the case in conventionalized bio markets. It is

striking, that conventions aiming at caring for nature are strong where provisioning directly depends from nature (esp. agriculture) and is sheltered from markets. Thus, initiatives for change should not only concentrate on justifications, but also create alternative organisations and institutions stabilizing new approaches.

Whether conventions related to degrowth have the potential to overrule market based conventions (in the sense of formal capitalist provisioning) also depends on their capacity to bundle similar actions and imposing alternative justifications. This is important, because – in the big picture – there is not always scope of action allowing citizens to deliberately and consciously chose conventions. Even if in most situations, actors are interested in mutual agreement because of the benefits of cooperation, there are situations in which actors are forced to act against their will, that cannot be described in terms of conventions, but instead in categories of power (Kädtler 2015). Among, there are inner contradictions between some approaches, e.g. concerning the role of the state. The latter is either seen as an instrument to enable change and implement politics or as a part of the problem (due to its interconnection to market actors and institutions). The concepts differ also concerning the individuals motivations and duties. Whereas *anti-utilitarians* aim at a society with little or no rules concerning reciprocity or duties, the concept of the *commons* suggest that rules are essential for functioning of the *commons*. Nonetheless, some differences may be complementarity, e.g. concepts focussing on local strategies and those concentrated on the medium and macro scale because they may link the different levels and contribute to a transformation of the landscape. Approaches focusing on substantial changes of the structure of economic institutions and those concentrated on culture, the control of technique, the imaginary and much more may also be complementary, balance weak points and reinforce themselves mutually. However, there are strong counter forces that may use contradictions within movements and indeterminacy to split movements and misuse and reinterpret justifications. As a consequence, the potential lies in clever linkages between justifications, practices and conventions and complementary action of approaches aiming to implement objective-material forms of provisioning.

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