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10 Jun 2026

https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2026.2668252

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internal colonialism, authoritarian high-modernism, or ecological devastation. We therefore do not reject national liberation or technology; we argue that both must be approached as contested terrains engulfed in the counterproductivity of institutions, class power, bureaucratic interests, militarization, and uneven socioecological costs. Total liberation is a materially credible horizon because it responds to the nationalist and socialist projects that have too often consolidated new hierarchies and suppressed dissent in the service of intensified extractivist development under the alibi of 'transition.'

We, moreover, identify academic gaps related to this conversation. First, the harms of industrial/digital society remain underaccounted. Second, the psycho/political and material impacts of digital/computational technologies have not been adequately recognized, accounted for, or popularly understood. Third, the political, ecological, and technological conditions have changed since the 1950s–80s (e.g., 'Decolonization Period'); and finally, the state remains among the largest 'out of control' macro-political technologies requiring studies to theorize and implement its global degrowth. This academic agenda requires further discussions within degrowth and ecosocialist debates that transform into practical actions. Critical scholars and activists must reckon with the historical failures of productivism, technological optimism, and state mediation by confronting them, while clarifying what forms of organization, autonomy, coordination, and material reproduction might actually interrupt the reproduction of domination rather than merely redistribute it. We hope this Forum article will be received as an invitation to elaborate communist, anarchist, and autonomous visions and practices in relation to degrowth and ecosocialist debates – and not as another wedge driven into this schism.

Abstract

This Forum Article addresses the current schism within and between degrowth and Marxist (eco)modernism. At its root is whether emancipation requires completing modernity through state-led industrial transformation or composting modernity through anti-authoritarian, place-based autonomy. Identifying a strand of leftist ecomodernism, we engage recent works by Jason Hickel and Max Ajl, who advance socialist modernist and communist agendas. After summarizing their key claims, we diagnose two intertwined failures of (eco)modernism: technological optimism and the state. First, industrial and digital systems are treated as neutral solutions, obscuring the extractive and fossilized supply-webs that high technology requires. Second, the state-form is not neutral; it depends on colonial coercion, militarism, and extractivism, while generating psychosocial pathologies. Against managerial state projects, ecological breakdown, and techno-authoritarianism, we propose a libertarian ecosocialist horizon: degrowing coercive power, prioritizing convivial technologies, and federating commons from below.

Introduction

There is a timeless and detrimental schism that haunts us into the present. It is a disagreement about how to deal with modernity and its institutions, which takes many forms, operates through different issues and on multiple levels. This schism, Gustavo Esteva reminds us, expresses itself in the late 1960s between two friends and well-known intellectuals: Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. Esteva (2023, p. 273) recounts how both rejected capitalism, its institutional arrangements and the harmful impacts of schooling, instead desiring profound social and political change. Despite their commonalities, there were also profound political, even ontological, differences,

which would calcify between them. Freire devoted himself to literacy campaigns, 'to bring the alphabet to the masses, and tried to apply his "revolutionary pedagogy" everywhere, to transform public and private education' along socialist lines (Esteva, 2023, pp. 272–3). Illich, by contrast, challenged what schooling does to people and how it shapes them. Schooling, he showed, generates expert dependence; produces consumerist 'needs'; destroys other convivial knowledges; and eliminates other ways of learning. Disagreements with Freire were less about pedagogical 'quality' and more about institutional form. To summarize, borrowing from McLuhan and Fiore´s (2008/1964) phrase, the medium and modality of schooling *is* the message implanted into people. Illich rejected authoritarian arrangements, whether imposed educational curriculums or vanguard parties, instead advocating that people collectively organize and empower themselves alongside identifying and resolving their own social, economic and ecological issues. Illich struggled *against* institutions and literacy, recognizing other ways of learning, while Freire fought for schools and literacy. Despite these profound political differences, Esteva (2023, p. 273) fondly affirms that 'they remained good friends,' demonstrating 'a very important lesson for those fighting among themselves all the time.'

In matters of education and political vision, Illich and Freire are amicable examples of the schism which dates back to Bakunin and Marx (Eckhardt, 2016);[1] authoritarian versus anti-authoritarian; statism and anti-statism; reform or revolution-insurrection.[2] This is the same schism, albeit less coherent, that has emerged between and within degrowth and ecological modernism. Modernism, rooted in Enlightenment, secularism, and scientism, is the development, advance, and spread of statism and industrialization (Grosfoguel, 2013), which manifests in the collective organi-

[1] Like Bakunin translating Capital, Illich translated The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

[2] See Dunlap (2020) for outlining the difference between revolution and insurrection.

reconcile Hickel's (2025b) position with the militant autonomous and anarchist actions taking place (largely lost on academia), but as it stands there is a communist state apologetics that appears either (1) unjustified, (2) not properly explained, and (3) from an anti-authoritarian perspective, contradicts the last 150 years of struggle. Libertarian ecosocialism rejects capitalist property and imperial enclosure while refusing to treat the party–state as the horizon of liberation. Its position is straightforward – degrow coercive power, expand self-governed capacities of provisioning, and federate commons from below so that coordination remains accountable, revocable, and materially grounded. If emancipation is to mean anything under conditions of ecological breakdown, it will be built through plural, situated autonomies that can outlast crisis without reproducing the materially and energy intensive infrastructures of domination.

Our commitment to anti-extractivism and postdevelopment does not evade class or imperialism; they sharpen them by insisting that 'class' is continuously *made* through territorial enclosure, wage suppression, gendered and racialized social reproduction, and the coercive reorganization of land, water, and labour into export-and rent-bearing extractivist circuits. Extractivism is not a moral slogan against 'resources,' but an analytic, or a way of seeing, through which states and capital (often together) convert socio/ecological fabrics into governable, mineable, and financeable territories, producing sacrifice zones and disciplining the semi-proletariat and subsistence worlds to generate accumulation. Postdevelopment, likewise, should not be caricatured as a retreat from planning, sovereignty, or anti-imperial struggle; it is a refusal of the modernist teleology that treats industrialization and technology as an unquestionable good and 'the state' as a neutral instrument, while remaining fully compatible with alternatives to development, or place-based anti-imperialist project that builds selective sovereign capacities through decentralization (including technological and infrastructural ones) without reproducing

tures of capital, the colonial/state, speciesism, patriarchy, racism, and the war against subsistence that organizes everyday life. We fault not only imperial and capitalist forces for this impasse but also statist left projects and movement actors who repeatedly accept party, bureaucratic, and developmental mediation as the horizon of emancipation, thereby reproducing new hierarchies in the name of transformation. Ajl (2023, p. 2025) and presumably Engel-Di Mauro (2021) say we have unfairly handled communist states, but this work has not been convincing – in recognizing their harms or in showing the socioecological benefits (of which numerous examples exist). This should not be read as liberal capitalist apologetics, but as a refusal of communist and capitalist models of ecocide, developmental progress, and imperialism.

The failing reality makes us sympathetic to Hickel's (2025b) proposal, but, as mentioned above, it lacks any grounding in the political reality and misunderstands anarchist struggle by implying an 'anarchist wing' be integrated into parliament as if to manage a segment of workers for the socialist state. By claiming authoritarian politics belong in the pluriverse, it completely misunderstands what the pluriverse means (Dunlap & Tornel, 2025; Esteva, 2023). Southern socialist politics can certainly be pluriversal, but can there be, especially considering the experience of the 'Pink Tide' countries, a pluri-nation state and pluriverse of states? While certainly rhetorically possible, we contend that the imperial logic of states prevents this as a concrete possibility. The state operates through force to create, maintain and advance its own material life through humans, infrastructure and the extractivism and exploitation it requires: It has never been neutral.

As with Bakunin and Marx, we believe the global state system has to degrow, becoming augmented to redirect power, knowledge, and resources back into local communities to advance socioecological sustainability and renewability, not individual profiteering, state and corporate capital accumulaiton. This means reducing its energy, material and military requirements. We would like to

zational objectives of material and technological innovations, productivism, and urbanization (Scott, 1998). Modernism weds itself to different politics, notably a narrow understanding of Marx's communist historical materialism, put into practice by Lenin's efforts at Soviet industrialization and electrification, or the formalization of imperial capitalist consumerism in Rostow's 'Stages of Economic Growth.'

Ecological modernism attempts to green the modernist project, which relates to ideas of 'Green growth' and 'decoupling' (Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Vadén et al., 2020). Ecomodernism is a variant of modernism, arguing that ecological crises can be overcome not by questioning industrial modernity (Kallis & Bliss 2019), but by intensifying and redesigning it through technological innovation, energy abundance, efficient design, and better resource management (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015). In this sense, it promises sustainability without abandoning the core commitments to growth, modernization, high-energy infrastructures, and digital/computational technologies (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015; Kallis & Bliss 2019). Ecological modernist scholars retain differing, diverging, and often overlapping emphasis on state and market mechanisms (Kallis & Bliss 2019), which spans and blurs the 'right,' 'liberal' and 'left' wing political spectrum. We place parentheses around 'eco' to emphasize the theoretical and hypothetical reality of (eco)modernism (Roos & Hornborg, 2024, 2025; Tilsted et al., 2021; Vadén et al., 2020; Kalis et al., 2025), which is either unfounded or highly contested.

This modernist, or ecomodernist, political spectrum also exists within Marxist thought. There is 'socialist [cyborg] feminism' (Haraway, 1991/1985) 'socialist modernisms' (Huber, 2022; Robbins, 2020), 'ecological Leninism' (Malm, 2020), 'solar communism' (Schwartzman et al., 2022) and 'fully automated luxury communism' (Bastani, 2019) to name a few. While some authors are sympathetic to these feminist and Marxist-Leninist articulations while advocating degrowth (Eastwood & Heron, 2024; Heron, 2022; Hickel, 2025a), other Marxist and post-Marxist authors

reject and clash with the statism and technological practicalities and/or romantics advanced by these authors (el-Ojeili & Taylor, 2020; Holloway, 2002; Roos, 2023; Roos & Hornborg, 2024, 2025; Saito, 2024). Recently interrogating 'leftist ecomodernism,' Andreas Roos and Alf Hornborg (2024, pp. 79, 89) find a 'Marxist Prometheanism' arising from disregarding the material effects of 'capital' once it's 'converted into the material form of technology,' then it 'becomes exempt from political critique.' The challenge to Marxist (eco)modernism, by Roos and Hornborg (2024, 2025) indicates a political-material gap and challenge to leftist identity (cf. Schwartzman, 2025). This relates to Gunther Anders' (1956/2025) notion of 'Promethean shame' that names the humiliation people experience when they discipline and adapt themselves to growth-oriented industrial and cybernetic orders operating in liberal and actually existing socialist regimes.

Marxist Prometheanism or Marxist ecomodernism has crystallized through repeated clashes with degrowth and other anarchist, autonomist, and anti-statist critiques – concerning the political role of the state, the status of technology, and the question of socialist accumulation (Andreucci & Engel-Di Mauro, 2019; Benjaminsen, 2021). Parrique (2026) has documented degrowth debates between 2010 and 2025, showing how several academic debates are emblamatic of the fault lines between socialist modernism and degrowth: Vergara-Camus (2019) and Giorgos Kallis (2019); Paul Robbins (2020) and Erik Gomez-Baggenthau (2020, 2022); Matt Huber (2022) and Kai Heron (2022). In parallel, ecological Leninist interventions, most notably by Malm and Carton (2024) dismiss degrowth categorically (for a critique see also Roos & Hornborg, 2024). These controversies are compounded by disagreements internal to degrowth itself (Dunlap, 2024a, 2024b; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Heikkurinen, 2024; Kerschner et al., 2018), which extend to recent exchanges between Jason Hickel (2021, 2025a, 2025b), Ted Trainer (2021, 2024, 2025) and Liegey and colleagues (2025). It

the shadows, which are living practices in movement seeking to undermine programmes from above. What does a non-vanguard 'mass party' actually look like, and how will it not repeat the same fate as the Pink Tide countries? Inversely, how will anarchists and autonomous groups sustain attacks, continue to spread practices, and convince governments, communist or capitalist, not to destroy and assimilate them if they are successful? Praxis, explanation, and due consideration are lacking on both sides of this ecosocialist schism, which would be wise to consider bridging this gap so a 'better' world could be made in the here and now.

Conclusion: the failure to acknowledge total liberation as a political horizon

While there have been social/material gains within the state, countless insurrections and autonomous areas, the global statist capitalist trajectory spreads and intensifies. While there are numerous experiences gained through social mobilization, uprisings, and 'leftist' governments, this trajectory persists alongside the same division set out between Bakunin and Marx (Eckhardt, 2016), if not centuries earlier (Rapp, 2012). While this schism relates to political vision, we also root it in the failure to account for the organizational and psychopolitics of the state, which is compounded by a second failure to adequately recognize the material, socioecological and psychological costs of modern technologies. We recognize the technological and state failures as mutually reinforcing, which, we might conclude, generates a third failure: The realization of total liberation. The struggle for total liberation has been a failure, often shuffling groups around within state hierarchies and managerial positions as extractivism, exploitation, and war proceed at increasing rates. By total liberation, we mean not merely redistribution, national sovereignty, or improved inclusion within existing institutions, but the dismantling of the intertwined struc-

ways, communications, and legal systems,' but 'they will have no legislative power.' This perspective is based on research by Trainer (2024, 2025) and reminds Hickel (2025b) that small-holder, village, and backyard organized permaculture and egg production radically reduce costs, energy, food insecurity and waste production. Changing 'grass-root consciousness' is the priority, Trainer (2025) continues, because the 'revolution' will already be under way by the time 'the right kind of party is elected.' The challenge, Trainer (2025) reminds everyone, is that 'no conventional government, local, state, or federal will do anything to interfere with the pursuit of economic growth.' Trainer (2025) is correct about localization, the parasitic reality of states, and the extent of the challenge that foregrounds the forum we are initiating.

Secondly, if authors seek to embrace and retain state power as a constant, it falls on them to demonstrate convincingly *how it will not repeat the past*, advancing the same cycles of state evolutionary consolidation. While Hickel (2025b) is correct, as mentioned above, to challenge the claims of Liegey and colleagues(2025), the concerns presented by them and Trainer (2025) are equally valid: How will unions, mass parties, and the state apparatus actually reproduce a de/postgrowth ecosocialist state? There is no real historical or political analysis of the state or political struggle; just a re-articulation of Marxist-Leninist theory alongside, in the case of Hickel (2025a, 2025b), an assertion of de/postgrowth and, in the case of Ajl (2025), an explicit celebration of authoritarian communist states. Hickel (2025a, 2025b) presents himself as more cautious and driven towards post/degrowth in his articles and interviews, while Ajl (2023, 2025), in his recent articles, uncritically advocates state-led industrial development. We recognize our own autonomous limitations in our own examples (Dunlap, 2025; Dunlap & Tornel, 2025; Garcia-Arias et al., 2025; Tornel & Dunlap, 2025), which are 'local,' constantly under threat of falling apart and, literally, struggling alongside countless autonomous projects – the Zapatistas and Rojava among them – and insurgent movements in

is from this latter cluster of debates that this article engages and replies.

Before the Russian Revolution, socialism was considered to embody diverse egalitarian, anti-authoritarian and collectivist politics (Chomsky, 2005; Kropotkin, 1903). Socialism, at its minimum, designates a political-economic commitment to social (rather than private) ownership or control over the means of production, which is typically coupled with some form of planning that orients production toward needs-satisfaction rather than profit accumulation (Engel-Di Mauro, 2009). Yet this baseline definition masks a crucial political distinction that is frequently collapsed in contemporary debates: Socialism has historically contained strong anti-authoritarian and anti-statist currents (Kropotkin, 1903; Mckay, 2011, p. 35). Only after 1918 did it become widely identified with party–state rule, centralized planning and, for some, totalitarianism (Dunlap & Becker, 2025). In our framing, this matters because 'socialist modernism' can operate as a Marxist variant of (eco)modernism – sliding from 'soft' to 'hard' authoritarian politics – while still claiming the emancipatory language of socialism. Similarly, state-socialist projects preserve the modernist faith in industrial progress, technological development, and centralized planning, but, again, positions these in the language of emancipation.

Ecosocialism and degrowth are internally split between currents: (1) that remain techno-solutionist – recasting the transition as an upgraded industrial programme under public ownership – and (2) those that insist that the ecological crisis cannot be addressed through a renovated productivism (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Heikkurinen, 2024; Kerschner et al., 2018; Roos & Hornborg, 2024) because the very means (e.g., industrial systems, state governance, large-scale infrastructures) carry modernist assumptions of authoritarian control, cultural homogenization, and territorial b/ordering. Liberal and authoritarian developmentalism converge on the general ideas of (eco)modernism, retaining commitments

to modernization, large-scale planning, and techno-industrial progress as the path to social transformation. Contrary to state socialism, ecosocialism, according to Brownhill et al. (2022, pp. 2–3), 'is not primarily a theory or party line that rains from above, but rather the convergence of resistance and anti-capitalist movements from below.' This entails, the authors continue, embodying grassroots 'practices and critiques, that together articulate opposition to relations of exploitation and dispossession and the defense, establishment, and elaboration of praxes of an alternative political economy and way of being, rooted in social and ecological justice' (Brownhill et al., 2022, pp. 2–3). We recognize this definition as an example of libertarian ecosocialism, which complements autonomous, anarchist and grassroots politics that challenges (eco)modernism and that we seek to cultivate.

By failure, we refer to a historical, political, and theoretical failure on several interconnected levels: (1) The failure of (eco)modernist scholars to engage critical scholarship on technology, extractivism, colonialism, and the state seriously; (2) the failure of socialist and anti-capitalist projects – whether statist or otherwise – to generate enduring transformations toward total liberation. Total liberation is understood as the elimination, or significant reduction, of human and non-human exploitation, class domination, patriarchy, extractivism, bureaucratic control, and engineered dependency (Dunlap & Tornel, 2025; Springer et al., 2021). The old schism persists through these fault lines and renews through these failures.

As with the rupture between Sartre and Camus – where the latter's insistence on naming Stalinist violence was read by the former as playing into the hands of Western imperialism – criticizing the authoritarian communist and pluri-national states today is treated similarly by Stalinist, Marxists-Leninists, Maoists, and liberal academics (Sicilia & Dayán, 2025). Siding with Illich, Bakunin and Camus, postdevelopmentalists and other autonomous movements, we recognize this debate in political ecology and human

tors and/or groups, which often mix and intersect into popular uprisings and movements concerning food, housing, gas prices and much more, which have real political, analytical and tactical disagreements. Academia, while replete with insightful studies, has so far failed to engage in serious dialogue concerning political struggle, strategy and the problem of states. Instead, the state is assumed to be necessary, meanwhile upholding the liberal myth that states are 'neutral' socio/political arbitrators without their own institutional requirements and necessities of their own (e.g., training, personnel, alliance, material construction, and energy). Bureaucracy is the material and energy intensive, and, arguably, the heart of the colonial project, which challenges (eco)modernism across the political spectrum.

Hickel (2025b) exclaims that if people 'wish to eschew state power at all costs, it falls on them to advance a viable alternative strategy for removing the capitalist class from control over the means of production and political power.' We reply: First, this statement speaks from embracing the hegemonic state form, assuming the need for a 'top-down' programme that, we contend, must originate and be designed from the 'bottom-up' as much as possible or with the support of the 'top' and 'middle.' Said differently, we reject the statist social engineering implied within this statement. There are a series of anarchist political programmes, whether from syndicalist organization to bioregionalism (Sale, 2000/1991), radical municipalism (Bookchin, 2015/1991) and various organizational methods for specific issues and goals (Gelderloos, 2024). This includes autonomous formation from Indigenous self-organization (*autogestion*), Zapatismo, and Kurdish Internationalists (Dunlap & Nomad, 2026), the latter inspired by Bookchin's (2015) radical municipalism. We agree with Trainer's (2025) reply to Hickel (2025b) advocating a 'transition to predominantly small towns and villages' or *localization*, which 'run themselves, via participatory self-government, their own committees, town meetings.' The only place for centralization, Trainer (2025) continues, is for 'coordinating national rail-

tion and repression to sustain the prevailing accumulation pattern (Machado & Zibechi, 2017). Debunked claims of poverty reduction (Warnecke-Berger et al., 2023) coincided with the criminalization of protest, selective repression, and the management (rather than expansion) of popular participation (Gaudichaud et al., 2022; Machado & Zibechi, 2025; Tornel, 2024). The authoritarian nature of development policy persists as the backbone of 'progressive' politics, contends Inés Durán Matute and Mariano Féliz (2022), combining extractivism, militarization, and social programmes with participatory rhetoric to neutralize resistance and reproduce capitalist social relations. Progressive projects tend to 'govern from above,' producing new elites, while neoextractivism entails dispossession, militarization, and criminalization deepening the colonial nature of the state, rather than transcending it – precisely because state scale and territorial command require centralized decision-making, legibility, and coercive enforcement against autonomous limits (Dunlap, 2025). The machinations and ubiquity of the state system should cause alarm, and serious consideration, and certainly not the factually wrong and comfortable liberal claim that states are 'neutral' technologies or instruments.

This, moreover, extends to a more immediate scale, with assemblies and struggles *within* the Notre-Dames-des-Landes (NDDL) Zone-to-Defend (ZAD) in France (Dunlap, 2023a); the Plaza Occupation Movements in Europe and North Africa (2010–2015); and general movements and insurrections in Greece (2008–2012), Chile (2019–2020), and the US (George Floyd Rebellion; Stop Cop City) among others. Discussing 'degrowth strategy' requires not only immersing themselves in (life-threatening) struggles but also recognizing political factions, engaging documents produced by individuals, groups, and movements (e.g., magazine and website debates) between action groups North and South of the Globe. We do, however, recognize the common problem and enduring challenge of the state (and its global financial economy). There are anti-statist, autonomous and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (MLM) ac-

geography and argue that we must confront the extractive and material conditions of modern technology; the uncritical belief in the state (as a neutral instrument); and the absorption of emancipatory struggle into developmentalist and statist projects. This is accomplished by first recounting the recent interventions by Jason Hickel (2025a, 2025b) and Max Ajl (2023, 2025) as two complementary, though uneven, expressions of socialist modernism. This provides a foundaiton for our analysis, leading to the second section that develops our central diagnosis of the two constitutive failures of (eco)modernism: (1)modernity, as expressed in techno-industrial solutionism, and (2)the state, as a colonial and coercive form that repeatedly absorbs and neutralizes transformative struggle. The conclusion returns to the question of total liberation as a political horizon, arguing that without confronting the historical failures of socialist modernism, degrowth, and ecosocialist debates risk reproducing the very assumptions they seek to overcome. Our contribution, therefore, is not to widen the schism, but to clarify its stakes and insist that any credible emancipatory politics today must reckon with the materiality of technology, the non-neutrality of the state, and the autonomous, anti-authoritarian possibilities that continue to emerge from below. This, we hope, will also shape research agendas.

Two complementary socialist modernist articulations

Jason Hickel (2025a, 2025b) and Max Ajl (2023, 2025) have advanced socialist modernist perspectives, the former rooted in (anti-imperialist) degrowth and the latter being a communist 'anti-imperialism.' Ajl (2025) argues that northern ecomodernism and degrowth/postdevelopment mirror one another, producing a 'fun-house' effect in northern 'green' critical thought. While reading like a departure from earlier work advocating convivial

technologies, 'decentralization', 're-localization' and industrial down-scaling (Ajl, 2021a), this 'mirroring' framework flattens important distinctions between degrowth, postdevelopment/anti-extractivism, and (eco)modernism. Ajl (2023, 2025, p. 2) argues that critics of rejecting 'a global class analysis;' harbouring disdain for 'peripheral nationalist movements;' rejecting 'sovereign industrialization' and lacking 'a serious analysis of technology.' Ajl (2023, 2025, p. 3) maintains that degrowth, postdevelopment and (anti-)extractivist scholars fail to engage 'Arab and African literature which proposed a tempered engagement with modernity, and approaches to technology which the problem-space of "modernity" versus "post-development" blocks from view.' While Ajl (2025) vaguely asserts that his Marxist Arab and African literature retains a 'tempered engagement' with growth and that, for example, Ismail-Sabri Aballah saw 'no contradiction between growth, development, basic needs fulfilment, and cultural flourishing.' Ajl's earlier work (2019, 2021a) is more considerate by foregrounding agroecology, indigenous technics, decentralized planning, and non-mimetic development. Yet his 2023 and 2025 interventions can read as Marxist (eco)modernism, insofar as they foreground sovereign industrialization while underplaying its recurrent coercive, extractive, and bureaucratic forms. Hickel (2020, 2021), however, demonstrates Fanon's degrowth sentiments and, later, contends that Thomas Sankara, Julius Nyerere, Celso Fratado, Marta Marnecker and Leopold Senghor 'perhaps had productivist orientations,' but 'were critical of growthism.' This point, and works, remain important whether for solidarity and/or academic purposes. This scholarship deserves greater elaboration concerning the praxis emerging from this scholarship, and studies reflecting on the historical realities of state repression (e.g., internal colonialism); the existence of 'tempered' and critical 'growthism'; the propensity for industrial ecocide, socialist accumulation, and, of course, imperial interference. Ajl's (2019, 2021b) readings of Third World Marxist scholars such as Amin, Amami,

also Sh&#363 which clarifies why 'progressive' administrations repeatedly slide into coercion and discipline when confronted with crisis and dissent. Domination, Leoplod Kohr (1957/2018) contends, is multi-scalar: Political units become 'overgrown,' even well-intentioned rulers cannot govern without proliferating bureaucracies that generate defects in social control. Large states drift toward centralization and coercion as objective necessities. Echoing Bakunin (1990), Machado and Zibechi (2016) critique of Latin American progressivism clarifies why the 'plurinational' qualifier does not escape the state's structural imperatives.

The failure of communist states cannot be ignored and entirely blamed on the CIA and imperialist interference. While the anarchists might have been fooled and slow to recognize Leninist/Bolshevik power purges in Russia and Ukraine, pinned against nationalists, the 'Red' and 'White' terror (*which are lessons to carry into the present*; Dunlap & Becker, 2025), we must look at the systematic misuse of ecosocialism by the 'Pink Tide' governments in Latin America or how movements allowed themselves to be 'subsumed' and failed to counter governments within Bolivia, Ecuador, or Argentina. Latin America's 'progressive cycle' or 'Pink Tide' came to power through elections with strong popular mandates; yet change 'from above' tended to reconstitute the domination it claimed to overcome. Machado and Zibechi (2016) show how these were not 'conjunctural' mistakes, leadership styles, 'betrayals,' but politico/structural pathologies – subjectification, dependency on experts, habituation to hierarchy, and the affective management of dissent. Progressivism did not displace the dominant classes; rather, it modernized governability, stabilized the order, and produced new bureaucracies/elites that 'domesticated' rebellions and movements, turning the struggle for transformation into advancing state administration. These governments deepened the extractive-export model – re-primarization, rentierism, megaprojects, and infrastructure – and when resistance emerged (Indigenous, peasant, territorial), they responded with criminaliza-

2025; Gelderloos, 2017). The history of state formation – from Bolshevism onward – shows that the state can indeed organize the conditions for modernist and capitalist expansion, but only by traumatizing and destroying ecologies, cultures, socialities, and human and more-than-human worlds (Alexander, 2008; Demuth, 2019; Dunlap, 2024b; Lane, 2000; Marya & Patel, 2021; Shapiro, 2001). In this sense, the state, like pipelines, electricity grids, urbanism, consumerism, and armed forces, operates as a weapon of planetary destruction. It is the 'mother of all bombs:' not an event like Hiroshima or Nagasaki, but a mechanistic, cybernetic, and progressive organizational structure that spreads and consolidates itself across the planet. Following Perlman's (2010/1983) imagery of mechanical 'worms,' 'octopuses,' and 'world eaters,' we might understand competing states as infrastructures of planetary consumption, while spectacular genocidal events appear not as exceptions but as moments within the historical evolution of a modernist hive-mind driven by capitalist and ecomodernist futurity.

Across otherwise distinct traditions a shared diagnosis emerges: the state-form is not a neutral instrument to be 'captured' (whether as national or plurinational), but represents a colonial, patriarchal, homogenizing, and militarized architecture that reproduces domination through scale, bureaucracy, and territorial command (Danewid, 2024; Gelderloos, 2017; Graeber & Wengrow, 2021; Holloway, 2002; Öcalan, 2011; Scott, 2017; Zibechi, 2025). Öcalan (2011) is explicit that founding 'a state of one's own' does not increase a people's freedom; it typically replaces 'old chains by new ones,' producing 'additional injustice,' while nation-states become 'serious obstacles' to social development – hence his proposal for a 'democracy without a state,' grounded in grass-roots decision-making, where ecology and feminism are 'central pillars.' Advancing Aimé Césaire (1955/2000) analysis of fascism, Öcalan (2011, p. 28) identifies the structural militarization of states as 'fascist exercise[s] of power is the nature of the nation-state'(see

and Abdallah make a valuable contribution to reconstructing development by rejecting mimetic industrialization, imported technological dependence, capital-intensive agriculture, and technocratic planning in favor of delinking, appropriate technology, agroecology, peasant-centered planning, and sovereign industrial capacity. Our critique, then, is not of Ajl's historical expertise, but of his recent tendency to mobilize this archive against postdevelopment and anti-extractivist literatures in ways that (re)inscribe the familiar authoritarian/anti-authoritarian divide.

Ajl (2025) and Hickel (2025b) both celebrate Samir Amin (Hickel, 2021, 2025b). This leads Hickel (2025b) to advocate for 'delinking as the process by which global South economies can reduce their dependence on imperial capital, increase economic sovereignty, organize production around human needs and national development, including – as others have added – the process of ecological planning.' Ajl (2021b) similarly reads Amin's delinking as an ecological and worker-peasant project: a strategy for subordinating trade, technology, and planning to internal popular needs rather than world-market imperatives. Delinking in the periphery, Hickel (2025b) contends, 'will further impel degrowth transition in the imperial core' as being unable to rely on external appropriations will 'provoke a crisis that will intensify domestic class conflict, galvanize revolutionary politics, and sharpen the need for a transition to socialism.' Delinking certainly represents important promises of degrowing and regrowing in a variety of different ways, and we believe, as Ajl (2025, p. 12) asserts, that Latin America should make its 'own machine tools industries, and manufacture its own high-speed rails.' Our concern, however, is *how* development takes place in terms of the materials produced; how they are used and in relation to the social, ecological, and cultural realities already augmented by paved roads, computational technologies, and urbanization.

The state for Ajl (2025) and Hickel (2025a, 2025b) is essential to this process. While Ajl rightly foregrounds the violence and extent

of imperialism and the strategic importance of states resisting it, his recent work (Ajl, 2023, 2025) treat certain states and non-western formations-especially China, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and, in specific contexts, Syria and Yemen-as strategically significant within struggles against imperialism. Our concern is that this emphasis can leave insufficiently examined the internal coercions, extractive policies, and developmental violence, as well as the autonomous and non-statist methods through which imperial domination is also contested. Departing from Kōtoku Shūsui (Tierney, 2015), who 'analyzed imperialism as a pathology inherent to the nation state' (Anonymous, 2025:16), Ajl (2023, 2025) strictly views imperialism as a matter of statist geopolitics. The extractivism literature, Ajl (2023, p. 10) contends, pays 'little attention to the world-systemic, imperial, factors contributing to the inability and unwillingness of "Pink Tide" states [e.g. Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil] to confront imperialism and neo-colonial class structures.' This similar concern is repackaged later by arguing anti-statist scholars – observing states as structural obstacles, advancing internal colonialism and political violence – as ignoring 'the achievements of the anti-colonial struggles in stopping colonial famines and genocides' (Ajl, 2025, p. 14). This criticism, unfortunately, bypasses the issues raised by authors; it fails to provide detailed examples (past general country-wide references); mischaracterizes and cherry-picks the body of (anti-)extractivism literature, which undermines some of his valid arguments.[3]

This selective engagement with the (anti-)extractivism literature leads Ajl (2023, 2025) to reject 'reifying difference' that 'militates against the possibility of unifying the popular classes – Indigenous, women, peasants, slum-dwellers – of the Third World'. Ajl (2025, p. 11) contends:

[3] He faults Escobar for failing to engage ecological Marxism, but this charge is hard to sustain given Escobar's explicit and favourable engagement with James O'Connor (Escobar, 2012/1995; 1996).

policy (cf. Lang, 2024). We argue, by contrast, that such positions do not adequately question the state's own organizational existence, expansionary logic, and political economy. The state-form is not simply difficult to control; it is a modern-colonial technology of territorial command, abstraction, bureaucratic mediation, and organized coercion (Dunlap, 2014, 2025; Springer, 2016; Ince & Barrera de la Torre, 2024; Kass, 2023), which is negatively entrenched in our political ecologies. The state manages a political economy of exploitation to advance an ecologically destructive modernism rooted in internal colonization, the police-prison industrial complex, geopolitical competition, and socioecologically lethal yet enchanting infrastructures (Bakunin, 1990; Gelderloos, 2017; Illich, 1978; Tornel & Dunlap, 2025). To imagine that such an apparatus can simply be repurposed for postgrowth pluriversal justice, plurinational coexistence, or ecosocial transition strikes us as politically romantic. At the same time, we recognize that simply rejecting or ignoring the state can appear equally naïve, which is precisely why the academic issue must be clarified: is the state affirmed because it seems unavoidable, or because it is still imagined as potentially liberatory?

While we seek to clarify the issue of liberation in the conclusion, we cannot entertain the illusion – advanced by Ajl (2023, 2025), Hickel (2025a, 2025b), and other socialist modernists – that the state is a neutral political technology. This is a regression in statist theory (Danewid, 2024; Ince & Barrera de la Torre, 2024; Poulantzas, 1978/2000), which degrowth has also struggled with (Dunlap & Becker, 2025; Fitzpatrick, 2024), failing to address the state as an imperial and colonial formation. State formation, population management, and subjectification have been integral to the organization of industrial and digital modernity. In this sense, statism is not an accidental feature of (eco)modernism but one of its constitutive conditions: politically coercive, psychologically intoxicating, and materially and energetically intensive in both its reproduction and expansion (Danewid, 2024; Dunlap,

Anarchist dogmatism warrants critique, yet accusations of anarchist 'purism' have also functioned as a rhetorical weapon to override legitimate procedural limits, suspend accountability (Dunlap & Nomad, 2026), and legitimate authoritarian measures in the name of 'transition periods' that – in Leninist and subsequent state-socialist projects – rarely arrive. Instead, communist governments have repeatedly invoked real and/or manufactured imperial interference to deflect internal critique from workers, the poor, and – most sharply – Indigenous peoples incorporated into the state project (Berg-Nordlie, 2015; Phol, 2014; Ramanujan, 2022). Hickel's (2025b) proposal is valuable for connecting degrowth with delinking in greater detail. Ajl's (2025) recent interventions, similarly raise important anti-imperialist questions, however, both authors do so through a state-centered framework whose engagement with postdevelopment and anti-extractivist literatures remains uneven. We contend, largely in agreement with Trainer (2025), that we must better grapple with the state as a political technology that, so far, has never transitioned towards a real or full socialism/communism/anarchy and, the reasons for this deserves greater detail beyond 'the capitalists/imperialist prevented it' (even if this is a large factor). The fact remains that people allow themselves to be ruled; even if demoralized and traumatized by capitalist and communist regimes alike.

Even when state theory rejects the idea of the state as a neutral instrument, it often stops short of breaking with the state-form itself. Poulantzas (1978/2000), for example, insists that the state is not a neutral tool but a 'material condensation' of class forces, while still advocating the strategic horizon of democratic transformation through and within its apparatuses. Brand and Lang (2024) likewise recognize that emancipatory projects repeatedly encounter serious obstacles when relying on the state, since actually existing states remain bound to political domination and capitalist growth. Yet they still maintain that the state can block powerful interests, stabilize eco-social demands, and help reorient infrastructures and

[O]ne may respect difference and the right to live differently without rejecting *the idea of states as terrains where difference is mediated*. Illustratively, it should go without saying that a community living near a mine and a community which could be well-served by the revenues from commodity exports clearly have differences. *To reject any project which seeks to mediate and balance those differences is to reject unity and unifying projects writ large.* (emphasis added)

Unity and statism are made synonymous, while Ajl (2025) treats the state, industrialization, and technology as strategic instruments that can be redirected through anti-imperialist planning; our concern is that this underplays how their institutional and material forms can themselves reproduce coercion, extraction, and dependency, which is a position also advanced by Hickel (2025b).

In his disagreement with Liegey and colleagues (2025) of 'rigid "anarchist" vs "socialist" distinction,' Hickel (2025b) advocates 'building mass parties (not bourgeois political parties, but mass parties, with strong connections to communities and grassroots movements) that can integrate disparate struggles, win elections, take power, and implement democratic ecosocialism.' While such a proposal would demand critical reflection and analysis of the 'Pink Tide'[4] countries, Hickel (2025b) stresses that 'a mass party is not a vanguard party' and that an ecosocialist economy 'should be democratically run' and notes four pillars of this socialist economy:

1. The financial sector and other commanding heights should be under public control, and investment and production

[4] The 'Pink Tide' names the wave of 'progressive' governments elected in Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s in response to neoliberalism. While they expanded social spending and state intervention, critics recognized the institutionalization of popular struggles, the production of new elites and bureaucracies meanwhile deepening extractivist development and attacks on Indigenous territories in the name of redistribution (Machado & Zibechi, 2016).

should be aligned with democratically-ratified objectives and social/ecological needs.

2. The foundational economy – essentials for human well-being – should be decommodified in the form of universal public services, which can be democratically determined, decentralized to the appropriate level, and democratically run.

3. A public job guarantee should be established to enable people to participate in socially and ecologically necessary works, which should be democratically determined, decentralized to the appropriate level, and democratically run.

4. Production units outside the commanding heights and the foundational economy should be democratically owned and managed by workers and/or communities, as appropriate (Hickel, 2025b).

While agreeable when people are subsumed by states and the global capitalist economy, Hickel (2025b) continues that his vision 'embraces values of democratic/worker control and can form the basis of a functional alliance with the anarchist wing [*sic*]. This is what I mean by democratic socialism.' Hickel (2025c) asserts that 'this programme involves the state, at least during a necessary transitional period,' and, in Leninist fashion, goes so far as to say: '**there is nothing *intrinsically* bad about the state**. The state is an enemy when it is controlled by the capitalist class or comprador elites' (original emphasis). Hickel (2025b) stating this vision in relative detail (compared to most academic works) is admirable. Ajl's (2019, 2021b, 2025) scholarship makes an important contribution by recovering Third World Marxist authors often neglected in political ecology; our concern is that his recent works can flatten postdevelopment/anti-extractivist traditions to advance authoritarian communism. While we rejoice in Hickel (2025b) sober assessment that

of the social sciences to have come true so dramatically' and contends that '[i]t deserves a place of honor in the famous canon for that reason alone.' The reality and present challenge posed by the state we understand as underdeveloped in terms of analysis and assessment (Dunlap & Becker, 2025) let alone strategy to create a libertarian ecosocialist present within the degrowth/socialist modernist debates.

This anti/statist and anti-/authoritarian schism, mentioned in the introduction, exists because this debate has never been reconciled and remains scantily acknowledged within academia (for exceptions see: Danewid, 2024; Holloway, 2002; Springer, 2014, 2017, 2018). We recognize the power accumulated by communist states, their historical revisionism (e.g. Trotsky & Stalin) and direct torture and execution of dissident anarchists and Marxists as essential to this process. As Chomsky (2005) reminds us, communist and capitalist states both agreed socialism and communism were to be synonyms for authoritarian centralized control (and capitalisms), if not totalitarianism (Arendt, 1962). This flattened and gutted the rich libertarian socialist tradition that anarchists and other ecosocialists seek to revive. The Bolsheviks, simply said, won against their 'internal enemy' and competitors to dictate the terms of socialism as authoritarian, while the 'West' got their 'boogie man' or external enemy to position and beautify their capitalist project through 'culture industries' (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002; Rockhill, 2025; Tornel & Dunlap, 2025).[6] We believe that this Forum – and the conjuncture beyond it – demands navigating this schism without retreating into dogmatic Leninism or anarchism, while facing the realities of state psycho/political subsumption, ecological degradation, technological totalitarianism, and consumerism now engulfing the planet.

[6] While we disagree with Rockhill's (2025) authoritarian communist ideological agenda, and painting of some intellectuals to fit that agenda, we do recognize the depth of work accomplished to show the extent of US cultural and intellectual warfare.

The failure of the state

Rooted in Daoist and Indigenous experiences and struggles (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021; Rapp, 2012), hostilities and rejection of the state are endemic as they are ancient (Gelderloos, 2017; Scott, 2017). The modern articulation between anti-statism and statism emerges between Bakunin (1990/1873) and Marx (1875/1970), where Bakunin (1990; Eckhardt, 2016) challenged Marx for: (1) Economic determinisms, ignoring cultural and political factors; (2) placing the 'revolutionary subject' solely with the proletariat (as opposed to rural communities); (3) ignoring state psycho/politics of absorbing people into its logic, perspective and culture; (4) and the general belief that the state would 'wither away' naturally (as opposed to requiring concerted destruction). Marx envisioned seizing the means of economic (e.g. industry) and political (e.g. governmental) production by appropriating the state, advancing through stages of capitalism into advancing full socialism and communism (Marx, 1875/1970; Marx & Engels, 1969/1848). This was justified by 'scientific socialism,' long criticized and rejected by anarchists (Kropotkin, 1903; Fabbri, 2017/1922). While Marx's early body of work was essential to Leninism/Bolshevism, and the resulting state communist projects, his ideas would develop and change towards anti-authoritarianism, anti-colonialism and pro-peasant articulations (Anderson, 2016). Despite Marx's efforts to silence and bury anarchist criticism (Eckhardt, 2016), their analysis and concerns were correct, even if challenging (as they still are today).

Anarchist analysis recognizes the state as not only a powerful psycho/political imperial technology, but also predicted what later formed into Leninism/ Bolshevism, Stalinism, and other varieties of authoritarian communism (which, contrary to the stories of Trotsky and Stalin, began under Lenin's regime; see Dunlap & Becker, 2025; McKay, 2019; Ryan, 2012). Bakunin's (1990) position, as Noam Chomsky (2005, p. 206) argues, 'must be one of the few predictions

'degrowth is not a coherent political movement' and (profoundly) lacks 'the capacity to implement the kind of broad social and economic transformations that it calls for,' which extends to romanticizing *Zone to Defends* (ZADs)[5] (see Dunlap, 2023a), we fundamentally have to challenge and augment their vision. This challenge, we present below, through what we see as the three failures of (eco)modernism.

The two failures to compost (eco)modernism

While we offer two criticisms of (eco)modernism that we regard as failures, this in no way suggests that they are complete. We hope this Forum Article will not only further advance conversations on the depths of these failures, but also find ways to struggle beyond the division within degrowth and ecosocialism. The two criticisms engage: Modernity, specifically the technological trajectory it entails; the state, notably as a lethal socio/ecological technology of governance; and, consequenlty, the failure of Marxist (eco)modernism to acknowledge libertarian ecosocialism as a viable direction of struggle. We conclude by acknowledging a third failure, that of (total) liberationary realities to flourish, which are smothered by institutional forms, political violence, habits, and secondarily, the academic practice that predominates.

On modernity and technology

Modernity can be defined as the historically specific Euro-Atlantic project – consolidated from the sixteenth century onward and philosophically canonized in the Enlightenment –

[5] ZAD (Zone à Défendre) is the reworks the French planning term for a 'deferred development area' to designate collectively reclaimed territories from (destructive) development projects the ZAD names a tactic of land defense and developing land-based prefigurative autonomous life (Dunlap, 2024b).

that grounds a statist order and legitimate knowledge in self-authorizing rational subjects (Grosfoguel, 2022). This political order organizes a practice and vision that separates nature and culture; promotes linear progress and makes claims to universal validity and applicability (Dunlap, 2014; Federici, 2009; Grosfoguel, 2022). The modernist ethos, in Habermasian (1991) terms, is the institutional and normative horizon of reason, emancipation, and democratic self-rule, framed as an 'unfinished project' that can be corrected and completed through reflexive critique and communicative rationality. Decolonial critiques argue, however, that modernity is structurally inseparable from capitalism, colonial conquest, and the creation of racial/sexist and other epistemic hierarchies (Grosfoguel, 2013), such that its promises are only possible through domination and erasure of subaltern, 'uneducated' and recalcitrant peoples and knowledges (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). What is required, then, is not the 'completion' or 'repair' of modernity (as with ecomodernism), but a displacement of its tenets to allow spaces for liberatory plural horizons.

Modernity, we recognize, forms the roots of the present technological regime consuming the 'hearts' and 'minds' of humans alongside the more than humans and habitats of the earth. Considering the present trajectory and objectively beneficial scientific advances (ignoring the material, cultural, and psycho-social costs), we embrace a trans-modernity (Dussel, 1994; Grosfoguel, 2008; Tornel & Montaño, 2023), which displaces the modernist regime while seeking to salvage the 'beneficial' modern knowledges, tools, and devices it has produced. This trans-modernity certainly resonates with Ajl (2025) and Hickel's (2025b) 'tempered' modernism and postgrowth articulations in the South. It stresses profound re-assessment and careful engagement with industrial and digital technologies, which are systematically lacking within assessments of industrial/cybernetic technologies (Dunlap, 2023b; Dunlap & Marin, 2022; Dunlap et al., 2025; Lohmann, 2026; Mulvaney, 2014; Roos, 2023; Roos & Hornborg, 2024). We recognize, echoing

– rather than a rupture with extractivism and imperial relations. This recurring techno-optimist, Roos and Hornborg (2024), show, routinely rely on narrow accounting that excludes upstream material and energy costs, treating technology as separable from the socioecological metabolism that makes it feasible – what they term 'machine fetishism.' This helps produce the image of 'clean energy' devoid of extractive and material supply-webs (Ulloa, 2024), which produce green dispossession and sacrifice zones (Tornel, 2024). This, moreover, sidesteps the problem of nuclear power (Ramana, 2024; Gunter, 2026), which is not 'green', the production is mateirally and energy intensive, slow to build, requires coslty maintenance, extermly dangerous, creates radio active disposal zones for 100,000 (+/-) and always has the potential to be weaponized.

On this reading, Hickel's redistributive optimism – where energy savings can be reallocated through planning, public investment, or provisioning – risks depoliticizing 'renewable energy' as a neutral technical substitute, while leaving intact the deeper continuity of *total extractivism* (Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2020): the expansion of commodified throughput, territorial enclosure, and mineral-intensive accumulation under a greener vocabulary. Despite this, we recognize Hickel's (2020, 2021, 2025b) prioritization of degrowth and anti-colonial politics as an important advancement in socialist modernist thought. We contend, however, this is only the beginning of the conversation, because: (1) The harms of industrial/digital society remain under accounted; (2) the psycho-political and material impacts of technologies have not been adequately recognized, accounted for, or popularly understood; (3) the political, ecological, and technological conditions have changed since the 1950s–80s (e.g., 'Decolonization Period'); and (4) the state remains among the largest 'out of control' macro-political technologies requiring degrowth.

and celebrated with lacking justification or detail other than our own subsumption within its national and international system that compels us to embrace it. A topic to which we return in the next section.

Jason Hickel (2020, 2025b), while retaining strong affinity with Ajl (2025), remains among the most thoughtful and concise in advocating postgrowth socialist modernism. Hickel (2019, 2020) recognizes the harm of marketing – i.e., daily psychological operations – and, unlike the large majority of academics – ecosocialist or not – has actually acknowledged the extensive mineral cost of lower-carbon technologies (Hickel, 2019, 2020). This assessment, however, at best was partial or incomplete (Dunlap & Laratte, 2022), situating itself in the long-debunked 'fossil fuels versus renewable energy dichotomy' (Dunlap, 2018, 2021; Lennon, 2021). Hickel emphasizes that 'renewables are now cheaper than fossil fuels,' and he pairs this claim with a political–economic diagnosis: Fossil fuels persist not because they are the least-cost option, but because they remain structurally more profitable within contemporary capitalism – anchored in established infrastructures (e.g., fixed capital), rent capture, state protections, and the ability of incumbent firms to externalize harms and secure favourable regulatory and financial conditions (Hickel, 2025a, 2025b).

While undoubtedly true, we contend that the focus on cost and profitability metrics can inadvertently narrow the analytic frame to price signals, obscuring how 'renewables' are materially *fossilized*: advanced solar, wind, batteries, grids, and electrified mobility remain dependent on fossil-fuelled mining, chemical production, coerced labour, manufacturing, logistics, and finance, and therefore reproduce the same global relations of extraction, unequal exchange, and sacrifice zones that underpin the fossil fuel regimes (Dunlap, 2021; Dunlap & Becker, 2025 Llavero-Pasquina et al., 2025). Thus, even where 'renewables' undercut fossils on price, the transition remains a reconfiguration of fossil power – shifting accumulation upstream into mineralized supply chains

Roos and Hornborg (2024, p. 90), that 'technology is capital' and that we cannot ignore – as has been and continues to be the case with the (Marxist) ecomodernist canon – the profoundly extensive, intensive, and harmful psychosocial (Alexander, 2008), health (Marya & Patel, 2021), and material requirements of modern, industrial, and computational technologies (Dunlap, 2023b; Kallianos et al., 2023). In agreement with Illich (1978), and the postdevelopment thinkers (Klein & Morreo, 2019; Kothari et al., 2019; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Sachs, 1992; Saunders, 2002), we cannot uncritically celebrate, if not romanticize, industrialization and digital development: Any engagement with modernity – and its resulting technologies – should be highly critical, if not hostile, ensuring that its development reflects collective community interest; does not threaten ecosystems near and far; and meets basic needs. Convivial technologies – technologies designed to serve the interest of a community rather than instilling dependence and addiction (Alexander, 2008; Heikkurinen, 2024; Illich, 1978) – entail developing technologies and practices supporting and working with ecosystems (or habitats), where growth relates to quality of life, environments, and autonomy, not consuming commodities and high technology. We believe a pluriversal '*The Simple Way*,' as advocated by Trainer (2024, 2025), is a trajectory deserving of more attention, development, and strategizing by various means.

Socialism, unlike capitalism, Hickel (2025b) contends, 'does not require constant growth to remain stable and meet human needs,' which 'creates space for the pluriversal possibilities.' As a theoretical proposition this is persuasive, and it aligns with arguments for a libertarian ecosocialism oriented toward provisioning, autonomy, and democratic control rather than accumulation. Yet it also warrants a historical caution. The record of 'actually existing' communism shows how state-led socialist projects of rapid industrialization have frequently relied on erasing difference through national assimilation strategies and authoritarian logics – legibility,

standardization, and forced transformation – that have brutalized rural life and remade peasant and Indigenous communities into a governable 'proletariat' in the service of developmental targets (Demuth, 2019; McKay, 2019; Ryan, 2012; Scott, 1998; Shapiro, 2001). National development is historically rooted in internal forms of colonialism that entailed epistemicide (Habersang, 2025), assimilation (Bonfil Batalla, 1987; Esteva, 2018; Gonzales Casanova, 2003) or elimination and genocide (Dunlap, 2019; Inclán, 2025). In this light, the question is not only whether socialism *can* be non-growth and needs-oriented in principle, but also what institutional forms and political cultures would prevent a renewed productivism from reproducing enclosure, coercion, epistemic, and political violence?

Industrialization is a common obsession among so-called liberal democracies and communist states, with the ideology of industrial progress guiding them (Churchill, 1985, 2003; Illich, 1981). We agree with Ajl (2025, p. 2) that much scholarship "lacks a serious analysis of technology." Yet his recent emphasis on state-led planning and sovereign industrialization risks treating technology primarily as an instrument of anti-imperialist development, underplaying its ecological, social, bureaucratic, and psycho-political effects-an emphasis that seems to contradict previous thoughtful accounts offered in A People's Green New Deal (Ajl, 2021a). We contend, in agreement with Roos and Hornborg (2024), that there is no serious accounting of industrialization and technological production. (Eco)modernist scholars systematically neglect the harms of technology and what would actually begin regenerating social ecologies – communities and their environments. Regenerating social ecologies, for us, would entail the improvement of air, water, soil, and the relationships within communities, between people and other existences (e.g. non/more than human). This would entail the capacity for critical thought, autonomy and collective self-defense against forces degrading social and ecological fabrics.

Critical scholarship on technology, industrialization, and digitalization is not taken seriously theoretically (or practically),

which prevents honest conversations or developing de/postgrowth visions. We contend that modern science and academia, whether in institutional objectives, funding opportunities, or methodological siloing, are preventing an honest and rigorous assessment of their own institutions, economic processes, and objectives. The measurement devices are tilted in favor of (capitalist) industrial progress, whether in method or (political) application. Life-cycle assessments (LCAs), environmental impact assessments (EIA) (Dunlap & Marin, 2022; Dunlap et al., 2025; Mulvaney, 2014), certification schemes (Archer, 2024) and carbon accounting in general (Dunlap, 2023b; DuPuis & Mulvaney, 2024; Lohmann, 2026), to name a few, are partial, inaccurate and highly misleading with how they operate and are presented by companies and the media. Proper assessments of capitalist and communist societies, and digital technologies and militaries themselves, still remain 'black boxes' in terms of the material and energy use alongside their destructive forces (Belcher et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2023). While raising an important question and providing some interesting soil data (among others), Engel-Di Mauro (2021) remains painfully apologetic towards communist terrorism/totalitarianism (to anti-authoritarian Marxists and anarchists) and limited in terms of recognizing the problem of high-modernism and socialist accumulation. Contrary to Engel-Di Mauro (2021, p. 198), and as Bakunin (1990/1873), Churchill (1983, 2003), and Roos and Hornborg (2024) have demonstrated, Marxism – or how Marx's work has been adapted and applied (Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, etc.) – can indeed be faulted with 'environmental degradation' right alongside 'liberal democracies.' Whether historical materialism or the stages of economic growth, the expansive, capitalist, developmentalists, and, dare I say, imperialistic logics are rooted within two (seemingly) opposing political modalities that retain similar objectives. The state, we recognize, is among the most lethal and underestimated political organizational technologies that, instead of receiving sustained critical scrutiny, are embraced