

The Future Is Degrowth

A Review

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The politics of “degrowth” are an important present-day trend in ecosocialism. The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth: A Guide to a World beyond Capitalism* try to explain this approach and its strategy for change. The politics of “degrowth” are often misunderstood and this book’s preference for vague and murky abstractions is not helpful.

A review by a supporter of degrowth politics notes that the term “degrowth” “has met much resistance because of a common perception...that degrowth means imposed austerity.” Various critics seem to suggest that “degrowthers” are simply proposing to solve the global warming crisis through an economic contraction — cutting emissions by cutting production. Some of the language used in *The Future Is Degrowth* lends itself to this interpretation. The chapter “Degrowth visions” defines degrowth as “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that encompasses both human well-being and enhances ecological conditions...in the long and short term.” Another passage in this vein: “Achieving global ecological justice will require a planned contraction of economic activity to a globally equitable level and a deprivileging of those who currently externalize the costs of their mode of living to others...” (p. 196). These passages are typical of the murky language favored by the authors. How can a reduction in production and consumption be “equitable” or support “human well-being”?

Economist Robert Pollin’s critique of the degrowthers does in fact assume they are simply proposing a contraction of economic production. By looking at the actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in past contractions, such as the 2008-2009 Great Recession, he can easily show that even a massive depression-level contraction of 10 percent would not reduce greenhouse emissions by the amounts proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. But the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* make it clear this is not what they are proposing: “One of the most common misconceptions assumes that degrowth would imply an across-the-board, undifferentiated reduction of all types of production or consumption — a patently absurd idea.”

If degrowth politics is seen as a politics of “less” — a politics of austerity — then it’s hard to see how this could build popular support. The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* are aware of this problem: “Degrowth has been criticized that it focuses on consumption and renunciation and its demands are thus directed against the working class in the Global North who need more rather than less. However, this critique misses what degrowth is about. Degrowth explicitly aims at improving the living conditions for everyone — including those in the Global North who struggle to get along, who have to juggle three jobs to afford rent and cannot pay for health care.” (p. 197)

Degrowth of What?

To get a better understanding of degrowth politics, I think we need to look at what features of present economic life they want to “degrow” or get rid of. The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* make it clear already on page 9 that they are targeting activities that have no place in a “globally just and sustainable economy”: “These include things like advertising, planned obsolescence, ‘bullshit jobs’, private planes or fossil fuel and defense industries.”

Here they are pointing to ways in which capitalism generates bureaucratic bloat and inefficiency. Bureaucratic bloat has long been inherent in capitalism because of the way capitalist firms build a top-down managerial apparatus to control labor day-to-day and protect the interests of the firm. People in “management” jobs have grown from 3 percent of the workforce in the early 1900s to 15 percent as of 2004. David Graeber’s term “bullshit jobs” was designed to refer to jobs

without real social justification that were created as part of this apparatus of control. Graeber had several different categories of “bullshit” jobs. Some jobs in the managerial apparatus may simply be due to managers offloading their work to gofers — to do a marketing analysis for example or a study of employee “satisfaction.” Graeber described some “bullshit jobs” as “goons” who act to deceive others on behalf of the employer such as lobbyists, PR flaks, corporate lawyers, and telemarketers. Another type of “bullshit” job are the “taskmasters” who are essentially a form of guard labor, such as managers and line supervisors who are a kind of cop over workers in production. Of course, people who hold important jobs such as hedge fund managers or corporate lawyers may personally view their jobs as socially useful, but in reality they are not legitimate positions if the capitalist labor oppression regime is not legitimate.

We can distinguish jobs that exist just due to capitalism’s scheme of labor and property control from jobs that actually do the work — workers cutting wood and doing other tasks in making furniture, nurses engaged in patient care in hospitals, drivers and mechanics who keep the local bus system running, line power technicians and power plant controllers who keep electricity flowing through the grid to our houses. These are “essential” jobs because the products and services are things we want. They are “meaningful” for that reason.

Capitalism generates a large bureaucratic control apparatus because it’s essentially a class system — sucking profit out of production based on oppression and exploitation of the working class. The degrowthers thus propose a shift to an economy based on self-management and community participation — to eliminate the unnecessary bureaucratic fat of the capitalist class regime.

This is where the degrowth movement leans in a libertarian socialist direction. Unlike “eco-modernist” state socialists like Matthew Huber (in *Climate Change as Class War*), the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* are aware that both the state apparatus and technological development and work organization under capitalism are not “class neutral” or system-neutral. The nature of work itself would change if workers gained the power to actually control the labor process and the industries we work in.

Moreover, class oppression is built into the very structure of the state. Public sector workers are subordinate to managerialist bureaucracies just as workers are in the private corporations. The day-to-day workings of state institutions are controlled by the cadres of a bureaucratic control class — state managers, high end professionals employed as experts, prosecutors and judges, military and police brass. This is in addition to the politicians who are typically drawn from either the business or bureaucratic control classes, that is, classes to which working class people are subordinate. Even though the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* propose at times a reliance on the state for reforms — as “one of the key loci of struggle for climate justice, labor, feminist, and decolonial movements” — they are at least self-critical in recognizing the limits of building through the state:

“While...reforms may...be necessary, there is controversy over the role of the state in bringing about real, needed change. On the left, both anarchists and socialists argue for the need to democratize society, decentralize the state, and put power in the hands of the people....Relying on the state may seem expedient at first in order to bring about macro-level changes, but this has its limitations in that the state itself reproduces hierarchy, power structures, and violence.” (p 265)

The Basis of the Environmental Crisis

But in order to present a plausible solution for the environmental crisis of capitalist society, we need to understand what the basis of that crisis is. We need to figure out both a strategy and a program for eco-socialism. As we'll see, *The Future Is Degrowth* is lacking in both these areas.

Capitalism does have an inherent growth dynamic which drives the process of capital accumulation. The system is made up of relatively autonomous firms. Competition between firms forces each firm to pursue a constant search for reducing financial costs. To the extent they can do this effectively, they will have more profit. With more capital to expand the business, they can move into new markets, hire more experts and managers, and devise new products or ways of reducing labor costs per unit of output. If they fail at this, other firms may drive them from the field. Creating new markets for their products has led to innovations such as the creation of consumer credit in the 1920s – to expand the market for automobiles and appliances. Thus in practice the capital accumulation scheme has led to expanded production of commodities.

Many radicals view the growth dynamic of capitalism as the cause of the ecological crises of recent times. This is often summarized in the slogan about the absurdity of “infinite growth on a finite planet.” But growth in itself does not explain the global warming crisis or the system's tendency towards environmental devastation. Here we need to look more closely at the constant search to minimize financial expenses. Firms do this at the expense of both workers and the environment. They work to keep wages low, and to find ways to reduce the hours of labor required per unit of output. They might automate an operation or use “lean production” methods to speed up or intensify the work. Stress and chemical exposures have a negative effect on worker health. Thus there is a systemic tendency for firms to externalize costs onto others. A utility firm may burn coal to generate electricity. This creates emissions that damage the respiratory systems of people in the region and also contributes to global warming. But the power firm is not required to pay anything for these damages. These costs to others from emissions are “external” to the market transaction between the power firm and its customers who pay for electricity. This is an example of a “negative externality.” This concept was introduced into mainstream economics a century ago by Arthur Pigou. Externalities are a pervasive feature of the capitalist mode of production.

Another helpful concept here is *throughput*. The throughput from production consists in all the material resources extracted from nature and the damages to people and to ecosystems from emissions. Extraction of resources includes materials dug up in mines and quarries, fish taken out of the oceans or water courses, and wood taken from forests as logs or wood debris. With the concept of throughput, we can also define *ecological efficiency*. If a production process is changed in ways that reduce the amount of damage from emissions (or amount of extracted resource) per unit of human benefit, then that change improves ecological efficiency. And here is a basic structural problem of capitalism: It has no inherent tendency towards ecological efficiency. On the contrary, the system treats nature as a free dumping ground for its wastes. And various tactics of conquest and land-grabbing have historically been used to minimize the financial costs for extracted resources.

A production system that could generate increasing ecological efficiency would tend towards reductions in pollution and resource extraction. This would require a non-profit, non-market type of eco-socialist economy where production organizations are required to systematically in-

ternalize their ecological costs. Capitalism's tendency to ever greater environmental devastation happens because firms have an incentive to *not* internalize their costs, but dump them on others.

Confusions About Efficiency

Degrowthers sometimes confuse ecological efficiency with the very different concept of energy efficiency. Unlike ecological efficiency, capitalism does exhibit at times a tendency towards greater energy efficiency. This happens because energy consumption is a market expense. For example, LED lights use much less electricity for a given amount of light than incandescent bulbs. Thus you can reduce your electricity bill by swapping in LED lights for incandescents. Increasing energy efficiency is thus one of the tactics proposed by some forms of the Green New Deal, such as the proposal of Robert Pollin in *Greening the Global Economy*.

The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* use the Jevons Paradox as a way to argue against this approach (p. 87). In the 19th century British economist William Stanley Jevons noted that the increasing efficiency in the use of coal in industry did not lead to a drop in coal consumption. On the contrary, it led to a major increase in use of coal as the cost of coal per unit of output decreased. Thus the degrowthers argue that increasing energy efficiency will simply feed into greater growth, and thus greater emissions.

But in reality the Jevons Paradox often doesn't hold up. As Robert Pollin put it: "We are not likely to clean dishes more frequently because we have a more efficient dishwasher." A person who replaces all the incandescent lights in their house with LED lights is not likely to use the savings to light up their house like a football stadium. There may be some tendency to do more heating if the heating is more efficient, but, as Pollin says, "rebound effects" of this sort are likely to be modest.

In any case, increasing *ecological* efficiency is something entirely different. The Jevons Paradox is about efficiency in the use of a resource that is *acquired through market purchase*. But in capitalism use of the water and air as a dumping ground for pollutants is a use of a resource that is *not* paid for. The power firm that burns coal is not paying for damages to respiratory systems or its contribution to global warming.

But if production organizations were required to pay for external costs such as pollutants, or if affected communities had the power to ban the polluting emissions, this would provide no incentive for *increased* damage from emissions. Robin Hahnel describes a structural change in society that would achieve this result in *Economic Justice and Democracy*. His proposal would require that popular assemblies or participatory governance bodies in communities affected by pollutants would have the power to ban them or request reductions. Production organizations that wanted to continue the emissions would have to pay for permissions to emit the pollutants. This would implement a "polluter pays" principle and provide an incentive for seeking ways to reduce the amount of pollutant per unit of human benefit from production.

The authors of *The Future of Degrowth*, however, claim that "it is impossible to...decouple material throughput and emissions from growth." (p. 198) As Robin Hahnel points out, this is not true. If a non-profit eco-socialist economy can force production organizations to internalize the costs of their throughput (resource use and damage from emissions), then production can grow without increasing throughput. If the furniture factory reduces its emissions per ton of chairs and tables, then they can make more chairs and tables without increasing emissions. If there is

a general dynamic of this sort in the economy, then growth can take place without increasing overall throughput because of a decline in the amount of throughput per unit of human benefit provided.

Their Strategy Won't Work

In *Envisioning Real Utopias*, Erik Olin Wright provides a typology of different strategies for shifting society away from capitalism. The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* make use of Wright's categories in explaining their approach. Strategies proposed by the radical left historically have differed along two different dimensions or dividing lines.

First, some strategies are more gradualist in how they view change. They see change of the social arrangement coming about as the result of accumulated reforms. "Ruptural" strategies, on the other hand, assume a fundamental break with capitalist legality and existing institutions is going to be necessary at some point. That's one dividing line. But there is another dividing line among strategies: Some strategies are more statist and look to political party power and hierarchical institutions like nationalized industries or central planning. Other strategies are more libertarian: The basis is building grassroots organizations and democratic participation with the aim of rebuilding social institutions on the basis of self-management. The libertarian and statist approaches each has both a gradualist and "ruptural" version.

The more libertarian or anarchist-leaning type of gradualist approach works to build alternative, self-managed institutions "from below" within the cracks of capitalism. Wright calls this an *interstitial* strategy. The traditional type of interstitial strategy is the building of cooperatives, but *The Future Is Degrowth* embraces a broader "mosaic" of alternatives, from "collective enterprises," community gardens, "child care and alternative schooling,...housing projects and squats," and the kinds of projects that are part of the movement for a "solidarity economy." This movement has embraced a wide variety of projects from mutual support among cooperatives, to self-help organizations (such as a child care cooperative) and free food giveaways.

The Future Is Degrowth borrows the slogan "nowtopian" from Chris Carlsson's 2008 book. The slogan is catchy because it suggests the idea of "building the future here and now." Carlsson was talking about projects outside the market exchange economy where people may find meaning from group activity such as free software collectives or community gardens. An example of this sort discussed in *Envisioning Real Utopias* is Wikipedia. It's a non-profit, non-market venture that is based on collaboration among its volunteer contributors and editors. But *The Future Is Degrowth* uses the "nowtopian" concept more broadly to include worker cooperatives and other sorts of ventures that act within the market economy, but independently of capitalist firms. The book discusses the Catalan Integral Cooperative which took over an abandoned industrial village in the countryside of Catalonia. They created "a carpentry and mechanical workshop, community kitchen,...soap production facility,...a music studio, social center — each run collectively and non-hierarchically." The cooperative also serves as a space for events and cooperative housing units. (p. 256)

Although many of the individual "alternative institution" projects can be worthwhile, the strategy has several weaknesses as a strategy for overcoming capitalism. First, there is a tendency to be drawn into the market, to compete with capitalist firms. But survival in the market is set by the conditions created by capitalist competition. If firms undercut your prices by paying lower

wages or polluting the environment, then your firm will be under pressure to follow that path. Thus the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain have created low-wage subsidiaries in Poland and Morocco where workers are denied coop rights. If expertise and marketing savvy are important to survival, then people with those skills can use that as leverage to get more pay and power when hired by a cooperative. Thus the study *The Myth of Mondragon* shows that in reality a corporate-style hierarchy of managers and top professionals actually runs the Mondragon cooperatives. Workers are not in control.

A second weakness of the cooperativist approach is that this sector has no inherent tendency to expand. For one thing, people with the organizing skills to create a cooperative could use those skills to set up their own business, where they would gain the profits. The prospect of higher income tends to encourage people with entrepreneurial skills to form conventional businesses rather than cooperatives.

A third weakness of the “interstitial” or alternative institutions approach is that the organizing occurs outside the class struggle which goes on in various forms of resistance of wage-workers to their capitalist employers. Like the Libertarian Socialist Caucus in Democratic Socialists of America, the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* talk of the alternative institutions approach as a form of “dual power.” But in reality actual counter-power is built where working class people build organizations and actions that directly confront and push back against the power of the employers and the state — as in building unions, going on strike, militant mass marches, rent strikes, and occupations. Unions, popular assemblies in neighborhoods, and tenant unions can be places where working class people get together to define their own agenda in opposition to the interests of the classes that exercise power over them — employers, landlords, or the state bureaucracy. What’s missing in the “interstitial” strategy is the kind of power that workers build in a strike, where they shut down the flow of profits.

The second type of gradualist strategy is based on elections and working for reforms through the existing, top-down governmental institutions. When the social-democratic or “democratic socialist” parties were first formed back before World War 1, they may have envisioned the use of the state at some point for a fundamental “rupture” with the capitalist regime — creating socialism from above through expropriation of the capitalists. However, the electoral socialist or social-democratic parties developed powerful bureaucratic layers of politicians and party organization. This has its own kind of logic where they will not want to risk loss of power. Politicians wanted to avoid scaring off middle class voters. Over time, rhetoric and proposals were toned down.

Systems of social provision (such as free to user health care) and restrictions on employer power set up in the post-World War 2 years tended to stabilize the capitalist societies in Europe. Thus, as *Envisioning Real Utopias* points out, the social-democratic reform approach was “symbiotic” — helping to protect capitalism while also providing social benefits. However, I think Wright gives too much credit to the politicians. The social benefits and restrictions on employer power in place in the years after World War 2 would not have happened without the massive revolutionary challenge of the world’s working classes to the capitalist regime in the decades before the war — from massive strike waves to revolutions and civil wars.

The authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* are aware of the weaknesses of the “interstitial” or “alternative institutions” approach:

“While there is a widely shared consensus within the degrowth discussion that interstitial strategies must be part of a degrowth transformation, their significance,

function, and concrete forms are controversial. Some argue that these alone are not sufficient, since small initiatives do not, in themselves, foster the creation of a counter-hegemony, or construct...a different macro-economic system.” (p. 261)

This leads the authors to advocate a “symbiotic” or social-democratic strategy, based on “gradual change of laws, norms, infrastructures and institutions, starting from and building on today’s structures.” The authors propose various reforms which would be pursued via electoral politics, such as “reduction of working hours, radical policies of redistribution, universal basic services, ecological tax reform, or income maximums.” (p. 263)

The authors do envision the use of a “top-down” strategy, using the state to take over and shut down the fossil fuel firms (p. 281). Thus they endorse Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s version of the Green New Deal for the conversion of the energy system in USA to 100 percent reliance on renewable energy. This illustrates the way aspects of the Green New Deal agenda are also endorsed by degrowthers.

But the electoralist strategy carries its own limitations. If electoral political parties tend to develop bureaucratic layers that seek an accommodation with capitalism, how can this be a strategy for getting rid of the capitalist mode of production? The basic weakness of *The Future Is Degrowth* is that the two strategies they propose each seems incapable of being a basis for a change to eco-socialism. Adding them together doesn’t provide the path to a “counter-hegemonic bloc” to confront and overcome the capitalist regime or solve the global warming crisis.

Expropriating the fossil fuel firms, for example, is likely to generate intense political opposition from the powerful capitalist elite. This move — and the move away from capitalism itself — is not likely without a vast, grassroots, working class-based movement engaging in a massive level of strikes and industry occupations and other forms of large-scale conflict. With their focus on building projects outside the class struggle — through cooperatives and other alternative institutions — the degrowthers are lacking any sort of strategy for building the struggle of workers in the day-to-day workings of the capitalist workplace or building union support for their aims. They do recognize the need for organizing in the class struggle:

“There is...a need for organizing and building movements that have the capacity to block or make demands from capital and the state...Even if politicians sympathetic to degrowth were...elected, they would need both support and pressure from movements to push forward...When a strike takes away the profits of those in power, they are forced to come to the table...Of course this requires dedicated, slow organizing in workplaces and where people live...” (p. 274)

But they only talk about strikes and worker organization in the abstract. Nothing in *The Future Is Degrowth* shows much understanding of workplace organizing or the kind of organizing needed to revive worker militancy and union organizations controlled by workers. Moreover, they are quick to reject the “traditional male industrial working class whose interests are often partly in line with defending the imperial mode of living (by being dependent on fossil fuel jobs in the automobile or energy sectors...)” They propose “new formations and struggles around precarity, patriarchy, racism, ableism, class hierarchies, ecology, and global justice.” (p. 274)

Here the authors are engaged in stereotyping — many workers in basic industry nowadays are women, and in USA a large proportion are black or Latino. Moreover, alliances and links

of solidarity need to be built cross-sector. A revival of union building and worker militancy in larger enterprises is likely to span a variety of sectors — large retail enterprises, health care and education, as well as renewable energy installers, warehousing, package delivery and manufacturing. This requires a labor movement that embraces the actual diversity of the working class. Although the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* need large-scale disruptive power (such as strikes) and worker organizational strength to push through the social change they are talking about, they are lacking in a working class orientation or strategy to build for that possibility. Their talk of an “imperial mode of living” also suggests they are in fact proposing cuts to working class living standards in the core capitalist countries — contradicting their previous denials. These limitations may reflect the fact that protagonists of the degrowth approach are, as the authors concede, often from “privileged milieus” (p. 271).

An Alternative: Green Syndicalism

There are essentially three main alternatives for addressing the global warming crisis and the environmental devastation of the capitalist regime. Two of these are the degrowthers and the kind of Marxist state-socialism that I discussed in my review of Matthew Huber’s *Climate Change as Class War*. The third alternative is Green Syndicalism, which is what our magazine proposes. In the typology of different strategies discussed earlier, syndicalism is a “ruptural” strategy.

Workers in the capitalist firms have both the numbers and the potential power to shut down the firms — as illustrated in strikes, and, going further, the potential power to simply take over the industries they work in — building a worker-controlled socialism from below. The widespread re-organization of the economy in Spain’s industrialized northeast in the syndicalist-inspired revolution of 1936-37 remains a permanent historical reminder about the potential for worker organizations to create a new organization of production “from below.”

The bureaucratization and centralization of unions in the decades since World War 2 is often cited as a counter-argument here. But rather than looking at that as a permanent change, the history of the labor movement suggests that unionism has been a “contradictory” social phenomenon. At times a paid hierarchy of officials and staff solidify control and act to diminish the level of conflict with the system — in a manner similar to social-democratic parties. But at other times, the revival of struggle leads workers to create new forms of organization — to have more effective organization to advance their aims.

Thus as US syndicalists we see two kinds of grassroots organization as possibilities for revival of a unionism with the ability to advance struggle and working class interests. First, there is the fact that only six percent of workers in the private sector belong to unions in the USA. This leaves plenty of scope for building unions that are both independent of the AFL-CIO union bureaucracies, and with a permanent commitment to democratic worker control of the union. Second, in situations where industries do have inherited unions that are highly bureaucratized and conservative, workers can form parallel worker committees or networks to mobilize action and birddog the officials. Railroad Workers United is an example of an organization of this kind in the railroad industry.

Green Syndicalism is based on the recognition that workers — and direct worker and community alliances — can be a force against the environmentally destructive actions of capitalist firms. Toxic substances are transported by workers, groundwater-destroying solvents are used

in electronics assembly and damage the health of workers, and pesticides poison farm workers. Industrial poisons affect workers on the job first and pollute nearby working class neighborhoods. Nurses have to deal with the effects of pollution on people's bodies. Various explosive derailments have shown how oil trains can be a danger to both railroad workers and communities. Thus, workers are a potential force for resistance to decisions of employers that pollute or contribute to global heating. An example of a convergence of worker struggle with ecological struggle for climate justice is the coalition between transit workers and environmental organizations in Germany with a strike and mass protest by 200,000 people, to support both better conditions and wages for transit workers and more affordable public transit.

Another example is work to ensure the Just Transition is real. The "Just Transition" is the idea that the cost of the shift away from polluting industries should not be borne by the workers in those industries, through the loss of their jobs. If fracking is shut down, or refineries are scaled back or coalmines are shut down, comparable incomes or jobs for those workers should be guaranteed. If there is going to be a shift to "green" energy projects, we need to make sure that there is a union presence in these jobs, and avoid this being just a new low-wage sector where capitalists can profit off "green" slogans. The Just Transition is based on the fundamental concept of working class solidarity.

From a syndicalist point of view, worker liberation from the managerial autocracy, insecurity, and environmental devastation of capitalism requires that workers eventually take over control of the industries they work in, creating a democratic system of worker control, planning and coordination. This would enable workers to:

- Gain control over technological development, creating a new logic of development for technology that is friendly to workers and the environment,
- Re-organize jobs and education to eliminate the bureaucratic concentration of power in the hands of managers and high-end professionals, develop worker skills, and work to integrate decision-making and conceptualization with the doing of the physical work, and
- Reduce the workweek and share work responsibilities among all who can work.

The degrowthers' strategies can't achieve this goal. The cooperativist or nowtopian strategy only builds organization apart from the struggle and resistance of workers in the big capitalist firms — the firms that dominate production. And the electoralist strategy tends towards statist conceptions of socialism that are built on subordination of workers to a managerialist bureaucracy.

An Area of Agreement

Much of the working-class population ekes out a living from low-wage jobs. Occasional bouts of unemployment are another aspect of working-class insecurity. In the USA medical bills are a leading cause of bankruptcy. Many can't afford to get medical care even if they have insurance, due to high copays or deductibles. About 40 percent of the population in the USA would have difficulty getting \$400 together for an emergency. Finding affordable housing can be difficult. The basic problem is the working class condition of being dependent on wage income to obtain what you need as "commodities" you buy.

This suggests that a politics based on working class interests — and the relation of the working class to production — needs to focus on reducing this insecurity or precarious existence through “decommodification,” as some call it. This means we — as a society — provide for ourselves various things through systems of social provision, such as free-to-user comprehensive health care and free pharmaceuticals, free household water and electricity, free to user child care and elder care — all proposed in versions of the Green New Deal. For an approach to working class housing, we can look to the earlier model of “Red Vienna” in the 1920s, where the city simply ate the cost of housing construction and residents were only responsible for maintenance costs. We could envision participatory planning for housing in urban regions where self-managed construction worker organizations did the work and the cost was taken on as a form of public investment. This would mean that residents would not have to pay for the construction through rents or mortgages.

These forms of social provisioning are actually an area of agreement between green syndicalists, degrowthers and state-socialist advocates of the Green New Deal. Thus the authors of *The Future Is Degrowth* propose “to withdraw from the market, or decommodify, the supply of goods and services necessary for a good life for all. It is therefore demanded that basic goods and services such as housing, food, water, energy, local transport, and communication, education, and health be made available to all regardless of the current rate of economic growth or individual income.” (p. 225)

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