



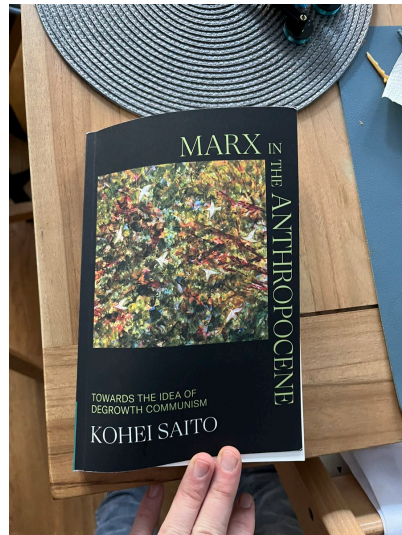
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There's obviously been a lot of buzz around degrowth in recent years, and the excitement around Saito's work is heartening. But most discussion remains at the theoretical level of how capital organizes and destroys the natural world. But what is the workers' viewpoint? 1 of x



In an article that @_a_dieterich and I have written, we've tried to address the problem that unions face in trying to implement an ecological unionism. As we understand it, workers are in a powerful position to transform how capital interacts with nature.

And this is because their organization can limit and transform how we produce and consume. This is the classical tension between what we call economic rationalization and social rationalization.

The former is concerned with organizing nature according to achieve maximum profits by means of maximum efficiency and maximizing and ever-expanding profits.

The latter with organizing nature according to needs deemed socially necessary (the ends of labor) through labor processes not determined by profit (the means of labor).

Social rationalization of nature can still cost the ecological systems human civilization is dependent on. If social rationalization ends in democratic control of labor and natural resources, regardless of ecological imperatives, then this is still part of the problem.

Put it more bluntly, to fight for anti-ecological social rationalizations of resources and labor is to always offset the problem elsewhere or to some other time.

Hence, ecological rationalization acts as a third pole of tension. It ultimately entails organizing resources in ways that are regenerative of ecological systems.

Social ecological rationalization of labor and natural resources therefore results in satisfying social needs and with as small a quantity of resources as possible defined by high use-value and durability.

In this way, the organization of labor and natural resources are in a three-way tension, as the balance between these three forces becomes politically (and naturally, depending on regeneration or exhaustion of natural resources) negotiated.

We expand on this schema — which we built off from André Gorz — some more in order to highlight combinations of these tensions, but that's not important for now.

So, how do unions combine social and ecological rationalization in their struggle?

Without thinking of the strategic obstacle to build consent within unions, @_a_dieterich and I argue that this will 1) necessitate unions joining in boundary struggles — struggles around what is worthy of remuneration.

2) unions will have to fight for the abolition, transformation, and expansion of entire fields of labor (a schema we borrow from @BueRubner) — meaning challenging capital's prerogative to organize a labor.

This provides a unique challenge. Yes, it's great that unions like Ver.di articulate public transportation worker struggles with the climate movement. But what about unions like IG Metall who cover industries that cover industries that will necessarily need to contract?

This also runs into the problem of the uneven and combined unfolding of class struggle. What if we are able to force capital to close industries down, and even retrain workers.... But the market doesn't absorb them?

3) this means we'd necessarily have to fight for redefining the role of the state and how provisioning happens. For this we borrow from @KeirMilburn, @alterurbanist, and @KaiHeron's idea of public common partnerships (PCPs).

In our view, PCPs provide an imaginative avenue to rethink unionism as workers organizations become decision-makers over economic processes along with scientific, community, consumer, and state actors.

PCPs ensure a democratic avenue to unroll a planned economy built around Universal Basic Services (UBS) that are then socially and ecologically rationalized. This our attempt to provide a bridge between now and the kind of economics @MGSchmelzer and co. argue for.

In this way, there's no way around unions taking a political position if they are defenders of the working class, or if they're just instruments through which workers expand their capacity to consume.

Yes, there are a number of strategic questions between here and there, but we are interesting in is defining and outlining the distinctive objectives of ecological unionism.

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