Alexander Dunlap & Josephine Becker
Introducing Anarchy and Degrowth
Towards rebellious, prefigurative, and insurrectionary degrowth ecologies
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Abstract

Where is the anarchy in degrowth? This introduction to the Special Issue: *Anarchy and Degrowth* confronts the persistent absence or marginalization of anarchism within the degrowth discourse. While degrowth positions itself as a transformative 'movement,' opposing capitalist modernity and ecological exploitation, it is increasingly dominated by an institutionalized, policy-oriented, and statist framework. In contrast, anarchist traditions offer anti-authoritarian, action oriented, and community-rooted, or prefigurative, approaches to social and ecological transformation. This introduction critiques degrowth's limited engagement with anarchism, its appropriation without attribution, and its continued neglect of autonomous and anarchist theory and practice (e.g., praxis). The introduction is framed by two concerns raised by Ted Trainer (2024): (1) Degrowth underestimates the harms done to the planet, and (2) fails to discuss the tactics, strategies, and pathways to remedy these planetary harms. Confirming these concerns, we revisit anarchist histories and political fault lines to sharpen degrowth's political intelligence and projectuality. In response to these concerns, we then advocate for integrating an *ecosystem of tactics* into degrowth. This leads to presenting the seven articles of the Special Issue that are organized into three sections: *Discussions and Interventions*, *Struggles Converge*, and *Organize to Resist*. The introduction further warns of degrowth institutionalization, hoping to push degrowth beyond its comfort zones and toward embodied, prefigurative, and antagonistic forms of struggle. This introduction concludes by discussing how degrowth can move forward and suggests research agendas to advance ideas of anarchy and degrowth.

Introduction

Where is the anarchy in degrowth? Unfortunately, it remains dormant. Smothered by university layouts, conference routines, academic pontification, policy proposals, and, most of all, the disembodied gaze that haunts all academic endeavors. Degrowth, as much as it considers itself a movement (Eversberg & Schmelzer, 2018; Nelson, 2025; Treu et al., 2020), remains institutionalized. While anarchism has an undeniable influence on degrowth (Dunlap, 2024a; Liegey & Nelson, 2020; Toro, 2018), in practice it seems more akin to a 'guilty pleasure' within the majority of "degrowth policy proposals," that tend to emphasize "top-down" approaches and a "national focus" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022, p. 10). There remains, however, an enormous amount of rebellious energy inhabiting and passing through the institutions where degrowth refutes the lies of "green growth" and claims to challenge capitalist modernity (Barlow et al., 2022; Treu et al., 2020). This Special Issue, though limited, seeks to contribute to closing these cracks and connecting degrowth with autonomous and anarchist struggles surrounding academia. We would like this issue to serve as a projectile to break the window—which separates people from urban and rural struggles—obstructing our vision.

Degrowth is generally considered as a proposal for large-scale reduction of material and energy use (Hickel, 2020). Adding to this, Parrique (2022, p. 15) recognizes degrowth as "a downscaling of production and consumption to lighten ecological footprints, planned democratically in a spirit of social justice and for the sake of improving well-being." This definition of degrowth, much like anarchist thought (Bakunin, 1873/1990; Bookchin, 1982; Clark & Martin, 2013; Kropotkin, 1892/2015; Roman-Alcalá, 2025), positions countless rural and Indigenous communities as compelling, alternative lived examples (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). Ted Trainer (2021, 2024) has made consistent anarchist interventions with the degrowth discourse. As an advocate of decentralized

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municipal self-sufficiency through *The Simple Way,* Trainer (2024) remains dissatisfied with degrowth—as a study and a policy proposal—and illuminates two glaring issues that foreground this Special Issue (and every degrowth endeavor).

First, Trainer argues that degrowth proposals do not "reflect an accurate understanding of the global situation with respect" to how governments, industry, and people have degraded ecosystems and threatened the integrity of the planet "and therefore the extent to which levels of production and consumption would have to be reduced before we could achieve a sustainable and just world order" (2024, p. 396). He calculates that "sustainable rates of resource consumption would be around 10% of present rich world per capita rates" (2024, p. 396), which leads him to his second concern: the "degrowth conundrum." How will degrowth actually cease, phase out, and re-work living on the planet? "There is considerable reference to strategy" in degrowth literature, explains Trainer, "but relatively little analysis of it, or assessment of potential, or giving of reasons as to why a preferred option might work" (2024, p. 399). This, as Trainer and this article contend, very much concerns ideas of anarchism and anarchy.

Recognizing and confronting the enormity of modernist, industrial, and cybernetic development manifesting from statism and capitalism (embedded in patriarchy, gender norms, ableism, racism, and Othering), this Special Issue proceeds by reviewing ideas of anarchism and degrowth. While reviewing degrowth works that engage with anarchism, the following section illuminates their political pitfalls and carelessness. Moreover, thinking of Joshua Mullenite (2021), we recognize the production of movement knowledge and discussions outside the academy and degrowth. This introductory paper seeks to clarify the anarchist political positions and fault lines either ignored, confused, or marginally engaged with, by degrowth. Before introducing the Special Issue contributors, we advocate recognizing an ecosystem of tactics. This advocacy is less about degrowth than about conceptualizing how to (generally) con-

front the socioecological state of the world outlined by Trainer (2024) to cultivate collective *projectuality*. Subsequently, the seven articles of the Special Issue will be presented, organized into three sections: *Discussions and Interventions*, *Struggles Converge*, and *Organize to Resist*. This introductory piece concludes by discussing how degrowth can move forward and suggests research agendas to advance ideas of anarchy and degrowth.

Degrowth and anarchy?

The presence of anarchist ideas running through degrowth is unmistakable. Recently, anarchism has been recognized within histories of degrowth in France and Spain (Jarrige & Liegey, 2025; Nogué-Algueró & D'Alisa et al., 2014) and in struggles against wind turbines in Greece (Tsagkari et al., 2025; see Mendez, this issue). While there are exceptions (AKC Collective, 2023; Dunlap, 2020, 2024b; Fitzpatrick, 2024; Gorostiza, 2023; Toro, 2018, 2021), this engagement between anarchism and degrowth remains disappointing—dancing between passing mention and uncredited appropriation (Dunlap, 2021b, 2024a; Toro, 2018). Anarchy, as opposed to anarchism (Anonymous, 2013/2024, 2014; Benally, 2023; Ramnath, 2012), we might remember, seeks to go beyond the formal ideology of anarchism. Anarchy, instead, extends to the relational ethos emblematic of the "spirit of popular uprisings" (Bakunin, 1873/1990, p. 29) and to everyday tensions enacted by people embodying anarchist values in their respective circumstances (Bonanno, 1998). Opposing domination and practicing free association, mutual aid, and direct action remain the essential values of anarchism (Springer, 2016), which extends beyond labels and formal ideologies (Dunlap, 2020, 2021a). This indicates the anti-authoritarian and self-governing tension long rooted in numerous peoples' practices (Indigenous, Roma, and others), which extend beyond the Enlightenment, the colonial,

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and modernist shortcomings associated with classical anarchism (Anonymous, 2021; Dunlap, 2021a, 2022). We might note, however, that the anti-colonial solidarity, inspiration, and accompliceship from anarchists remain consistently underestimated (Ó Donghaile, 2010; Ferretti, 2017, 2018; Khan (2013); de Laforcade & Hirsch, 2020; Zimmer, 2017). This underestimation proves useful to authoritarian opponents and helps to cement a partially false stereotype.

Degrowth demonstrates an anarchist tension, even if muddled by academic bureaucracies, smothered by statism, and circumscribed by extractive technologies. Reference to anarchism emerges, for example, by Treu and colleagues, who acknowledge that:

> *there is also a split within the left, between the progressive productivists who —in the tradition of the socialist and social democratic labor movement— focus on growth, productivity gains and redistribution and tend to prefer vertical forms of organization, and those movements that, closer to the tradition of anarchism, rely on self-organization from the bottom up and fundamentally question economic growth.* (2020, p. 9)

While there remain contentions about anarchism, or anarchy, even being associated with 'the left' (Anonymous, 2013/2024, 2014; Benally, 2023; Black, 1997), this "split within the left" persists within degrowth—particularly in the tensions between 'top-down/bottom-up' approaches or authoritarian/anti-authoritarian and statist/anti-statist orientations. This tension, as many prominent scholars in the domain acknowledge (Fitzpatrick, 2024; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Barlow et al., 2022; Trainer, 2024), remains an enduring fault line within degrowth. While horizontal and, to various degrees, anarchist aspirations are prevalent within degrowth (Fitzpatrick et al., 2025), ideas of anarchy and anarchism depart from degrowth with "top-down" statist and authoritarian strategies.

References to anarchism, and faint notions of anarchy, emerge with reference to horizontality, decentralization, mutual aid, direct democracy, and autonomy. "Horizontalist, direct democracy and grassroots power-sharing streams are influenced by anarchism and gender politics," explain Liegey and Nelson (2020, p. 86). While also recognizing the complementary autonomist politics of Cornelius Castoriadis and John Holloway, Liegey and Nelson (2020, p. 90) contend that "the degrowth movement feels freer and more confident in experimenting with a decentralized and horizontal network[s] of small collectives and projects" (see also Nelson, 2025). Anarchist communist conceptualizations of "agro-industrial federation, based on voluntary co-operation between producers to meet social needs" (see Roman-Alcalá, 2025), as Exner and colleagues (2020, p. 162) show, inspire degrowth's flirtation with the abolition of money. The "degrowth ethos," Toro (2018) reminds us, is firmly rooted in the work of French geographer, and early ecological anarchist Élisée Reclus. Critiques of development, anti-utilitarianism, ecological harmony, reconceptualized meanings of well-being, bioeconomics, and (environmental) justice are themes well established by Reclus and taken up by degrowth.

In Barcelona, the anarchist influence on squatting is often minimized (Debelle et al., 2017), separated from degrowth (Cattaneo, 2013), or completely ignored (Kallis et al., 2020). While Dunlap (2021b, 2024a) has recognized this absurdity, Salmansperger (2023) challenges this tendency toward statist legalization. The academic nature of degrowth frequently separates anarchism not only from squatting but also from anti-colonialism, eco-feminism, and anti-capitalism. Not only do anti-authoritarian ideas lead back to anarchists and Indigenous people (Graeber & Wendgrow, 2021), whether in ideological label or ethos (Rapp, 2012; Springer, 2016), but Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974/2020), who coined the term "ecological feminism," was also an anarchist feminist. Anarchism is an embedded pillar within (anti-authoritarian) feminism(s) although with minimal reference (cf. Dark Star, 2012; Bottici,

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2014). The analytical gaze, dissecting and selectively drawing on anarchist ideas, ignores all the women fighters who have practiced anarchy, placing their liberty and political practice above limited gendered framing and categorization (Beniamino, 2019; Cotlenko, 2018; Goldman, 1911/2009, 1924/2017; Iaroslavskaia-Markon, 2020; Weir, 2016). This, however, remains a contentious topic not only within feminism but also within queer interventions (Bæden, 2014; Bey, 2021). This indicates political positionality and conceptions of liberation as contested issues, struggling against "right" fascism and "left" dictatorships. Degrowth, unfortunately, joins the list of those selectively appropriating or collapsing anarchist ideas into a new (academic) label while stripping them of their history and combative essence. This academic conduct, of course, works against anarchist positions and struggles.

The state is an inherent enemy of anarchists, carrying painful historical baggage from divide-and-conquer strategies against horizontal societies (Gelderloos, 2017; Rapp, 2012; Scott, 2009) to more explicit bloody ideological battles with the bourgeoisie, Bolsheviks/Leninists, and fascists in Russia, Ukraine, Spain, and beyond (Berkman, 1925/2009; Christie, 2008; Cotlenko, 2018; FoAB, 2017; Iaroslavskaia-Markon, 2020). The state, Peter Gelderloos (2017, p. 14) explains, is "a centralized, hierarchical system of political organization based on coercion and alienation" that deprives "each person's ability to decide over their own lives," and suppresses "self-organization so that power could be centralized, delegated, and institutionalized" (see also Bakunin, 1873/1990). States have ancient precedents (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021; Scott, 2017). Meanwhile, Ince and Barrera de la Torre (2024) make a distinction between statism and the state. Statism, Ince and Barrera de la Torre (2024, pp. 148–149) contend, "underpins the way states establish and maintain their centrality in the ordering of society and the cosmos through the repetition and deepening of certain forms, discourses, symbols, and rationalities associated with state rule." Statist logics circulate around political control and

economic production, mapping territories, promoting sedentary living (e.g., terrorizing nomadic groups), political legibility (e.g., registration), domestic extraction (e.g., taxation, fines), developing coercive power (e.g., police, military, paramilitaries), and preventing the overthrow of statist political structures (Kilcullen, 2010; Scott, 1998). These logics also involve disarming populations in exchange for providing them security, and securing a monopoly of violence (Virilio, 1990; Weber, 1904-1920/1946), deciding citizenship, organizing the economy, and urban planning to extractive develop states.

The state, and the related politics propping it up, remain a central concern within degrowth and beyond. As Brand (2022, p. 49) notes, "An anarchist position would argue that the state needs to be abolished." He continues, "I agree that this applies to the capitalist state, but I think that some form of apparatuses to administer things, to give social life certain rules and a certain level of stability will remain important" (2022, p. 49). Radical municipalism (Bookchin, 1991, 2015), bioregionalism (Sale, 1985/2000), and The Simple Way (Trainer, 2024) are anti-authoritarian programmatic approaches systematically ignored by degrowth. Meanwhile, Clastres (1974), Scott (2009), Gelderloos (2017, 2022), and Graeber and Wengrow (2021) provide other examples of communal organization and cautions for colonial/statist absorption. Gelderloos (2024), moreover, identifies affinity groups, federations, and syndicates as important anti-authoritarian organizational technologies that respond to specific needs and can be developed in unlimited ways. Acknowledging D'Alisa and Kallis's (2020) Gramsci approach to the state, Fitzpatrick (2024, p. 201) recognizes how "they reduce political institutions down to government" and "imply that humans are not capable of experimenting with social organization" as an inadequate response. This is why Brand (2022, p. 50) recognizes, "The debate about degrowth's strategic orientation thus needs a strategy for the state."

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The state, political history, and learning from the past

The "big tent" approach to include anyone degrowth can—whether under university mandate or for movement building—discards political history and positionality and consequently, creates the incoherent approach criticized by Trainer (2024). "A reductionist dismissal of anarchism accompanied with pleas for state intervention is not uncommon," Fitzpatrick (2024, p. 190) rightfully argues, adding that "the degrowth movement must incorporate an anarchist critique of the State that unites the means and ends of degrowth" (2024, p. 198). While greater engagement with anarchist history, theory, and practice would be welcomed, profound concern emerges when words are taken out of their political context and theater. Oddly calling Michel Foucault a "statist,"[1] Fitzpatrick and colleagues (2025, pp. 201–203) wrongfully present Vlademir Lenin as anti-statist and write, "In fact, Pëtr Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Vlademir Lenin (1870-1924) were comrades despite ideological differences who often discussed the strategies and tactics of social revolution." While not incorrect—Lenin condemned the Tsarist state and discussed with Kropotkin—this, however, ignores Bolshevik/Leninist political strategy and the October–December 1917 political coup d'état they performed (McKay, 2019). The Bolsheviks and Lenin, once in power, quickly eliminated freedom of speech and association, formed political police (Cheka), created forced labor prisons (GULAG), and, most of all, executed the "Red Terror" to eliminate the anarchists, Socialist Revolutionaries (SR), and other political enemies (Berkman, 1925/2009; FoAB, 2017; Goldman & Berkman, 1924/2013; Mattick, 1978/2007; McKay, 2019; Ryan, 2012). This,

[1] While people try and tar Foucault as neoliberal for his anti-statism and individualist approach, his political activity and works suggest affinity with insurrectionary anarchism or post-anarchism (see Newman, 2003, 2022; Vásquez, 2020).

contrary to the myths propagated by Trotsky and Stalin (McKay, 2019), was all accomplished well before Lenin's death in 1924.

Degrowth and "left" and "right"-wing academics, either purposely or by mistake, tend to conflate political tendencies and ignore the insidious acts that led to the imprisonment, torture, and execution of autonomous Marxists, SRs, and anarchists (Berkman, 1925/2009; FoAB, 2017; Goldman & Berkman, 1924/2013; Mattick, 1978/2007; McKay, 2019; Ryan, 2012). Unlike Trainer (2024), we should recognize a difference between socialists and communists—the latter representing Bolsheviks/Leninists, Stalinists, or Marxist-Leninists-Maoists (MLM). The recuperation of socialism by authoritarian communists deserves greater attention, which Noam Chomsky (2005, 2015) confronted in texts and public speeches. The political maneuvering, deceit, and terror executed against anarchists and socialists from the Russian Revolution to the Spanish Civil War have rippling and continuing consequences for discussions not only for political strategy but also for clarifying political positionality (Christie, 2008; Cotlenko, 2018; McKay, 2019), which has relevance for degrowth. Political confusion reverberates through degrowth (and academia), particularly around the reality of the state, the ideas of seizing it, and its history, which deserves a brief mention.

The cooptation of the Russian Revolution began when the Bolsheviks actively deceived everyone with the *Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia* (Lenin & Stalin, 1917/2006), which claimed to: (1) abolish private property in the service of peasant self-determination; (2) give "equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia"; (3) grant "the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, even to the point of separation and the formation of an independent state"; (4) abolish "any and all national and national-religious privileges and disabilities"; and (5) "free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia." This declaration, unfortunately, was a ruse. The declaration contradicted the long-established po-

fronting state violence to herbal mutual aid and self-organized energy justice, to the gaps and contentions that certainly exist and require careful consideration.

This Special Issue is only the beginning of a larger conversation that brings the importance of anarchy and degrowth into sharper focus by drawing on lessons from anarchist and autonomous struggles to inform and deepen degrowth theory and practice. Anarchy remains neglected in favor of anarchism within the Special Issue, but this still furthers degrowth's anti-authoritarianism and struggle. Future avenues of research include how degrowth can support land defenders; advance anti-prison/abolition and border struggles; and advance total liberation struggles in general. This entails degrowth connecting with existing autonomous movements and joining an ecosystem of tactics with a concerted direct action praxis. Every degrowther should ask the central question, which remains open: *Can Degrowth be Dangerous?* This danger refers to degrowth presenting a challenge to extractivism, bureaucracies, city planning resembling prisons, surveillance culture, and products designed to poison everyone. The answer to this question, however, depends on degrowthers, the actions they take, and the accomplices they make.

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Conclusion: can degrowth be dangerous?

This Special Issue emerged from our frustration and disillusionment with degrowth. Largely institutionalized, degrowth makes robust claims of being a movement while demonstrating carelessness toward land defense struggles in Europe and beyond. This introduction has reviewed the intersection between degrowth and anarchy, highlighting the issue of the state and the political implications this has had, and continues to have, for anarchists and the wider political struggle against "growth." Considering this conversation, and the dire situation and lack of strategic development that Trainer (2024) has reminded us of, we offer the general framework of an ecosystem of tactics to be taken up by degrowth. This introduction, and this Special Issue, we hope, ignites degrowthers to develop a political praxis that refuses authoritarianism and takes an active part in resistance (outside work hours). While we worry that degrowth might become the new sustainable development, we offer this contribution to support and challenge the degrowth proposal.

Predictably, while handling this Special Issue, patterns emerged that we believe reflect broader trends within the degrowth discourse: anarchist principles within degrowth are (at best) mentioned but seldom integrated in a practical, meaningful way. Projects—especially in a depoliticised manner like Transitions Towns—are favored over autonomous (militant) land defense or remain marginalized. The appeal to anarchism from the initial submissions appears reduced to ideas of democracy, establishing cooperatives, and other prefigurative approaches, which are largely detached from anarchist critical debates and the antagonistic politics of direct action. Concepts like Universal Basic Income, though appealing to many, remain rooted in state-based mechanisms that highlight, again, the difficulty of moving beyond the state and (energy and material intensive) bureaucratic structures. The Special Issue, however, offers a broad spectrum of perspectives on anarchism and degrowth, ranging from con-

sitions of Lenin and the Bolsheviks (McKay, 2019). Mike Duncan summarizes the Declaration and political situation as follows:

> *The local village and the individual factory committee would wield most of the power, minority nationality groups would be completely autonomous [and] it was an inverted power structure that was practically drawn straight out of the pages of the anarchists. But while these decrees proliferated in the streets Lenin and the Bolsheviks simultaneously crafted the foundation of the opposite of all that: A highly centralized one-party dictatorship.* (2023, 29:46–30:13)

While this created internal dissension and protest from some Bolsheviks (e.g., Lev Kamenev), it took long for the socialist revolutionaries, autonomous Marxists, anarchists, peasants, and workers to combat the Bolsheviks and realize that Lenin would liquidate them. Anarchists were caught between nationalists, "White Terror" and "Red Terror." In response to the Bolshevik execution of seven anarchist insurgents, Ukrainian Maria Nikiforova began a propaganda and bombing campaign against the Bolsheviks in late Summer–Fall 1919 (Cotlenko, 2018). During Lenin's political rule, between December 1917 and February 1922, conservative estimates suggest "28,000 executions (excluding [civil war] battlefield deaths) on average per year directly attributed to the Soviet State," explains James Ryan (2012, p. 2), which was "a sharp contrast with the approximate total figure of 14,000 executed by the Russian Tsarist regime between 1866 and 1917." The pathway towards Stalinism, which eventually liquidated all Bolsheviks and anyone questioning the regime, soon gave way (Avrich, 1973; McKay, 2019; Ryan, 2012). "[T]he Bolshevik system, unlike the Nazi, never admitted theoretically that it could practice terror against innocent people," explains Hannah Arendt:

> Russian practice, on the other hand, is even more 'advanced' than the German in one respect: arbitrariness of terror is not even limited by racial differentiation, while the old class categories have long since been discarded, so that anybody in Russia may suddenly become a victim of police terror. (1951/1962, p. 6)

This is why, among other reasons, Marxist Otto Rühle (1939/2017, p. 207) declared: "The struggle against fascism begins with the struggle against Bolshevism." Political position, tensions, and differences are noteworthy and have significant consequences for political strategy and for how people approach the state. Bakunin (1873/1990) predicted Leninism and Stalinism from the early works of Marx, which is why Noam Chomsky (2005, p. 206) declares: Bakunin's prediction "must be one of the few predictions 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." Degrowth, and other political tendencies, should not take the state and political strategy lightly but should critically reflect not only on the material and energy throughput necessary for the creation and maintenance of the state but also on the psycho-political and power implications entailed by the state apparatus. Alongside being anti-state, anarchists have always been prison abolitionists (Goldman & Berkman, 1924/2013; Kinna, 2025), which raises questions concerning degrowth scholars' position on the police and prison industrial complex.

There is more embedded in degrowth's position towards the state than is currently considered. Anarchists have a defined political position and tension against the oppressive circumstances of the present, which does not or should not take lightly the statist forces using, betraying, and crushing them to establish bloated bureaucracies to facilitate factories, mines, police, prisons, institutionalization, and, in one word, "growth." Sadly, while ecosystems have degraded, technologies and populations have advanced and grown,

examines the intersection of anarchist resistance, solidarity practices, and degrowth, arguing that capitalism's reliance on various forms of violence (systemic and structural) creates injustice and alienation. The piece focuses on acts of solidarity, particularly within Internationalism and Palestine solidarity, not only as a form of resistance but also as a vital survival strategy against the pervasive violence of global capitalism. The article captures a powerful call to rethink understandings of violence through the lens of solidarity and revolutionary love, and their implications for anti-capitalist struggles, such as degrowth. As Marquardt contends, "The anarchist perspective of collective disobedience against the State, combined with an ethics of love for each other and the world, are powerful ways to fight against indifference and build new affective registers of belonging needed for liberation."

Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Degrowth Group (2025) addresses the potential threat of far-right co-optation of degrowth, a risk that has largely been overlooked. Through the lens of "fascist creep," the authors expose various ways in which far-right groups (e.g., political parties) in Europe are already using ecological arguments to pursue their agenda or justify oppressive narratives (and attacks) with concerns over ecological destruction. Beyond the (physical) dangers of this, the authors also expose the vulnerabilities within degrowth that could be exploited by said groups. Considering that fascism can arise from and within everyday conditions—and assessing the real dangers of this—the authors argue that "embedding antifascism in a movement such as degrowth is a much larger project than merely preventing narrative co-optation." Thereby, they urge to integrate antifascist tactics into degrowth, starting by presenting an 'Antifascist Degrowth Reporting Tool' that documents, monitors, and communicates the fascist creep in degrowth, as a first step in resisting such efforts and in sharpening antifascist values within degrowth.

practices like re-inhabiting spaces, they conclude, "opens space for breaking with notions of linear time, progress, Anthropocentrism, and Eurocentrism, which is useful in strategic considerations on how to dismantle colonial relations of appropriation."

Continuing with the theme of land defense, Alyssa Mendez (2025) turns attention to the Agrafa Mountains of Greece, where communities are resisting industrial-scale wind energy projects. In doing so, the article exposes the tensions between climate mitigation strategies and the defense of land and wilderness, highlighting the disconnect between abstract, techno-scientific climate "solutions" and the grounded realities of ecological destruction. Mendez explores the tensions between climate justice and wilderness conservation and challenges the discourse for its insufficient attention paid to the land. By engaging with Agrafa's resistance, Mendez captures how activists resist the false binary between fossil fuels and renewables, which (usually) leads to a subordination of land to broader climate goals. Instead, activists focus their aim to address the root causes of ecological crises, which aligns with the systemic critiques of degrowth. Although they contend that "land defenders might be wary of the language of degrowth, degrowth advocates should nonetheless recognize the common ground that they share with communities struggling against the expansion of resource frontiers." Furthermore, Mendez argues, degrowth scholars should move beyond intellectual solidarity to meaningful support for ongoing land struggles, which entails active participation, public amplification, and strategic alignment. At a time when new energy infrastructures are rapidly rewriting geographies of extraction, Mendez leaves degrowth with a clear imperative of participation and active solidarity.

Organize to resist

Franca Marquardt (2025), in their perspective piece on *Confronting violence: Towards an insurgent, internationalist degrowth,*

the political chessboard among nationalist, fascists, liberals, (various) Marxists, Indigenous (autonomists/anarchists), and (various) anarchists—or between statism and anti-statism—has not changed. While Trainer's (2024) concerns regarding degrowth are correct, we might note that the political categorization (e.g., raising awareness by 'turning away') and disparaging disposition toward direct action is where we depart. We, instead, suggest the importance of developing an ecosystem of tactics, which recognizes the dire situation, and transcends top-down/bottom-up dichotomies and regards the state as a powerful force akin to the "ring" in *Lord of the Rings* novels and film.

Ecosystem of tactics

The federated anarchist-communist permaculture approach advocated by Trainer (2024) deserves serious consideration. Developing, advancing, and practicing Trainer's (2024) proposal in rural, suburban, and urban contexts, linked with radical municipalism and bioregionalism (Andreucci et al., 2025; Bookchin, 1991, 2015; Sale, 1985/2000; Trainer, 2018), represents a long-term avenue for degrowthers to practice and develop. We agree, moreover, that "to implement and enjoy here and now" with (anarchist) prefigurative initiatives,[2] such as gardening and transition towns, when they are politically motivated and established as educational devices (Trainer, 2024, p. 209)—not only as gardening—is an important approach to develop incremental praxis. While The Simple Way deserves engagement, we break from Trainer's (2024) categorization and, considering their brief reference to Zapatistas and Rojava, contradictory position on militant direct action.

Engaging with Erik Olin Wright's terms, the categorizations Trainer (2024) responds and/or employs (e.g., raising awareness by 'turning away') departs from anarchist and social movement stud-

[2] On Prefiguration, please read Uri Gordon (2017).

ies, and, more so, from conversations outside academia (Anonymous, 2021; Gelderloos, 2007, 2013). Trainer (2024, p. 409), moreover, disparages direct action, saying that "ruptural strategies can promise only struggle and danger, at least in the near future."

His perspective feels painfully disconnected from the anarchist movement (outside of Australia) and quickly dismisses the legitimate, and tactically necessary desire to damage, stop, or, at the least increase the insurance policies for banks, extraction sites, and urban developers, to name a few. Trainer (2024), however, is not wrong to suggest that direct action will create struggle and danger, yet ignoring direct action and pre-emptively burying the militant hostilities not only belies the faith—like Karl Marx—that the state will just wither away—which it will not—but also neglects the necessity of self-defense against violent impositions on people and territories. As the Revolutionary Degrowth Group (this issue), among others, know, fascism, extractivism, patriarchy, the state, and capitalism will not just "go" or wither away. People need to work toward this, and the success of this will depend on how people act, and how the ecosystem of tactics develops.

Before delving deeper into an ecosystem of tactics, we should note that Trainer (2024) and degrowth deserve a more sophisticated treatment of direct action and militant struggle, especially in the age of extreme-right politics, political violence, war, artificial intelligence, land/water grabbing, and so on. Recognizing the different methods of communication and escalation with "propaganda by the deed" certainly has a place in struggles against statism, capitalism, and for autonomy. Given the academic nature of degrowth, an easy first step would be to recognize and engage with discussions by Peter Gelderloos (2013, 2020, 2022), Eric McBay (2019a, 2019b), Klee Benally (2023), and Ben Morea (2025). This would include examining magazines such as *325*, *Return Fire*, *Tinder Box*, and many more. As discussed above, the histories, debates, and—in the case of the Russian Revolution—purposeful erasure of history are not properly recognized (Christie, 2008;

and build capacity to transform a system that most people are still conditioned to justify.

Struggles converge

Drawing on ethnographic research with the anti-mining struggle of Lützerath in Germany, Elena Salmansperger and Elīna Turbina (2025) offer a dual intervention to the degrowth discourse: first, through a critical reflection of media manipulation and psychological warfare in the service of green growth; and second, through a rethinking of how degrowth scholarship relates to autonomous and anarchist struggle. Applying an (eco)anarchist lens, the authors argue that state-corporate media plays a central role in "manufacturing consent" for green industrial expansion and reveal how dominant narratives strategically pacify dissent and normalize ecological destruction. Against this backdrop, the paper foregrounds the practice of *re-inhabiting*, the act of physically and symbolically reclaiming land from extractive development, as a form of radical presence that challenges dominant narratives of reform and progress. Here, the empirical context of Lützerath exemplifies re-inhabiting modes of grassroots resistance aligned with anarchist traditions of direct action, mutual aid, and horizontalism. Crucially, Salmansperger and Turbina (2025) critique degrowth research that often seeks to evaluate or "certify" grassroots struggles based on their compatibility with degrowth ideals, resulting in tendencies that risk depoliticizing autonomous struggles by instrumentalizing them as case studies for degrowth theory. Instead, the authors call for a re-politicization of empirical engagement in which, through upward learning, the historical and political specificity of resistance is honored, rather than having academic categories forcefully imposed. This reorientation, they argue, offers not only a more solidaristic approach but also strategic insights for degrowth to engage with and fight against media propaganda models of green capitalist ideology. Cherishing

on social and ecological health." This work thus invites degrowth scholars to critically reflect on epistemic and political assumptions embedded in energy and democracy organizing and to center anti-authoritarian and place-based approaches.

From yet another angle, Antonio Roman-Alcalá (2025) explores the entangled relationships between anarchism and degrowth, through the context of food sovereignty, considering both their possibilities and contentions. Through a series of grounded reflections, they ask: What is anarchism good for?—in relation to degrowth and food sovereignty—and where might it fall short? Despite no easy answers, Roman-Alcalá argues that anarchism deserves greater attention "as an animating ontological philosophy and inclination, and as a force for concrete political organizing that can strengthen social movements generally." The paper outlines key contributions anarchism makes to degrowth and food sovereignty: from direct action that disrupts infrastructures of growth and defends territories, to building autonomous food systems and affective local ties and to revealing already existing alliances between degrowth, anarchist praxis, and food sovereignty. At the same time, Roman-Alcalá (2025) in his article critically examines anarchism's limits, particularly its reduced traction in contexts marked by "politics of normalcy," where the absence of visible crisis can obscure the appeal of anti-statist politics. Still, even for those who are not ready to "let go of the state," Roman-Alcalá contends that anarchism remains a vital tool for organizing in the present and for keeping degrowth grounded in action, rather than in abstract policy. By interrogating the viability of anarchist strategy and the assumptions behind state-led degrowth, this contribution challenges readers on all sides: those who place their hopes in state action and those who resist it but struggle to chart clear pathways to mass mobilization. The critique of the state, and its implications for degrowth and food sovereignty, offers as many insights as questions about how to move forward

McKay, 2019). This research and study, moreover, could extend beyond debates into understanding the evolution of the Black Panthers into Black Anarchists (Ervin, 1979/2021) and the different politics and experiences of Revolutionary Cells/Rote Zora (Smith & Moncourt, 2009), the Angry Brigade (Carr, 2008), the Tupamaros (Gilio, 1972), the Weather Underground (Berger, 2006), the George Jackson Brigade (Burton-Rose, 2010a, 2010b), Direct Action (Hansen, 2002), and other Latin American action groups and their fates (Kolh & Litt, 1974). This, moreover, extends to the more recent Earth Liberation Front/Informal Anarchist Federation (Best & Nocella, 2006; Loadenthal, 2017; Nocella et al., 2019) and to the debates and concerns regarding even claiming actions. This study, however, cannot be separated from praxis, from developing skills, and from a managerial degrowth intelligentsia who do not understand or know the project of direct action and sustained struggle, whether illegalist or "above ground." Understanding the politics and evolution of these groups would certainly apply to taking ideas of degrowth strategy seriously and moving outside the halls of the EU Parliament.

The proposition of degrowth invites transformation and struggle, which means taking seriously what this transformation will look like and what it means to appropriate the label of "movement." To understand the depths of this struggle, and also to maximize inclusion, we advocate an "ecosystem of tactics." This term emerges from the "Stop Cop City" struggle in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, fighting against the destruction of the Weelaunee Forest for the construction of an urban warfare training facility and film lot (Herskind et al., 2025; Kass, 2025). The idea of an ecosystem of tactics resonates with Alfredo M. Bonanno's (1998) concept of "permanent conflict," which in the meanwhile has spread to other struggles in the US (Baller & Bell, 2024) and remains implicit within struggles across the world (Bosworth, 2022; Brock, 2020a, 2020b; Chua & Bosworth, 2023; Dunlap, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2024b; Gilbert, 2024; MTC, 2018; Tornel, 2023; Wilson, 2023; Zibechi,

2008/2012, 2022/2024). Placing greater emphasis on established communities, Raúl Zibechi's (2008/2012, p. 268) concept of "peoples" or "societies-in-movement" describes large-scale uprisings that transcend the (Western-centric) notion of social movement and expresses the large-scale formation of an ecosystem of tactics.

The idea of building, or naturally forming, an ecosystem of tactics emerges as a reaction to a diversity of tactics (IGD, 2023). Recognizing how a diversity of tactics qualitatively expands beyond the simplicity of nonviolence, Peter Gelderloos (2013, p. 237) explains how the concept emerged from protest mobilizations "that attracted people who would use very different, sometimes incompatible tactics" and thus "developed primarily as a practical but limited framework for planning a multiform protest space where nonviolent blockaders, peaceful marchers, and Black Bloc saboteurs can all take to the streets causing the maximum disruption without stepping on one another's toes." The diversity of tactics, in Gelderloos' (2013, p. 237) words, "allowed people to choose their form of participation" and "[a]lthough a diversity of tactics framework allows more room for debate than nonviolence, it still tends to a limited debate in a spirit of relativistic pluralism." A diversity of tactics was incapable of discussing NGOs, politicians, and other political practices critically, or strategically, as it was designed as a "protest framework" (Gelderloos, 2013, p. 237). A diversity of tactics is limited to debating and to elites, whereas an ecosystem of tactics is built by or emerges from community to respond and to continually grow and develop beyond movement impasses and repression. This means degrowing state capitalism and (re)growing an ecosystem of tactics.

An ecosystem of tactics, instead of a protest mobilization, seeks to territorialize and develop in place. It is an attempt, despite political (and other differences), for people to employ various tactics with informal or relative unity within a struggle against a system (e.g., the state and capitalism) or a specific project or infrastructure (e.g., a police warfare center, a bank, or animal testing laboratories).

degrowth pathways, not only through material commoning but also through social and relational practices rooted in responsibility, friendship, and reciprocity.

In the second contribution, Nishikant Sheorey (2025) explores the hypothesis that restructuring energy systems according to anarchic principles could serve as a key driver of broader systemic degrowth, particularly by reducing the metabolic throughput of societies and undermining capitalist commodity-driven models. By focusing specifically on electricity, Sheorey highlights how the social and ecological impacts of its production are uniquely shaped by logics of control, accumulation, and commodification. As they write, "while the harnessing of energy has always been an element of all life processes, the production of electricity, especially as it exists today, is somewhat unique in both its social and ecological impacts." The author links material accumulation to the accreditation of social power, extending beyond capitalism to critique the state and hierarchical social formations more broadly, and criticizing how dominant degrowth discourses (at times) reproduce colonial epistemologies in their overemphasis on technocratic, policy-driven, and statist solutions. "Far too often," they note, "academic discourse on degrowth perpetuates those colonial mindsets through advocacy for techno-managerial solutions and epistemic hierarchy," with state policy and legality acting as prime examples. In response, Sheorey engages with the emerging literature on "new energy spaces" to illustrate how alternative, locally rooted energy initiatives can challenge dominant modes of production, consumption, and governance, noting their transformative potential to challenge extractivism and accumulation for their frequent "anti-capitalist, anti-statist, and decolonial elements." By engaging ideas of anarchism and degrowth, Sheorey provides "food for thought" regarding the organization of energy development and evokes a vision of energy systems utilizing "forms of ownership and governance that do not allow for the centralization of control … [but] focus

examines these intersections and applies them to two struggles: coal mining (and their media) in Germany and wind turbines in Greece. The third section advocates for the confluence of illegality and anti-fascism with degrowth. These articles challenge and connect degrowth with already existing complementary political movements, and further develop its values in both research and political positions.

Discussions and interventions

In their contribution, Michelle Glowa (2025) offers a powerful intervention into the politics of care and commons through the lens of mutual-aid herbalism. Grounded in an anarcha-feminist framework, Glowa examines grassroots herbalists' relationships to solidaristic care and land, embodied resistance, and how care of plants creates both symbolic and material alternatives to capitalist medical and property systems. Herbal mutual aid, as the author shows, is not only a site of alternative health provision but a practice of transformative commoning, challenging commodification, and ownership through everyday practices of collective care. Situating these efforts within broader constellations of care, Glowa reminds us that "herbal mutual aid efforts offer a counterweight to the heaviness of a world in crisis which can animate our movements." Examples such as herbalist disaster relief and social solidarity projects underscore how herbalism cultivates collectivized care and community resilience, contributing to decommodified health autonomy and building an essential element in envisioning degrowth futures beyond the extractive and individualized current health systems. As Glowa writes, "herbalism can act as a complement and a first line of defense," not only medically but politically, offering tangible ways to unsettle dominant property regimes and capitalist biomedical systems and to pursue autonomy, solidarity, and interdependence. This intervention further highlights how land relations are central to

"So it's not a bunch of things working against or in-spite of each other, it's several tactics working in conjunction and in relation to each other," explains a Weelaunee Forest defender (IGD, 2023). Explaining an ecosystem of tactics, this forest defender continues:

> *Everything from the Muskogee stomp dance to marches of preschoolers to leafleting the community old-school style, to windows being smashed, to people building treehouses in the forest and refusing to move. [It's] punk shows and dance parties and religious services and garden planting…and a lot of these things are difficult for some people to understand why they matter; why they're connected to each other, but it's important to understand that we have to reach every aspect of human society.* (IGD, 2023)

Despite differences—real, imagined, or constructed—the idea is to recognize a common struggle and a place for every type of action and organizational activity. This flirts with Trainer's (2024) concern about education, but this should not exclude propaganda by the deed as a form of communication and education—teaching people and businesses that some activities and infrastructures are unacceptable. This, we must recognize, is a matter of self-defense, especially with the onset of ecological catastrophes and classical and technological authoritarianism (Sovacool & Dunlap, 2022; Springer, 2016). Every action has its place, and it is about the informal connection between the parts that are ready to refuse the divide-and-conquer strategies (e.g., media and counterinsurgency) designed to sow doubt, fear, and generate confusion. It is about all actions, or tactics, spreading information, creating relationships, and causing material damage that advances the struggle, even if repression, fear, and collective punishment attempt to convince movements, or forming ecosystems, otherwise.

The ecosystem of tactics extends to everyone. This means developing and maintaining unity concerning common values

and goals—which might involve stopping a project or, in this case, transforming capitalist and statist society into degrowth societies. Achieving this may require people to recognize that statist law is often designed to maintain minimal social protections *to advance* capitalist extractivism. Developing an ecosystem of tactics means creating understanding and unity among peoples, classes, and non- and more-than-human beings (Pellow, 2014; Springer et al., 2021). This also means developing struggle, which extends to people already within institutions and/or those entering them, to actively create space for unmediated struggle—from universities to city halls (Dunlap, 2024b). Thinking of Ivan Illich (1978), this means 'rolling back' oppressive laws and actively creating situations of collective empowerment over institutional dependency. This, however, indicates the importance, for degrowth, of the historical reflections outlined above and of anarchist insights that recognize the psycho-political transformations that occur within people and societies once they become institutionalized.

Paraphrasing Bakunin (1873/1990) and other anarchists (Clark & Martin, 2013; Gordon, 2023; Perlman, 1985), institutions tend to change people more than people change them, no matter their convictions and commitments. Degrowth, in this case, is already institutionalized, despite people coming from various social movements, they struggle to expand beyond conferences and policy making. One may ponder then, can degrowth begin to develop an ecosystem of tactics syncing up with and/or implicitly supporting anarchist and autonomous movements? Or, will it repress criticism and combative action against a 'new' degrowth society that repackages (green) extractivism and advance authoritarianism? Degrowth was already slow to challenge the Green New Deal, and anarchists involved against high-voltage power lines (HVPLs) in Spain have rightly criticized this tendency as follows:

> *People advocating for degrowth usually do not bring a lot of new things to the table. They simply collect old contributions, rearrange ideas and join them together. They talk about the 8Rs, voluntary simplicity, etcetera. They never talk about the way this transition is supposed to happen and who is supposed to do it: What political class, groups, and individuals? If the same people [politicians, companies, etc.] who put us into this shit [socio-ecological catastrophe] are supposed to get us out of it, it is probably not going to happen. For the moment, it's just a declaration of intention, to support the future re-organization of capitalism. We share the idea that they defend—from their theoretical or academic ivory tower—but there is a big division in terms of practice.* (Dunlap & Laratte, 2022, p. 14)

The above statement remains a succinct assessment of degrowth and recurring conclusion from critics (Dunlap, 2024a; Rodríguez-Labajos et al., 2019; Toro, 2018, 2021). This introduction, and the Special Issue in general, seeks to encourage degrowth to develop an anti-authoritarian ecological praxis. Tactics, strategies, and actions are related to political philosophy and political projectuality—the desired prefigurative immanence and direction. Degrowth has yet to develop any "revolutionary" potential (see Nomad, 2025), but further joining or developing an ecosystem of tactics remains an open call for degrowthers.

Special issue contributions

The intersection between anarchism, degrowth, and anti-fascism advances, if slowly, with this Special Issue. The next section is organized into three sections: *Discussions and interventions*, *Struggles converge*, and *Organize to resist*. The first section presents theoretical discussions and interventions related to degrowth and anarchy in the context of anarcha-feminist herbalism, energy formations, and food sovereignty. The second section