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SUSTAINABLE MASCULINITIES AND DEGROWTH

Pathways to Feminist Post-Growth Societies

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG PRAGUE

INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Junior Research Fellowship 2021

Institute for Politcal Ecology
Junior Research Fellowship 2021

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"The global social and environmental problems of today are gendered. They are products of the complex multiple and slow violences of masculinist social injustices and environmental degradation."

(Hedenqvist et al., 2021)

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Introduction

Economic growth, generally understood as the increase in the amount of goods and services produced per head of the population over a period of time, has become a determining feature of contemporary societies across the world. Though economic *growth* emerged into parlance relatively recently - first in the 1930s in the wake of the Great Depression as a way for Roosevelt to accurately assess the state of the American economy, then during the War to help mobilize for the war-time effort (Kallis, 2018, pp. 68-69) - its roots lie much further back in history. Indeed growth, though commonly measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is not a purely material metric: embodied in and associated to it are cultural, political and social processes, notions of what is 'good' for society, what ought to be prioritised and how these goods are to be achieved. For these reasons I follow Gareth Dale in perceiving growth as a *paradigm*:

> *the idea that 'the economy' exists as an identifiable sphere of society, that it possesses an inherent tendency to grow, that its growth is imperative, continuous (even, essentially, limitless), and that growth is an acknowledged social goal and a fundamental social good – even indeed the principal remedy for a catalogue of social ills. (Dale in Borowy & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 27)*

By conceiving economic growth in this broader sense we are better able to trace the origins of economic growth understood not as something static, but rather as *a process or drive*, which developed within a particular historical and social context, and was accordingly shaped by varying ideas, ideologies, and worldviews. Echoing Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts in the sciences, I posit that different competing notions and visions of the economy and society also existed during the growth paradigm-forming process, which were undermined and ultimately replaced by the growth paradigm becoming hegemonic in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In particular, I propose to examine this process with an emphasis on patriarchal norms and practises, to understand how gender norms and subjectivities evolved alongside it and what this might mean for masculine subjectivities in the future. Drawing on Feminist, Ecofeminist, Masculinities and Marxist Feminist literature from a range of different disciplines, I trace a historical view of how the growth paradigm emerged and drew on patriarchal forms of domination - the combination of which had destructive consequences on nature, women as well as men themselves.

Though much has already been said about the origins of economic growth (Borowy & Schmelzer, 2017; Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2018), and much written about the oppressive nature of patriarchal systems with respect to women and the environment (Eisler, 1995; Federici, 2004; Merchant, 2019; Mies, 2014; Shiva & Mies, 2014; Öcalan, 2013), efforts to integrate the two with the study of masculinities and the effects these processes have had on men

are few and far between (Hultman & Pulé, 2019; Pulé & Hultman, 2021; Eversberg & Schmelzer, 2019).
This paper will start by considering the more conventional view of the origins of economic growth as expressed by economic theorists and economic historians. I will then introduce the alternative degrowth view of growth's origins inspired by eco/feminism and social reproduction theory. In contrasting these two views and the absence of growth's exploitative nature in the former, I draw attention to a weak-point in the degrowth account of growth: notably that it continues to have an uneasy relationship with gendered critiques of growth. In the final section I offer an analysis of some of its key texts' treatment of eco/feminist literature, leading me to question why gender isn't always fully explored in degrowth.

I conclude that the influence of hegemonic masculinity continues to constrain much of degrowth's field of research and that a better understanding of hegemonic masculinity would be beneficial to the development of degrowth's aims and objectives, thus shedding light on possible pathways towards sustainable masculinities and post-growth futures.

A brief note on definitions

Just as I have clearly defined what I mean when speaking of economic growth, so too must I clarify how we will be using the terms 'patriarchy' and 'hegemonic masculinity' throughout. Here I understand patriarchy to mean

> *a form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organisation/structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalisation of sex-based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles. These institutions interconnect not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination based on real or perceived differences between humans, creating States that respond only to the needs and interests of a few powerful men.*
>
> *- "What Is Patriarchy?", Alda Facio*

Given the numerous different definitions of patriarchy, I have chosen to work with Alda Facio's definition for three key reasons. Firstly its emphasis on the procedural and thus evolving nature of patriarchy enables us to track how it has changed over the course of economic growth history. Second, its institutionalisation via various types of mechanisms and beliefs opens a broader perspective than traditional structural anthropologist definitions of patriarchy seen primarily as a factor of lineage for instance (Uberoi, 1995), thus serving to highlight its relevance to the present. Finally, its linking with other forms of domination (class/race/religion) enables a more intersectional analysis crucial to our purposes of examining how patriarchy and economic growth have also affected men.

Masculinities are not only plural, they can also mean different things according to historical context and place. Raewyn Connell coined the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ to highlight the fact that, although masculinities are plural, it is also true that one form of masculinity tends to overrule the others at any given point in time. According to Connell:

> *Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (2005, p. 77)*

This definition is particularly salient given its strong critical ability and resistance to co-optation. Much like degrowth remains skeptical of attempts at solving ecological issues under new brand names (green growth, sustainable development, circular economy etc...), new forms of masculinity can often be debunked when perceived through the lens of hegemonic masculinity (Martino, 2008).

The Origins of Economic Growth

Theories of economic growth are varied and can be found in disciplines across the board: from economics to political ecology, decolonial studies and feminist studies. It is unanimously agreed that economic growth began in Western Europe, sometime around the 18th century. The question I set out to answer then is: how and why did growth begin in 18th century Western Europe?

I will begin by outlining the principle theories of growth as found in economic history and theory to then compare them with ecofeminist, political ecology and degrowth literature. By doing so I hope to shed light on the often-hidden interlinkages between economic growth and patriarchy, pointing us towards the final chapter of this paper: the human and environmental costs of the growth-patriarchy nexus, and sustainable masculinities.

Economic accounts

Both economic historians and economic theorists have been interested in the origins of economic growth. Coming from different perspectives and often communicating in very different languages - that of narrative analysis and that of mathematical equations - these two groups have more often than not been at odds with one another although a sort of rapprochement has been in the making these past two decades (Diebolt & Haupert, 2019, pp. 36-37; Warsh, 2007, pp. 80-96).

1. Economic Theory

In economic theory it is generally agreed that economic growth (in its narrow sense of the increase in production of goods and services) began with the first industrial revolution in England in the late 18th century. Though several theories explaining what led to this growth have been posited and argued throughout the years certain factors can be said to be key. As Paul A. Samuelson (Gottesman et al., 2005; Skousen, 1997), author of the most influential textbook on economics, writes: “economists who have studied growth have found that the engine of economic progress must ride on the same four wheels, no matter how rich or poor the country. These four wheels, or factors of growth, are:

- Human resources (labour supply, education, skills, discipline, motivation)
- Natural resources (land, minerals, fuels, environmental quality)
- Capital (factories, machinery, roads, intellectual property)
- Technological change and innovation (science, engineering, management, entrepreneurship)” (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 503)

Debate among economists centres around the weighting attributed to any one factor, or the

sub-factors within each. Over the years economists have made substantial contributions to the theory of growth though perhaps none have been as influential as two of the subject's forefathers: Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus. The pair are generally accredited as precursors to economic growth theory and continue to have a lasting influence on the field (Barro, Xavier, 2004, p. 16; Jones, 2016, p. 8). They both pointed to land as a key resource enabling economic growth to prosper. Smith, imagining a Golden Age in which land was abundant and freely available to all, claimed that output would double for every doubling of the population. Economic growth then will continue unabated. Malthus realised that such growth would be limited however given that in the real world land is limited. The assumption that land was necessarily a fixed supply meant that "with new labourers added to fixed land, each worker now has less land to work with, and the law of diminishing returns comes into operation" (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 506). As the output per person diminishes, so too do living standards, until they are below subsistence level, leading to high mortality and population decline.

Though this reading of Malthus has been called into question, the so-called 'Malthusian view' entered popular parlance and has been severely criticised on the basis that it did not account for the two other wheels of growth, technological change and capital. As Samuelson and Nordhaus put it in their *Economics*:

> *Malthus's forecast was dramatically wide of the mark because he did not recognise that technological innovation and capital investment could overcome the law of diminishing returns. Land did not become the limiting factor in production. Instead, the first Industrial Revolution brought forth power-driven machinery that increased production, factories that gathered teams of workers into giant firms, railroads and steamships that linked together the far points of the world, and iron and steel that made possible stronger machines and faster locomotives. (2010, p. 507)*

This is the view that has come to dominate economic thinking ever since Malthus. Beginning with Keynesian economists Harrod and Domar in the late 30s and early 40s, the underpinnings of a modern theory of economic growth started to develop. According to the Harrod-Domar supply-side model, higher savings is the single most important factor in explaining economic growth. Such an understanding of growth would imply that governments ought to intervene in the economy to prioritise their savings rate above anything else in order to stimulate growth (Van den Berg, 2013).

Averse to notions of government-intervention in the economy and the instability inherent to the Harrod-Domar model, neoliberal economists were quick to challenge it. Beginning in the 1950s, Robert Solow argued that economic growth can be explained through the interaction of two kinds of factors: conventional economic inputs (such as capital and labour) and technology, improving at a steady rate "outside" the system (Solow, 1956; Warsh, 2007, pp. 90-91). Solow effectively removed the notion that a higher saving rate was crucial to growth and replaced it with technological progress, without which growth would eventually reach a standstill due to diminishing returns on capital (Van den Berg, 2013).

> *Where the Harrod-Domar model suggested a need for government policies to increase saving, raise taxes to fund government investment, and build publicly-owned infrastructure and industries, the self-equilibrating Solow model suggested that 'economic reforms' like business deregulation, flexible labor markets, privatisation, and lower taxes on income and profit were called for in order to increase innovation and technological change. (Van den Berg, 2013, p. 14)*

Economists have built on this view ever since. In particular, they have worked on building technological progress *into* the model. Solow, though recognising the importance of technological progress, had left it outside of his model, unexplained. Such 'exogenous' technological change meant that there was little economists could do in prescribing measures for growth. In the words of economists Barro and Sala-i-Martin, by following Solow we thus "end up with a model of growth that explains everything but long-run growth, an obviously unsatisfactory situation" (Barro, Xavier, 2004, p. 18).

This issue was only remedied decades later, when Paul Romer built on Solow's model in the 1990s. Romer claimed that both "capital accumulation and technological change account for much of the increase in output per hour worked" (Romer, 1990, p. 72) and, therefore, economic growth. Contrary to Solow however, for Romer "technological change arises in large part because of intentional actions taken by people who respond to market incentives" (Romer, 1990, p. 72), thus characterising the technological change as *endogenous*. This meant that long-term economic growth results from Research and Development activities specifically geared towards this end, and therefore "the long-term growth rate depends on governmental actions, such as taxation, maintenance of law and order, provision of infrastructure services, protection of intellectual property rights, and regulations of international trade, financial markets, and other aspects of the economy" (Barro, Xavier, 2004, p. 20).

This 'New Growth Theory' has since become favoured by the mainstream (Jones, 2016, p. 22), and can be found in both traditional textbooks such as Samuelson's as well as newer more 'sustainable' takes on the economy such as Jeffrey D. Sachs' *The Age of Sustainable Development*. As Sachs explains it:

> *In its simplest description, a technological breakthrough raises GDP, which in turn raises the incentives for innovation more generally, since a higher GDP offers the prospect of higher profits for new products and processes. These new innovations raise GDP still further, spurring yet more innovations. And the innovations combine in novel ways, giving rise to new kinds of equipment, machinery, industry, and manufacturing techniques. (2015, p. 80)*

The results of economic growth theory, from Solow up until now, have had a profound impact on economic policy worldwide. As the Nobel Prize committee put it upon awarding him with their prestigious award: "Every long-term report . . . for any country has used a Solow-type analysis." (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 508) The subsequent work of Romer and New Growth Theorists have enabled neoliberal economists to reach even fur-

ther into governmental policy-making, entering “the ongoing policy debates about tax subsidies for private research, antitrust exemptions for research joint ventures, the activities of multinational firms, the effects of government procurement, the feedback between trade policy and innovation, the scope of protection for intellectual property rights, the links between private firms and universities, the mechanisms for selecting the research areas that receive public support, and the costs and benefits of an explicit government-led technology policy.” (Romer cited in Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 511)

2. Economic History

Economic historians tend to deal more directly with our question of why economic growth started in Western Europe and not anywhere else in the world. Indeed, our concern with historical causes leads us to perceive economic theories of growth as lacking. In the words of one economists’ review of economic theories and histories of growth, the former are “formulated at such a high level of abstraction that they do not allow for the explanation, understanding, and interpretation of the course of growth processes in individual countries in different periods of their history” (Boehlke in Osińska, 2019, p. 13).

Economic historians’ concern with understanding why growth took off where it did, when it did, generally leads them to identify certain prerequisites of modern industrialisation, where the question of primary accumulation becomes key. Yet, as Alexander Gerschenkron has warned, identifying them is not as easy as it first seems: in comparing the characteristics of preindustrial society to those of a modern industrial economy, the latter are often “with a slight twist of the pen [...] declared to be “prerequisites” of industrial development” (Gerschenkron, 1962, pp. 31-32).

Nevertheless Walt Rostow’s seminal book *The Stages of Economic Growth* published in 1971 set the tone of the discussion. In it, Rostow described how Great Britain was able to transform itself from a traditional society typical of the medieval ages to become the first fully industrialised nation. Two factors were key to Britain’s take-off: “the discovery and rediscovery of regions beyond Western Europe, and the initially slow but then accelerating development of modern scientific knowledge and attitudes” (Rostow, 1990, p. 31). Colonialism enabled a widening of the market by bringing in primary materials like Jamaican cotton and West Indian dyes to be processed in Lancashire and Yorkshire and sold as marketable goods. Crucially, this happened in a context of competitive European states battling one another to retain market share to the point that “the concern of governments with trade transcended primitive concerns with military or even political power on the international scene” (Rostow, 1990, p. 32). This colonial trade paired up with new technological advances which, from Galileo to Newton, were more and more geared towards solving issues of fuel supply and machine efficiency, thus driving the take-off stage of growth.

Though Rostow’s view has been criticised as overly prescriptive and narrow - especially due to his focus on the case of Great Britain - on the whole his thesis on the preconditions to growth continued to bear significant influence on economic historians (Boldizzoni & Hud-

son, 2015, p. 26). Two decades after Rostow's publication, another influential volume of economic history, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, described growth's origins along very similar lines. For Kennedy growth emerged as "a dynamic process driven primarily by technical and economic progress under specific geographic and social conditions" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 16). Largely agreed with Rosto, he posited that competing European states, institutional support of international markets, colonialism, intellectual freedom and military technical advances all explain why Europe and not China or the Moguls, first experienced take-off growth. The emphasis shifts however, from the fruits of colonialism to the importance of military technology. According to Kennedy, Europeans developed the latter to a far greater degree than the Japanese, Moguls or Ming dynasty due to the highly competitive nature of the European continent in which no given nation was able to achieve a lasting monopoly over the rest (Kennedy, 2010, pp. 21-23).

Much of economic history has since been superseded by the New Economic History of the 1990s which cast aside the "artisanal" qualitative and ethnographic approaches of the old historians in favour of newer, more technical quantitative ones deemed "more elaborate" (Diebolt & Haupert, 2019, pp. vii-viii). As Peter Temin puts it: "New economic historians have turned their back on traditional historians and sought their place among economists" (2019, p. 43). The new economic historians, or cliometrics as the field is also known, shifts the emphasis mostly in terms of their tools of analysis, favouring quantitative econometric calculations and the use of statistics and mathematics (Fogel, 1966). In essence, this was an attempt to apply neoclassical economic theory to the study of history (Hudson, 2016).

According to Robert Fogel for instance, a vocal adherent of the New Economic History, the key to economic growth lies in relative price variations signalling opportunities for profit which stimulate technological innovation and thus growth (Lamoreaux, 2016; Diebolt & Perrin, 2016). Other such as Galor and Wiel have taken endogenous growth theory as a building block from which to re-write economic history and explain how the West transitioned out of the Malthusian trap. To them, "the acceleration in the rate of technological progress gradually increases the demand for human capital, inducing parents to invest in the quality of their offspring rather than in the quantity" thus leading to the take-off of sustained economic growth (Diebolt & Perrin, 2016, p. 190).

The advent of cliometrics has brought us full circle back to economic theories of growth. As mentioned earlier, these lacked historical grounding - as one critique put it: "Its models, starting from Solow (1956), merely establish a certain functional relation between inputs and output in a "state of the world" that is taken as given (exogenous, as it is said)" (Boldizzoni, 2011, p. 80). Depending on the observer, cliometrics either served as a helpful bridge between economic history and economic theory, or as a colonisation of history by neoliberal economics. Though historians initially reacted critically to this development, the publishing of Fogel and Engerman's inflammatory book *Time on the Cross* marked an end to their interest - effectively separating historians from cliometricians (Lamoreaux, 2016).

3. Policy Implications

The particular views of New Growth Theory and New Economic History have strong implications for public policy. As stated in Samuelson's *Economics*: "If technological differences are the major reason for differences in living standards among nations, and if technology is a produced factor, then economic-growth policy should focus much more sharply on how nations can improve their technological performance." (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 511)

Here it is important we distinguish two types of economies: those who industrialised early-on (broadly, the West) and those who did not. For in both cases the policy implications differ substantially. In the case of the former, the theories suggest that industrialised states will overwhelmingly benefit from gains in productivity given their already high levels of technological innovation. In the case of the latter the only way 'forward' is to continue improving their technological performance:

> *The master path remains one of market-driven capital-intensive growth in capitalist–liberal states, as pursued by the West over the past two or three centuries, and this is seen as the natural path towards development and modernisation. Qualitative and quantitative differences in the structure and performance of other parts of the world are seen as resulting largely from institutional constraints and distortions that have prevented them from following the normal route of development. (Boldizzoni & Hudson, 2015, p. 3)*

Jeffrey Sachs, a pioneer in sustainable economics, notes that industrialised and developing nations experience very different kinds of growth: endogenous growth in the West and what he terms "catch-up growth" for the rest whom, "for whatever reasons of history, politics, and geography lagged behind as the technological leaders charged ahead" (2015, p. 80).

Though it is true that only a handful of nations first shot to prominence through strong and sustained economic growth, the economic accounts of how and why that happened leave many stones unturned. Before prescribing the recipe for 'catch-up growth' we are inclined to deepen our understanding of 'endogenous' growth. Indeed, Solow and Romer were perhaps too quick to throw out Smith and Malthus' insights with respect to the importance of land. The fact that growth happened in the absence of any Malthusian Trap needn't attribute technological progress as the sole contributing factor. As we shall see, expanding the land and commodity frontier were absolutely key: growth was predicated upon the active impoverishment of what are today 'poorer nations', the destruction of ecosystems all across the world, and the exploitation of men and women both at home and in the colonies. Such an understanding of growth's origins implies a very different approach to policy making: 'catching up' to the West is less about investing in capital and technology and more about leveling out the playing field which continues to be heavily imbalanced. It is to these 'reasons of history, politics and geography' to which we now turn.

Degrowth accounts

Degrowth is heavily influenced by the fields of political ecology and ecofeminism - two large, varied and rich sources of critical analysis we can draw on in order to better understand the origins of endogenous growth. In particular, the subsequent analysis will use marxist and feminist political ecology, ecofeminism and social reproduction theory as tools with which I will elaborate two arguments: firstly, economic accounts of growth are deeply flawed in their analysis of the factors of growth because they omit information which might otherwise jeopardise growth. Secondly, economic growth relied on patriarchy as its mutually supportive bedfellow, suggesting that degrowth's objective to overcome the economic growth paradigm might not be achieved without overcoming patriarchy at the same time.

> *UNDERSTANDING economic change including everything from the rise of the Western world to the demise of the Soviet Union requires that we cast a net much broader than purely economic change because it is a result of changes (1) in the quantity and quality of human beings; (2) in the stock of human knowledge particularly as applied to the human command over nature; and (3) in the institutional framework that defines the deliberate incentive structure of a society.*
>
> *- Douglas North, co-founder of New Economic History (2005, p. 1)*

Though my reading of economic growth departs from very similar grounds as North's, the devil lies in the detail. Political Ecologists and Ecofeminists, though entire fields of study in their own right, nevertheless share a similar account of growth's origins which stresses the importance of three key factors or preconditions to growth, which can be read as re-interpretations of North's three points made above (Fraser in Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 23):

1. The availability of Nature as a source of 'productive inputs' and a 'sink' for production's waste (North's (2))
2. Governance functions performed by public powers (North's (3))
3. Social-reproductive activities of provisioning, caregiving, and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds (North's (1))

Crucially, and unlike the economic accounts above, these factors are perceived both historically and politically. The kinds of questions such theorists ask often have to do with power. Who exercised it, over whom? Who benefited and who didn't? This is a markedly different approach to the economic accounts of growth which, although acknowledging the role of imperial colonies for instance, mostly play down its importance and its impact on the territories colonised. This is arbitrarily justified under the guise that economic growth brought about many positive changes in the world. In the words of Douglas North: "there were losers—lots of them along the way—whose conditions deteriorated in the course of the changes described. But overall, the material conditions of human beings and the security of persons and property over a range of civil, political, religious, and economic activities improved" (2005, p. 137).

1. Nature as Source and Sink

To understand how and why growth began, we must look to the era which preceded the industrial revolution, known as the Early Modern Period (15th-18th centuries). This period saw huge social, political and philosophical changes which drastically changed humans' perception of nature, shifting from a relationship *with nature* to “one built on the principles of possession, extraction, commodification and ever-increasing productivity” (Hickel, 2020, p. 66) thus providing the material basis for economic growth. The animist beliefs in the agency and spirituality of nature were incompatible with the new capitalist demands made upon nature: “in order to possess and exploit something you must first regard it as an object.” (Hickel, 2020, p. 66)

Carolyn Merchant charts how this fundamental ontological change took place in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution,* in which she contrasts Medieval European norms and attitudes towards nature with those that arose during the Early Modern period. Up until 1500 humans relations with nature were organic, structured “by close-knit, cooperative, organic communities” (Merchant, 2019, p. 1). At the time two differing images of nature coexisted: one of “a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe” and another as “wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos.” (Merchant, 2019, p. 2).

It was this latter image which took over during the Early Modern period - a necessary shift to enable and socially sanction the denudation and exploitation of nature on a scale unparalleled in human history. Crucially, the imagery associated with Nature became more and more overtly misogynistic as emblematically characterised by Francis Bacon, forefather of the Scientific Revolution. Inspired by the witch hunts of his era Bacon likened the investigation of nature to the torture of witches, from which “a useful light may be gained, not only for a true judgment of the offenses of persons charged with such practices, but likewise for the further disclosing of the secrets of nature. Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object” (Bacon cited in Merchant, 2019, p. 168).

Science became the primary method with which Nature’s secrets were to be translated into gain and productivity, even if the gains were only short-lived. Thus, the cooperation and good land-management characteristic of premodern Europe gave way to widespread soil erosion and the decimation of European forests through overuse in the 16th and 17th centuries - a fact attributable to economic growth rather than population growth (Merchant, 2019, pp. 61-63). The more Europe’s forests were cut down and its topsoil depleted, the greater the need to find more forests and more land to use. As Patel and Moore put it: capitalism spreads via frontiers, sites where profit is siphoned to the point of utterly depleting the land only to move on to another (2017, pp. 29-30).

So long as the damages can be outweighed by the profits, such destruction continues unabated. Climate change, the direct consequence of human extraction and combustion of

fossil fuels which fuelled modern economic growth, is but one of the consequences of this ontological shift. Loss of biodiversity, air pollution, contaminated rivers, poisoned fish, ocean dead-zones…[1] as Merchant observed back in 1980: “The disruption of the forest ecosystem by the rise of early modern industry, coupled with the careless use and mismanagement of resources, bears striking parallels to current environmental issues and is illustrative of the fact that today's environmental crisis is not new in kind, only in degree” (2019, p. 67).

Economists ignore these changes in much the same way they ignore the destructive effects of a growth-based extractivist economy. It is not that Douglas North was wrong in highlighting “the stock of human knowledge particularly as applied to the human command over nature” as a precondition to growth. The problem is that he does not question what that process fully entails. If he did, he may have come to the conclusion that the command over nature for the sake of economic growth may not be desirable for the future of human societies.

2. Governance

The Early Modern oversaw the historic transition from feudal, pre-capitalist states to the foundation of the industrial modern state. By the 15th century feudal power was increasingly on the wane: “by some basic estimates indicating that between 1350 and 1500 a major shift occurred in the power-relation between workers and masters. The real wage increased by 100%, prices declined by 33%, rents also declined, the length of the working-day decreased, and a tendency appeared toward local self-sufficiency” (Federici, 2004, p. 62). Silvia Federici, in her work *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, argues that a new, more localised, autonomous and more democratic organisation of society was on the rise throughout Europe - a movement against which the state and wealthy elites did everything they could to overturn.

Far from being a ‘natural’ transition from feudalism to capitalism, this period is best characterised as one of struggle, dispossession and bloodshed. Federici builds on Karl Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation which describes the process through which capital was first able to be built up, able to then be invested and spur the engine of economic growth. As we saw above, the economic account highlights capital as one of the four key drivers of growth. Adam Smith himself inspired the term ‘primitive accumulation’ when he spoke of the period of ‘previous accumulation’ in which a group of hard-workers accumulated capital which they were then able to reinvest to their benefit.

For Marxist Political Ecologists though, this account ignores the historical reality of what happened: accumulation “entailed taking land, say, enclosing it, and expelling a resident population to create a landless proletariat, and then releasing the land into the privatised mainstream of capital accumulation” (Harvey, 2003, p. 149). This would be accomplished

1 https://ejatlas.org/

through violent enclosures at home (seizures of common land), and war, enslavement, and colonialism abroad. Indeed, it is doubtful that growth would have ever started in Western Europe were it not for the millions of acres of land enclosed in Europe, the countless acres colonised abroad, the millions of kilograms of silver and gold siphoned out of the Americas, the millions of slaves brought across the Atlantic and the trillions of dollars of taxes paid by the colonies into the colonising states' coffers (Hickel, 2020, pp. 51-53).

All of this was facilitated by governments who legalised (and thus expanded) the enclosures via Acts of Parliament in England for instance, by giving their crown's blessing to colonial 'voyages', by protecting colonial trade interests across the seas against the threats of marauding pirates and enemy ships, and by imposing strict taxation systems and export regulations ensuring that profits were redirected to the colonial overlords (Linebaugh, 2012). Or, as Parenti puts it, "The state must physically seize parts of the surface of the earth containing and controlling it militarily and legally. It must also open space with roads, canals, and ports, which are based on the scientific knowledge, good credit, and direct investment of public agencies. The state must also seize and open "nature" more abstractly, by knowing it and making it legible; that is, by encasing it within the techno-managerial apparatus of administration, science, and governance" (2015, p. 834).

Political ecologists refer to this as 'geopower', the state's control of a given territory which enables capital to enter and extract rents from it. Force will therefore be applied when resistance to such rents is expressed, perhaps nowhere better depicted by the state-led repression of the Luddites and Plebeian Protests of the 19th century (Thompson, 1966; Linebaugh, 2012; Schmelzer, 2021; Griffin & McDonagh, 2018). In the face of growing popular unrest "and a local defence of ancient right and custom which were threatened by privatisation, machinery, and enclosure" (Linebaugh, 2012, pp. 18-19) the state silenced dissent with as many tools as necessary. The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 prevented any political action while simultaneously legitimising their violent putting-down. High rewards offered by the courts for incriminating information served to divide communities and ultimately put hundreds to trial, to be imprisoned or shipped off to Australia in the best of cases and hung in the worse (Griffin & McDonagh, 2018). "Luddism", as E.P. Thompson put it, "ended on the scaffold" (Thompson, 1966, p. 495).

3. Social-reproduction theory

The forerunner to geopower is Foucault's concept of biopower, a concept which social reproduction theorists build upon in their history of the state's regulation and radical transformation of the role of women in society. For social reproduction theorists a third key factor underlying economic growth is the vast quantity of unpaid reproductive labour, traditionally done by women, which includes "housework, child-raising, schooling, affective care, and a host of other activities that serve to produce new generations of workers and replenish existing ones, as well as to maintain social bonds and shared understandings" (Fraser in Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 23). Indeed, such is the contribution of reproductive labour in enabling workers to go to work day in day out and thus sustaining the economy, economic

growth cannot function without it (Jaffe, 2020).

Though unpaid reproductive labour continues to underpin modern economic growth, such was not the case at the outset of the Early Modern and only came about through the systematic control of women's reproductive labour. During the Early Modern Period women had enjoyed a relatively peaceful co-existence alongside men in productive life: land was owned by both husband and wife and women's work was valued both for that done at home (raising children, cooking, keeping a herb garden etc…) and the work done outside of it (working as smiths, butchers, bakers, ale-brewers, as well as doctors and surgeons) (Federici, 2004, p. 31). The sexual division of labour that later came to characterise modern nation states was not perceived as a rigid divide, in the words of Federici: "In the feudal village no social separation existed between the production of goods and the reproduction of the work-force; all work contributed to the family's sustenance" (2004, p. 25). Moreover, women had control over the reproductive capacities of their bodies, managing natural birth control and holding a monopoly in the midwifery profession.

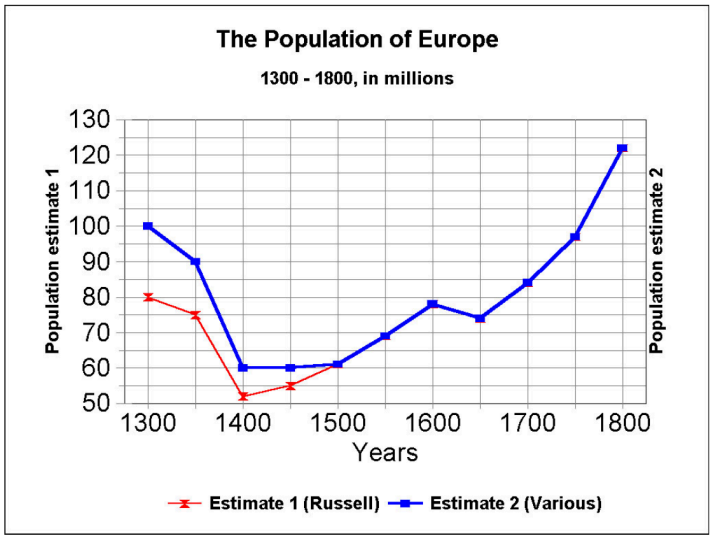
By the 17th century however, the position of women in society had changed drastically: a rigid sexual division of labour came into being, the social position of women was debased and relegated to housework, and women's bodies came to be seen as managed property of the state. For social reproduction theorists, these were politically motivated changes brought about to ensure successful economic growth and the appeasement of class antagonism.

The new patriarchal order that came into being to defend this status quo wasn't left unchallenged. Rising concerns with regards to women unwilling to abide by the rules are prevalent in 16th-17th century England as made visible in the popular literature of the time and recorded by local court orders:

> *Between about 1560 and 1640 - precisely the period of greatest concern about other kinds of disorder - such records disclose an intense preoccupation with women who are a visible threat to the patriarchal system. Women scolding and brawling with their neighbours, single women refusing to enter service, wives dominating or even beating their husbands: all seem to surface more frequently than in the periods immediately before and afterwards. It will not go unnoticed that this is also the period during which witchcraft accusations reach their peak. (Underdown in Fletcher & Stevenson, 1987, p. 119)*

A historical turning point was the General Crisis of the 1620s and 1630s which saw world trade and markets slump and unemployment soar - a crisis which historians have pointed to as emblematic in understanding the origins of growth given that "After it, the barriers [to growth] seem to have been permanently lifted" (Hobsbawm, 1960, pp. 99-100). Federici argues that the crisis was primarily a demographic crisis on a scale unheard of with the exception of the Black Death, caused by three factors: first the 'America Holocaust' which wiped out millions of natives in the Americas, second, deaths due to plague or smallpox in Europe and third, contrary to Malthus' views on the high reproductive rate of the poor, by

the end of the 16th century women were in fact marrying less and having fewer children. This third factor, in combination with the other two, is what led to the economic and demographic crisis of the 1620s and 1630s effectively putting a halt to the growth that Europe had started to experience (Federici, 2004, pp. 43-44).



The Estimated Populations of Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Estimates by J. C. Russell (red) and Jan de Vries (blue)

Having recognised the centrality of a large labour force to continued economic growth, states responded to the crisis by beginning to enforce new rules and regulations over women's reproductive capacities to guarantee a steady supply of labour. States launched "a true war against women clearly aimed at breaking the control they had exercised over their bodies and reproduction. Starting in the mid-sixteenth century, while Portuguese ships were returning from Africa with their first human cargoes, all the European governments began to impose the severest penalties against contraception, abortion and infanticide" (Federici, 2004, pp. 46-47). Spies kept close tabs on women, male doctors replaced midwives in the delivery room to ensure infanticide was not carried out, and countless women were prosecuted and executed for the crimes of infanticide and witchcraft (Federici, 2004).

Enslaved women in the colonies met a worse fate - forced to become breeders for their masters, and raped with impunity, they never had a chance to know their children who were brought to auction to be sold-off. For Federici, "in both cases, the female body was turned into an instrument for the reproduction of labour and the expansion of the work-force, treated as a natural breeding-machine, functioning according to rhythms outside of women's control" (Federici, 2004, p. 91).

In addition to the usurpation of women's bodies, primitive accumulation relied heavily upon women's unpaid housework. During the Early Modern Period women saw their productive work progressively diminish (as traditionally female jobs such as ale-brewing and midwifery were taken from them) while their social status became associated with being house-wives

and doing domestic work. Indeed, women were systematically infantilised both legally (rights were taken away from them on the basis that they lacked the capacities to stand up for themselves and were consequently unable to represent themselves in court; unable to live alone and unable to work independently) and culturally (gender stereotypes maximised differences between genders and depicted women as inferior to men) (Federici, 2004).

By distinguishing productive from reproductive work, and associating men with the former and women with the latter, a new gender dynamic was created with long lasting consequences (Kallis et al., 2020, p. 39). As value became attributed to monetary income, women's (unpaid) work became socially insignificant, thus creating the new image of the woman as a domestic care worker. As Nancy Fraser puts it: "those who do it are structurally subordinate to those who earn cash wages, even as their work supplies a necessary precondition for wage labor" (Fraser in Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 24).

Exploitation: The fifth wheel

> *"The 5000-year-old history of civilisation is essentially the history of the enslavement of woman" (Öcalan, 2013, p. 9).*

Unlike most economic accounts of growth, the degrowth account outlined above clearly distinguishes the different actors who either benefited or were exploited by the growth paradigm. The fact that economic accounts tend to leave such questions outside of their analysis is arguably due to the core function they serve in the growth machine, an argument I hope to have now rendered visible. It goes without saying that were such an understanding of growth to pervade society, public policies pursuing economic growth would be much harder to pass. Indeed, it would not be difficult to imagine a fifth wheel of growth named 'exploitation', which is present in all four wheels described by Samuelson, and indispensable to their right functioning.

If exploitation is so ubiquitous in the history of growth the same could be said about history at large. Examples of human beings exploiting other humans and non-humans are certainly not lacking. And yet there is something quantitatively and qualitatively different about the ways in which economic growth exploits that bears little or no resemblance in the historical record. Historians have often - if indirectly - found answers to this when pondering the question of why growth began in Europe and not elsewhere.

Economic historians for instance, note that many other civilisations had mastered navigation and cartography prior to the Europeans, including the great distances covered by Polynesian ships. Europe, however, stood out for her sustained readiness to "rationalise them [voyages of 'discovery'] and to develop the resources they brought within her reach" (Jones, 2003, p. 80). And unlike the fleeting voyages of discovery lead by the Chinese, the European expeditions saw potential for profit and "made it clear that they were there to stay" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 27).

The economic historian's language of 'rationalising' and 'developing' veils the real human stories and histories behind concepts: "historian's economic history is generally conducted by presupposing general exchange value rather than particular use value. Its language tends to be abstract" (Linebaugh, 2012, p. 23). When attempting to grapple with the human dimensions of history, the economic historian flounders. In Kennedy's words, "If these features [the awful cruelties inflicted by these European conquerors upon their many victims in Africa, Asia, and America] are hardly mentioned here, it is because many societies in their time have thrown up individuals and groups willing to dare all and do anything in order to make the world their oyster" (2010, pp. 27-28).

The point Kennedy is making is that Europeans conquered the world because they were ruthless in their means and methods to make a profit *and* they had the technological means to do so: the combination of the two enabled European economic growth to take off. Had any other society been in that situation they would have undoubtedly done the same. While we question the veracity of the latter half of Kennedy's claim regarding the universality of exploitative growth, we may agree that it was a particular mindset which enabled Europe to conquer, colonise and extract the wealth of others. Technology may well have served a role in enabling this to reach further and further across the world - but it would have been of little worth if those wielding it were not predisposed to the exploitation of humans and non-human others.

> *For efficient subordination, what's wanted is that the structure not only not appear to be a cultural artefact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear natural—that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of the facts about the beast which are beyond the scope of human manipulation or revision. It must seem natural that individuals of the one category are dominated by individuals of the other and that as groups, the one dominates the other.*
>
> *(Marilyn Frye) (Plumwood, 1993, p. 41)*

As noted earlier on, exploitation must be conceptually justified if it is to be sustained. Carolyn Merchant retraced this process in the context of the rise of economic growth, noting how a sustained campaign to de-sacralise and debase women and nature allowed for growth to advance. Feminist historians have further elucidated the historical roots of this process, which began many thousands of years ago. In Gerda Lerner's *The Creation of Patriarchy*, the historical watershed was the invention of slavery, representing both the first form of institutionalised hierarchical dominance as well as harbingering the development of ancient civilisation. Reminding us that women were first to undergo this treatment she posits: “In doing so, men acquired the knowledge necessary to elevate “difference” of whatever kind into a criterion for domination” (Lerner, 1986, p. 214). Women were the first to be othered and the first to be enslaved, opening the doors to the othering, enslavement, exploitation and domination of subsequent human and non-human others.

The logic of domination and exploitation that stems from this is perhaps nowhere more clearly expressed than in the neoplatonic concept of the Great Chain of Being, a hierarchy which placed God at the top followed by "angels, then kings, then priests, then men, then

women, then mammals, then birds, and so on, through plants, then precious gems, then other rocks, then sand" (Jensen, 2016, pp. 37-38).

Conceived in Ancient Greece, the concept of the Great Chain of Being served as a rational legitimation of exploitation and dominance. As Page duBois' describes in her history of the term, it emerged as a consequence of particular social changes in 4th century Greece, chief among which were a growing dependence on slavery and heightened social inequality. More than a mere attempt to classify and order the universe, the concept of the Great Chain of Being arose because of political necessity in the face of social unrest: "The unquestioned acceptance of slavery as a natural phenomenon, the dependence on the institution of slavery, led to a new discursive formation, a new way of understanding difference. The great chain of being was created to justify the relationship of mastery" (DuBois, 1991, p. 151).

> *Order is Heav'n's first law; and this confest,*
> *Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,*
> *More rich, more wise*
> *(Alexander Pope cited in Lovejoy, 2011, p. 206)*

It is of interest to note that the word exploitation, from the 17th century french *exploitation*, initially had a positive use and referred to the action of making value of something (Colbert, 1873). Add to this the notions of scarcity and distribution and you are left with the modern definition of economics, "the study of how societies use scarce resources to produce valuable goods and services and distribute them among different individuals" (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 4). By the 19th century however the definition of exploitation had changed to one that is more familiar to us today, coming to mean the action of extracting an illicit or excessive gain from something or someone (Say, 1841). That the two centuries it took to realise that extracting value of something could be illicit or excessive happen to be the same two centuries in which economic growth took off may be more than mere coincidence.

So too with the resurfacing of the Great Chain of Being. Though lost to history for over a millenium, the idea of the Great Chain of Being saw a spectacular revival in 18th century Europe. In the words of another chronicler of the term, "there has been no period in which writers of all sorts - men of science and philosophers, poets and popular essayists, deists and orthodox divines - talked so much about the Chain of Being, or accepted more implicitly the general scheme of ideas connected with it" (Lovejoy, 2011, p. 183).

Though a thorough analysis remains beyond the scope of this paper, what I would like to suggest is that the ontology derived from the Great Chain of Being simultaneously enabled and justified the multiple forms of exploitation that accompanied and underpinned economic growth in the West. Moreover, this ontology was pervasive and spread to scientific, philosophical, religious and cultural rhetoric, making it particular to the West and stands in stark

contrast to the many other relational ontologies found in other parts of the world.[2] This dominator-dominated ontology captured by Great Chain of Being is therefore a likely candidate for explaining why economic growth took off in Europe and why it has persisted so tenaciously in the face of mounting adversity.[3]

2 Further work could seek to flesh out the ties between this ontology and the notions of 'progress' and 'improvement' that took hold of European thought during the late 16th and 17th centuries as discussed by Gareth Dale (Dale in Borowy & Schmelzer, 2017).

3 A development of this position ought to take into consideration Banerjee and Bell's criticisms made of ecofeminism and which apply to much of the argument laid out above: "For example, Merchant's view of precapitalist society passes easily over the brutality of feudal hierarchies. Similarly, Indian society before the British certainly was highly transformative of the South Asian landscape, and was equally capable of striking social hierarchies. Patterns of domination of women and nature can be found in more societies than in the West, but Plumwood does not identify the logic of domination outside of the West. Mellor's vision of women as environmental mediators homogenizes women's experience and unnecessarily excludes men as potential mediators. And Salleh does not confront the question of the commodification of men and male labor." (Banerjee & Bell, 2007)

Hegemonic Masculinity: A Conspicuous Absence

The concept of the Great Chain of Being has prevailed into the present day albeit amended in ways which obfuscate the real inequalities which operate therein (Salleh, 2017, p. 203). Thus the categories of God, angels, kings and slaves have ostensibly been removed, with all humans perched on the top echelon, peering over the animals, insects, plants and minerals beneath them. The truth is, however much those below may have climbed up the ladder, the characteristics of those at the top remain almost unchanged.

> *One of the recurring features of masculinity – as opposed to femininity – is that men go to great pain to hide it [masculinity] and, by extension, to hide the way that it functions and operates. Hiding can allow masculinity to function without challenge or question. (Reeser, 2010, p. 7)*

The analysis presented in the preceding chapter highlighted how economic growth was premised upon a radical re-configuration of society - from one which perceived nature as animate and women as valued citizens participating in productive life to one in which nature was subservient to the needs of capital and women relegated to invisibilised unpaid reproductive labour. The Great Chain of Being points to another invisibilised (f)actor in the origins of growth: hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In the epigraph to this article I pointed to the historical responsibility masculinist practices shoulder in causing the present socio-ecological crisis, and, by analogy, the economic growth paradigm (Hedenqvist et al., 2021). In the following chapter I will argue that efforts to face the socio-ecological crisis must include masculinities into their analysis if they are to be successful in bringing about the kinds of changes degrowth, ecofeminist and political ecologists call for. It is not simply a case of integrating gender equality as an add-on to programs for post-growth societies. Rather, as Suzanne Clisby and Mark Johnson put it in their reconceptualisation of equality, "it is about asking whether equality is simply more of the same system of oppression, wrapped up as gift bestowed by men." (2020, p. 6)

Understanding the growth paradigm cannot be divorced from understanding its underlying system of oppression, which is indubitably gendered. Men have not only reaped the greatest benefits from economic growth, they have also perpetrated the most violence in its name, leading to the socio-ecological crisis the world now faces (Kimmel, 2005; Magnusdottir & Kronsell, 2021; Pulé & Hultman, 2021; Hultman & Pulé, 2019; Di Chiro, 2017). In an overview of the topic, Paulson and Boose remind us that men live in less sustainable ways and have higher carbon footprints, are less willing to take on environmentally-friendly behaviours, and are more likely to support climate denial and green techno-fixes than women (Paulson & Boose, 2019). Such observations are not meant to induce male readers into a sense of guilt and paralysis but rather a consideration for the ways in which masculinities have been created in alignment with domination and exploitation (Gaard, 2017; Pease, 2019). As the revered masculinities scholar Raewyn Connell put it: "We understand now that destructive actions - including environmental crime - are not mechanically caused by

masculinity but are often purposive means of achieving a form of masculinity that is valued." (Connell, 2021)

Indeed, not all masculinities embody or enact the violences attributed to men. Connell coined the term *hegemonic masculinity* to denote the specific practises that legitimises men's dominant position in society. Importantly, there are, at any given point in time, various masculinities, some of which are considered 'superior' or hegemonic, over the rest (Connell, 2005). These masculinities change and evolve over time such that, what may have been considered hegemonic in 17th century England certainly would not be so today (Reeser, 2010). The point is that, although not all men enact hegemonic forms of masculinity - indeed they are unable to given the inherent hierarchy embedded into hegemonic masculinity - all men nonetheless benefit from the social and economic system created by it (Connell, 2005).

This is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the way economic growth has disproportionately benefited men. Gender pay-gaps, men's preponderance in positions of power and decision-making (in the household, at work, or in governance), and unequal distribution of care work are only some of the most obvious ways in which men are routinely advantaged by the growth paradigm (Forsythe et al., 2000; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Blau & Kahn, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Hegemonic Masculinity and Growth

As we have seen with the social-reproduction theory account of economic growth, feminist scholars have long pointed out that growth relied on a new patriarchal order to take hold across society (Arruzza, 2013). The State's condoning of wide-spread emergence of gang-rape as a tool of masculinist oppression in 15th century Europe for instance, can be seen as a mechanism to protect early economic growth (Federici, 2004). In effect, "the state-backed raping of poor women undermined the class solidarity that had been achieved in the anti-feudal struggle" (Federici, 2004, p. 48). Moreover, growth's reliance on unpaid reproductive labour and subsequent reliance on women to do it, strengthened the figure of the male patriarch while "aggravating the burden on women and the oppressive relations between men and women" (Arruzza, 2013, p. 126).

Cinzia Arruzzza reminds us that although "men, including working-class men, enjoyed and continue to enjoy a relative benefit from gender oppression does not mean viewing men as an exploiter class" (2013, p. 126). Instead, we would do well to perceive these relations in the light of "the complexity with which capitalism integrates and employs pre-capitalist power relations to create hierarchies of exploited and oppressed, digging trenches and raising barriers" (Arruzza, 2013, p. 126). The point being made is that hegemonic masculinity (though here referred to as patriarchy) not only existed prior to economic growth, it is malleable, changing and context-dependent. A new range of hegemonic masculinities emerged and developed in sync with the rise of economic growth, which promised its fruits to those

who upheld its new order. Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé have referred to these as 'industrial/breadwinner masculinities', which are "bound to the pursuit of industrial growth, since the two require each other to thrive" (2019, p. 42).

It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity implies hierarchies between men themselves as well. Thus “hegemonic masculinity helps solidify a “gender order” that devalues behaviours and values coded as feminine, and also marginalizes other forms of masculinity” (Stoddart & Tindall, 2011, pp. 345-346). What I would like to draw attention to is the notion that just as the demands of economic growth have transformed feminine subjectivities, masculine subjectivities have undergone a similar process. Bearing in mind that these subjectivities were, and always are, plural, we can nevertheless see how hegemonic masculinity affected men in various ways during the development of the growth paradigm.

> *“In the progress of the division of labor, the employment . . . of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations . . . generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.” (Adam Smith cited in Linebaugh, 2012, p. 11)*

The historical shift from heretic witch to docile housewife for example, is paralleled by the shift from early modern craftsman to industrial worker. What was once an honourable trade suddenly became a dull and menial one. The division of labour brought about by the factory meant that the diversity of tasks craftsmen were used to in the workshop was replaced by the repetitive monotony of one task in the name of efficiency. Instead of the finished item bearing the mark of the craftsman who made it, now “the worker was divorced or alienated from personal engagement with the finished product” (Sussman, 2012, p. 72).

This alienation from their own labour was offset by the reinforcement of patriarchal power in the household, thus serving a dual purpose of dividing the working class along gendered lines while securing a steady labour force for the needs of capital. Indeed the disciplining of the workforce is key to ensuring the smooth functioning of economic growth - something Samuelson acknowledges in his description of the wheels of growth (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). What is left unsaid in *Economics* however, is that the disciplining of men was achieved hand-in-hand with the disciplining of women, and left both all the more impoverished because of it.

Scholars have noted how the enactment of hegemonic masculinity has had detrimental effects on male health by associating the act of caring for self with being wimpy or less manly while making demands of men to be strong, resilient and risk-taking. Thus both state and society sanction the fact that men work disproportionately in jobs which not only are the most ecologically destructive, but also have the highest rates of occupational accidents and fatalities such as mining, logging, commercial fishing and the military (Paulson & Boose, 2019). This is justified by the common dictate to simply 'take it like a man!' (Paulson, 2016). Susan Paulson's work in Andean communities has shown how these masculinities have evolved in conjunction with the encroachment of neoliberalism, pushing rural in-

digenous men into gruelling working conditions, simultaneously exploiting themselves, undermining women's labour and their very own ecosystems (Paulson, 2017). Moreover, gender and health studies have highlighted less visible but equally lethal side-effects of hegemonic masculinity by correlating high rates of coronary heart disease among men with the enactment of hegemonic masculinity (Robertson & Shand, 2020).

The ideal of masculinity boys are socialised to aspire to has likewise had repercussions on their psychologies and mental health. In the words of Roger Horrocks: "in becoming accomplices and agents of the patriarchal oppression of women, men are themselves mutilated psychologically" (1994, p. 182). Indeed, some have interpreted men's oppression and control of other humans and non-humans as a reflection of the inner self-repression of feelings and emotions boys are socialised to embody growing up (hooks, 2005). Thus, the very systems of oppression that uphold economic growth and give men power simultaneously "block many men's abilities to acknowledge and deal with the pain and suffering that comes from abusive behaviour, effectively obstructing personal and structural change." (Pulé & Hultman, 2021, p. 214)

This is not to say that 'men suffer as much as women' but rather to point out that on an emotional, psychological and even physical level hegemonic masculinity impoverishes men (Paulson & Boose, 2019; hooks, 2005). Horrocks calls this 'male autism': the associated feelings of emptiness, impotency, un-acknowledgment and despair (Horrocks, 1994). Or, in the words of bell hooks: "Patriarchy demands of men that they become and remain emotional cripples" (2005, p. 27). The incredible success of Mens Rights Groups (MRGs) in the United States and elsewhere is perhaps the clearest indication there is some truth to this claim, and a reminder that such grievances, if left untouched, can easily be addressed in unsavoury ways (Jordan, 2019). Moreover, it acts as an additional reason for men to step down from hegemony and collaborate with other genders in the construction of non-hegemonic feminist post-growth societies (Peretz, 2020).

Naming but not Claiming

> *Most growth objectors rightly denounce the illusion of progressivism, which consists in conceiving Progress as the predetermined meaning of History. And yet, the vision of a society which is sustained, humanly and ecologically, goes hand in hand with certain progresses. Are there any that concern women? (Najman, 2007)*

Just as Douglas C. North was correct in identifying certain preconditions to growth while failing to question what that process fully entails, a similar observation could be made with respects to degrowth. Having recognised the centrality of exploitation to economic growth, degrowth is still a step short from incorporating the crucial role of hegemonic masculinity into its analysis and risks promoting an ecologically balanced future in which such practices persist, unmarked and unnoticed. As Petra Kelly noted in the 1980s "we don't want an eco-

logical society where men build windmills and women silently listen, bake bread and weave rugs" (MacGregor, 2021). Though degrowth theorists would certainly agree with this, it is my contention that such agreement can only translate into action by tackling hegemonic masculinity. This can start with the ways in which degrowth speaks of itself, where it originated from and where it is headed.

In their paper "Composting Feminisms and Environmental Humanities" addressing the influence feminisms have had in shaping the environmental humanities, Jennifer Hamilton and Astrida Neimanis point to the distinction between *naming* feminism, and *claiming it*. In their compost analogy, they ask that "we attend to our critical metabolisms—to notice not only what is being transmogrified [what goes into the compost], but also under what conditions, why, and to what effect." (Hamilton & Neimanis, 2018, p. 503)

Looking at different types of 'origin stories' of the environmental humanities, Hamilton & Neimanis point out that even when feminist authors and sources are specifically cited as foundational contributions to the birth of environmental humanities, "their feminism is left unsignalled" (Hamilton & Neimanis, 2018, p. 508). To illustrate, they give the example of how Carolyn Merchant's book *The Death of Nature* is credited for pioneering a new path in the environmental humanities, yet neither is the subtitle of her book mentioned (*Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*) nor are "the specific feminist problematics or concerns that inform Merchant's insights" addressed (Hamilton & Neimanis, 2018, p. 508). So too with other feminist scholars in other accounts of environmental humanities' origins.

Hamilton and Neimanis' main argument is not so much that recognition ought to be given when due (which it should), but that failure to recognise the feminist contexts of works cited debilitates the field's capacity to build alternative worlds. I contend that degrowth scholarship is susceptible to a similar reproach: feminism and/or ecofeminism (eco/feminism thereafter) are sometimes *named* as sources of degrowth, but rarely are they *claimed*. Though the close ties between degrowth and eco/feminism have been acknowledged by scholars in both disciplines (Nicolas, 2018; D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013; Barca, 2019a; Latouche, 2016) degrowth has also been criticised for not thoroughly engaging with it (Gregoratti & Raphael, 2019; Bauhardt, 2014; Löw, 2015; Harcourt & Nelson, 2015). This is in spite of efforts to recognise specific contributions to the degrowth literature and analysis - notably Marilyn Waring's critique of GDP, Silvia Federici's history of capitalism and the exploitation of women, Gibson-Graham, Antonella Picchio and Mary Mellor's feminist economics (Kallis et al., 2020; Kallis, 2018; Hickel, 2020; D'Alisa et al., 2014; Demaria et al., 2013).

Leaving aside the texts which do not name feminist/ecofeminist sources (Latouche, 2009; Muraca, 2013; Latouche, 2019; Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017; Kallis et al., 2018) and those that do (D'Alisa et al., 2014; D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013; Kallis et al., 2020; Latouche, 2016) of concern to us are those which name but don't claim: those in which "feminism is present (either as an orientation or through the avatar of one of its key thinkers or as represented in the deployment of key feminist concepts) but the mattering of that feminism is downplayed, or disavowed" (Hamilton & Neimanis, 2018, p. 506).

Vincent Liegey and Anitra Nelson's book *Exploring Degrowth* for instance, names ecofeminism as "a key principle of degrowth applied by acknowledging needs for gender equality, engagement of all in care of people and nature, thus deconstructing gender identities and roles associated with domination and exploitation" (2020, p. x). However, apart from a fleeting reference on page 7, we find no other traces of ecofeminism in the book. Opportunities were certainly not lacking. In the discussion of degrowth's uptake in different countries in which Matthias Schmelzer and Barbara Muraca's contributions to the German history of degrowth are cited, the book could have easily highlighted their central argument: notably that early ecofeminist contributions to the degrowth debate have been ignored and forgotten (Muraca & Schmelzer, 2017, p. 185). The fact that it didn't raises questions as to why not. Instead, we are left with the conventional 'GDL' (Georgescu-Roegen, Gorz, Daly & Latouche) story of degrowth's founding fathers.

In a similar vein, Valerie Fournier's account of degrowth includes Gibson-Graham as part of the 'whole tradition' upon which degrowth advocates draw upon (Fournier, 2008). Yet despite fleshing out Gibson-Graham's notions of a diversified economy, no mention is made of the specifically feminist nature of her work, nor of the gendered implications contained within it. Even when this is done, as in the case of Giorgos Kallis' book *Degrowth*, it is simply named without being elaborated further (Kallis, 2018, p. 42).

Indeed *Degrowth* (Kallis, 2018) exemplifies the ambiguity with which degrowth approaches feminist and ecofeminist thought. On the one hand it singles out feminist authors (Antonella Picchio, Mary Mellor, Gibson-Graham) as key sources of inspiration for degrowth and also highlights the ways in which economic growth is built upon the subjugation of women as in the following passage: "Women were charged with the reproductive work of nurturing more humans. Witchhunts and natalist policies in early capitalism ensured women stayed in line (Federici 2004). Their subjugation ensured the uncompensated appropriation of care labour: a labour without which growth would not be possible." (Kallis, 2018, p. 66)

On the other hand, several of these (the case of Federici aside) are left under-developed: Gibson-Graham for instance, is noted as a feminist economist on p.42, and her book *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* is cited on p.122 in a discussion on the diverse degrowth economy. Yet the book's explicitly feminist perspective and positioning of the household economy as locus and inspiration for the diverse economy, is left untouched (Gibson-Graham, 1996). A deeper discussion of Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's eco/feminist perspectives is likewise missed (Kallis, 2018, p. 5).

Jason Hickel's book *Less is More: How Degrowth will Save the World* follows a similar ambiguity. Thus although in chapter one 'Capitalism - A Creation Story' he credits Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* as his key source "for much of this chapter" (Hickel, 2020, p. 298), Federici's core feminist argument is only attributed one paragraph near the end of the chapter: namely that capitalism grew atop of the domination and mastery of women's bodies and reproductive capabilities. The subtitle to her book, *Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, is likewise absent, representing a missed opportunity to underline the specifically material feminist nature of her work.

As with *Degrowth* (Kallis, 2018), Hickel cites Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva as sources of inspiration for degrowth but without mention of their eco/feminist perspectives. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* is cited in the overview of capitalism's history, yet much as Hamilton and Neimanis critiqued its narrow reading in the origins of environmental humanities, Hickel also overlooks the specifically gendered problematics raised by Merchant in her work (though the book's subtitle is correctly referenced).

Though to some, such omissions may appear trivial or be received as unwarranted chastisement, I raise them precisely because they are easily overlooked and subject to ambiguity. To be clear, I am not saying that these books - written by friends, colleagues and peers - do not contain important contributions to the foregrounding of decolonial thought, deepening notions of environmental justice and pioneering avenues towards degrowth futures. I am raising the question: why, given eco/feminism's vast store of knowledge and structural analysis that complements degrowth so well, hasn't it been more explicitly integrated into degrowth? Indeed, in their systematic review of degrowth literature, Weiss and Cattaneo pointed out the fact that while degrowth has focused on criticising growth, it has "spent little effort to quantify the costs of continued economic growth as well as the well-being benefits of degrowth" (Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017, p. 227) - areas of research particularly well-known to eco/feminists.

One reason that has been suggested is that degrowth is almost unanimously agreed upon as having originated with four key (white) men none of whom considered the ways in which growth was predicated upon oppression: Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, André Gorz, Herman Daly and Serge Latouche (Gregoratti & Raphael, 2019, p. 87; Barca, 2019a, p. 178). And yet a look at the historical record clearly indicates sustained eco/feminist engagement with degrowth from the 1970s to the present. Latouche himself names the founder of ecological feminism Françoise d'Eaubonne, as "an authentic precursor of degrowth" reminding us that she was in discussions with key degrowth thinkers in its earliest of days (2016, p. 202 [my translation]). Speaking of these contributions to influential discussions within the degrowth community in the 70s and 80s, Muraca and Schmelzer note:

> *"While only partly taken into account or cited in the current international or German degrowth literature, these works prefigured central arguments and could add not only historical, but also conceptual depth to current degrowth discussions" (2017, p. 185)*

Homogenising the origins of degrowth risks losing out on the wealth of eco/feminist analysis that otherwise extend and fortify the very pillars degrowth has named as its foundations (Gregoratti & Raphael, 2019; Perkins, 2010; Latouche, 2016). More than a lost opportunity, the process of 'naming but not claiming' further compacts the issue by perpetuating the 'GDL' story of degrowth. The most recent book published on degrowth is a case in point: though its authors draw heavily on Kallis and Hickel's work, there is absolutely no mention of feminist or ecofeminist principles in the entire book (Stuart et al., 2021).

In *The Degrowth Alternative: A Path to Address our Environmental Crisis?* (Stuart et al., 2021) gender is mentioned just once, and only in the context of how degrowth needs to avoid slipping into neo-colonialism and thus, citing Dengler and Seebacher, by taking a "feminist decolonial degrowth approach, which is sensitive to patriarchal gender relations, colonial continuities and economic structures that enable and (re-)produce these relations, can contribute to the endeavour of building North-South bridges at equal footing" (Stuart et al., 2021, p. 55). Dengler and Seebacher's feminist contributions however are completely overlooked. Similarly, in their chapter on degrowth and work, though citing Stefania Barca's article 'The labor(s) of degrowth', they sidestep her core argument calling for an ecofeminist grounding of degrowth and class relations (Barca, 2019b).

A provocation or an invitation?

Of course, I do not seek to attribute blame where it does not belong. It clearly lies with the authors of *The Degrowth Alternative*. I wonder though how many more repetitions of the 'GDL' story it'll take before other histories are finally remembered. More importantly, I am still left unsatisfied with the answer to the question as to why this has not yet happened.

In seeking answers to a similar question, the following provocation offered by Hamilton and Neimanis help us think it through from a different angle: "by refusing to name it and fully claim it, what else might we be avoiding?" (Hamilton & Neimanis, 2018, p. 518). My suggestion is that the avoidance is related to hegemonic masculinity and its unique feature, mentioned by Reeser at the start of this chapter, to hide itself and the way it functions and operates (Messerschmidt, 2019). Could it be that fully claiming eco/feminism entails some sort of threat to hegemonic masculinity? Speaking of why d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist writings have been forgotten in degrowth literature Latouche muses:

> *Although an interlocutor of André Gorz and Ivan Illich (not to mention of Jean-Paul Sartre or Simone de Beauvoir), her conception of the 'mutation of society', very close to the project of degrowth, was literally repressed, perhaps because her strong theses were spoken by a woman and not only because they were ahead of her time. (2016, p. 202 [my translation])*

Given degrowth's predominantly white, male and European makeup, it is important we open up an honest, caring and self-reflective inquiry into these questions. As many feminists have pointed out, it behoves men to do so, as opposed to being reminded to do so by feminists (hooks, 2005). I am certainly no exception to this: in my own work I have also side-lined eco/feminist contributions to degrowth. In my documentary *Fairytales of Growth* in which I sought to explain the concept of degrowth to a wider audience, the storyline I opted for was to recount the ecologically destructive origins of growth, voice the limits to growth critique, followed by green growth alternatives and degrowth critiques thereof (Smith Khanna, 2020).

Although I had initially positioned care as a key concept I wanted the film to develop, I ended up editing it out. Now I wonder why that is? Was it really for the sake of brevity as I initially thought? Did I think that my audience would be more receptive to the more environmental/technical narrative I developed? Who, indeed, was my audience? A brief look at the film's analytics on YouTube show that my audience shares a similar demographic to my own: the majority of viewers are male (66.6%) and mostly between 25-34 years old (24.5%). Did I think that including care would put-off my audience? Was I afraid that the film wouldn't be successful if I had?

Profeminists help orient our answers to these questions by exposing how men openly espousing profeminist perspectives and practices do so at the risk of losing their own privileged status among their male peers. Their behaviour is perceived as a sort of 'gender betrayal' and "is a big ‘no-no’ if one is wanting to remain a recipient of the social primacy promised men by a sexist and nature-destroying society" (Hultman & Pulé, 2019, p. 203). Indeed, when considering the sort of intersectional approach ecofeminists have long pointed towards, and which degrowth strives for, by perceiving problems as a web of oppressions based on class, race, gender and nature, it seems as though openly standing up for issues of gender is perhaps most difficult for men to do. For Richard Twine this is because men engaged in environmentalism or class-struggle benefit from a social return on their work insofar as it "can be seen to bolster a particular form of romantic masculinity" (2021, p. 120). The same cannot be said of profeminist work which leads me to suspect that patriarchy could be the final vestige of privilege most resistant to change (which is not to say that other forms of power and privilege have been overcome, nor that they are any less important). In the words of James Messerschmidt, it is "hidden in plain sight" (2019).

Just as patriarchy suffocates men, so too does it limit our pathways towards post-growth futures. Thus, just as degrowth scholars criticise green growth narratives overly reliant on technological fixes to climate change, masculinities scholars point to ecomodern masculinities being developed as solutions to the problems faced by industrial/breadwinner masculinities (Pulé & Hultman, 2021). The ecomodern alternative secures continued economic growth and caring for the planet, while ensuring the gender order is not subverted (perhaps best exemplified by the persona of Arnold Schwarzenegger going from body-building-Terminator to eco-friendly-Hummer driver) (Hultman, 2013).

Indeed, the tremendous resistance to degrowth arguments shown by the status quo stems not only from a willingness to uphold the growth paradigm at all costs, but from the fact that this paradigm is intensely intertwined with patriarchy. As Cara Daggett has argued in the specific context of threats to the fossil fuel industry, climate action is not only perceived as a threat to economic growth, but as a threat to men's standing in society (2018, p. 9; see also Anshelm & Hultman, 2014). Given the fact that those most resistant to a degrowth future are likely those who have most to lose from the changes it implies, it would be of much use to degrowth to better understand how hegemonic masculinity functions to better develop strategies for degrowth's adoption and implementation.

Hultman and Pulé's ecological masculinities have been put forwards as an alternative to

these destructive enactments of masculinity, in which care for self, for other humans and for non-humans lies at the very core of one's subjectivity. Here, recent developments in degrowth literature, pioneered by likes of Giacomo D'Alisa, Matthias Schmelzer and Susan Paulson, which give a central stage to care and highlight the gendered dimensions of economic growth as well as including feminist critique as a core source of degrowth are particularly encouraging (Kallis et al., 2020; Schmelzer & Vetter, 2019; Schmelzer et al., 2022). This is perhaps an indication that degrowth is embarking on what Hultman and Pulé have posited as the first step towards ecologising masculinities: 'awareness'.[4] This is taken to mean the willingness to look at an issue from as many perspectives and actively listen to these. Only then can one begin the work of deconstruction to then modify, rebuild and reinvent masculinities (Hultman & Pulé, 2019).

Men's oppressive behaviours stem from a lack of self-awareness and an 'internalised superiorisation' that is learnt and acquired as children (Hultman & Pulé, 2019, p. 233). Undoing this, and addressing the many wounds and severances caused by being raised into a patriarchal world, is uncharted territory (hooks, 2005; Pease, 2019). And yet, if degrowth is really serious about bringing about a future in which wellbeing, quality of life, care and happiness are put at the centre, such work is of vital importance. The structural changes that degrowth pushes for are undeniably gendered and require not just a call for gender equality but a deep reconfiguration and questioning of masculinities. This will undoubtedly give way to difficulties as these new subjectivities are navigated, or to what Ariel Salleh has called "masculinist disorientation", which I think will be disorienting not only for men but women and other genders as well (Salleh, 2017, p. 210).

At a more familiar level for instance, Gibson-Graham has noted how shifting towards communal households in which men and women take up and let go of traditional gender roles has been challenging for both men and women alike: men may resent the loss of status associated with their work, and women may struggle to relinquish their role as primary caregiver (1996, p. 67). Likewise, sites of daily struggle for alternate masculinities challenging the growth-patriarchy paradigm will necessarily be challenging for men and women alike. In her book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, bell hooks hints at the scale of the challenge when she points out that while on the one hand feminists have done a good job at criticising patriarchy, they have "very few insightful ideas about alternative masculinity". On the other hand, men researching male dominance and emotional poverty, though recognising "the way patriarchal thinking damages boys *are unable to call the problem by its true name* and by so doing free themselves to envision a world where the feelings of boys can really matter" (2005, pp. 38-39 [my italics]).

In a similar sense, exploring degrowth from the perspective of non-hegemonic forms of masculinity will raise diverse challenges relating to how we talk about the sources of degrowth, how we prioritise the many elements that fall underneath the degrowth umbrella, what policies and recommendations ought to be made, and how do we, as white European

4 See the 'Giving ADAM-n' model based on Awareness, Deconstruction, Amendment, Modification, New Masculinities and ecological masculinities (Hultman & Pulé, 2019)

men, best utilize our various privileges to bring about post-growth and post-patriarchal societies.

A good starting point would be to update the origin story of degrowth. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's contributions to post-development critiques of growth could be cited specifically for their ecofeminist lens. Similarly, Françoise d'Eaubonne and the Bielefeld School's early engagements with degrowth discussions in the 1970s ought to be integrated alongside feminist critiques of GDP accounting by the likes of Waring and Gibson-Graham. In conjunction with this, eco/feminist thought can play a much bigger role not only in the diagnosis of the ecological crisis but in the building of a degrowth prognosis.

Gregoratti and Raphael have already pointed out that the sources of degrowth, as outlined by Demaria et al. (Demaria et al., 2013) could be complemented by original ecofeminist contributions: 'earthcare' or 'partnership ethic' (Merchant 1996), 'caring economy' (Jochimsen and Knobloch 1997), 'subsistence perspective' (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 1999), 'community economy' (Gibson-Graham 2006), 'eco-sufficiency' (Salleh 2009), '(re)productivity' (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2010) (Gregoratti & Raphael, 2019, p. 86). Closer attention could be paid to the gendered nature of care work as it is re-conceived in degrowth futures in which traditionally female-held jobs in paid social reproduction are multiplied (whether as paid work or non-paid work), the working week, use of cars and household appliances are reduced, and local organic foods replace imported/processed foods - all of which could have negative effects on women if not properly considered (D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013; Bauhardt, 2014; Akbulut, 2017; Mellor, 1992).

Moreover, it has also been suggested degrowth pay attention to the gendered dimensions of all types of work, not just care work (Gregoratti & Raphael, 2019, p. 92). Here an interesting discussion to have surrounds the reevaluation of different kinds of work and what ought to be valued by degrowth and how such changes might come about without falling into the trap of essentialism (Pease, 2021, pp. 546-552). Caution must also be taken so that degrowth does not run into the same problem as ecomodern masculinities by including care into the picture but subordinating it to the imperative of criticising growth at all costs (Daggett, 2018, p. 10). In the same way, the development of alternative masculinities ought to remain constantly alert to the possibility that they will themselves become hegemonic (Pease, 2017; Simpson & Lewis, 2020; Martino, 2008; Gaard, 2017; Pease, 2021; Filteau, 2014).

Finally, attention could be given to child-rearing in the knowledge that hegemonic masculinity, like all behaviours we are socialised into, begins at birth (Mac an Ghaill, 2020). Environmental education for children as well as adults can be better integrated with gender studies and open a new ecomasculinities critical pedagogy "to help make heroic scripts of nature separation and mastery less attractive to self-constitution" (Twine, 2021, pp. 130-131). Likewise lengthy paternity leave has been demonstrated to be the single best policy to encourage men to take on and sustain a higher share of reproductive household work, as well as making visible examples of male caretakers in society (Barker et al., 2021; Fernandez-Lozano & Jurado-Guerrero, 2021). Doing so would enable a much broader discussion to take

place, opening new pathways and indeed, new imaginaries, outside of the growth paradigm.

> *if to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and if that relationship is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one, but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies. (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xvi)*

It is noteworthy that in talking about diverse economies and the need to 'get out of this capitalist space', Gibson-Graham point to feminists' work in "(re)theorising sexual difference, to escape - however temporarily and partially - from the terms of a binary hierarchy in which one term is deprived of positive being." (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 14) Just as the hegemony of capitalism posits non-capitalist modes of being and exchanging as an insufficiency or an absence, hegemonic masculinity highlights the feminine (as deficient, other, or as the only gender which exists), while masculinity is left outside of the field of analysis, unquestioned and 'unmarked' (Hultman & Pulé, 2019, pp. 37-42; Reeser, 2010, p. 8). To subvert this requires identifying masculinities for what they are: diverse, hegemonic as well as non-hegemonic, heterogeneous as well as heterosexual, homosexual and queer, trans and cis, vulnerable, strong, spiritual and vain.

Conclusion

> "*The clear lack of male engagement is problematic since men, being the main perpetrators of violence against the planet and people, carry the lion's share of responsibility to change these fatal and unjust social and ecological realities.*"
>
> *(Pulé & Hultman, 2021)*

My contention has been that, just as degrowth recognises the fact that there are differentiated responsibilities for the climate crisis from the perspective of industrialised and developing countries, so too ought it recognise the role men have played in this and (re)structure its analysis accordingly.

In this chapter I have sought to understand how degrowth has constructed its understanding of economic growth's origins in opposition to economists and economic historians' narratives. Though highlighting the diverse range of exploitative relations underpinning economic growth, and drawing from feminist, ecofeminist, marxist feminist and feminist political ecology, degrowth struggles to truly claim eco/feminism, which is something of a lost opportunity. In fact, a similar reproche is being made by cliometricians who feel that their field of study would benefit from historians working outside of their field and with different methodologies, expertise and perspectives (Lamoreaux, 2016; Hilt, 2017).

By analysing certain key degrowth texts and reminding ourselves of the various eco/feminist criticisms that have been made of degrowth, I have shown how an awkward alliance between degrowth and eco/feminism persists despite the many hopeful signs to the contrary. Conscious or unconscious, intended or unintended, acts of ignoring the role of hegemonic masculinity was posited as a possible reason for this disjuncture, opening an invitation for degrowth to critically engage with the ways in which hegemonic masculinity shapes the field. New directions for enquiry were proposed as ways to include new, non-hegemonic forms of masculinities into degrowth discourse, as well as participate in their development in order to gain clearer visions of pathways towards feminist post-growth futures.

It has taken some time to realize and expose the fact that we are imbued in a society based on the hegemony of growth, which has justified and upheld itself rendering "the underlying social and power relations as natural, inevitable, and timeless" (Schmelzer, 2016, p. 351). Likewise, hegemonic masculinity is so embedded, implicit, invisibly assumed and *conspicuously absent* that it permeates all spheres of emancipatory action – from radical scholarship, to activist organising. Degrowth scholarship has perhaps historically focused on a narrow set of considerations, yet recent work suggests it is in flux and opening up to other important fields both new and old. Eco/feminist scholars have long been beacons of light in this deepening of vision, and just as society is waking up to the need to challenge hegemonic masculinities in a multiplicity of creative ways (Peretz, 2020; Biese, 2021; Filteau, 2014), I believe degrowth can too.

...

Though there are multiple theories and histories of growth's origins, each is unavoidably political and represents a certain view of the world. Whichever is most in vogue is likely a reflection of the dominant paradigm in which theorists and historians live and operate. Thus the Harod-Domar model of growth was supposedly thrown out for its 'socialist' implications and threat to capitalism, even though it was a more consistent model than those which followed it (Van den Berg, 2013). The upholding of a paradigm needn't be a rational affair, and as Kuhn eloquently described, in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary it'll seek to hold its ground under its own rules and theories (Kuhn, 1996). Yet as Hamilton and Neimanis point out, "how we *think*, *speak*, *and write* the world can shape how we *act* in it and *make* it" making it all the more important to pay attention to what is going into the compost heap of degrowth scholarship and *how* it is being mixed in (2018, p. 524). As Sekulova *et al*. reminded us in an analogy not too dissimilar to that of compost, in cultivating a 'fertile soil' for degrowth we should note that "it is not only the diversity of factors but the quality of their mutual connectedness, or relatedness, that 'prepares' the soil for the emergence of new groups and the continuation of existing ones" (2017, p. 3).

Finally, in theorising other paradigms outside of the dominant growth paradigm, it is probable that for such a shift to happen rationality will not suffice. As Lakatos put it in his appraisal of Kuhn, paradigm shifts resemble "a mystical conversion which is not and cannot be governed by rules of reason" (Lakatos & Musgrave, 1970, p. 93).[5] I take heed then of the repeated warnings against overly-rational approaches to socio-environmental problems obfuscating the ontological condition of humans as part of nature (MacGregor, 2009; Salleh, 2009, pp. 9-10) and open an invitation for degrowth to explore the many seeds of possibility contained within eco/feminist and profeminist and queer eco/masculinities studies. Doing so may well lead to the fertile soil upon which a new paradigm might be born.

5 As Kuhn himself admits, for a scientist to drop his current paradigm in favour of another, "a decision of that kind can only be made on faith" (Kuhn, 1996, p. 158)

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