

“BACKWARD” COMMON SENSES FROM THE EUROPEAN SEMI-PERIPHERY – CHALLENGING DEGROWTH OF THE CORE?

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Title: “Backward” common senses from the European semi-periphery – challenging degrowth of the core?

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Theme: The Pluriverse: Articulating Alternatives to development

In the search for more sustainable metabolic patterns, via concept of common senses and world-systems theory, the discussion of this panel will further politicize the definition of degrowth by recasting socio-institutional common senses (D’Alisa and Kallis 2016) in relation to the hierarchy of material and ideological flows between European core and post-communist Eastern European semi-periphery (Domazet and Ančić 2017). The session is fundamentally framed by the critical presentation of the Gramscian notion of common senses, the so-called folklore of philosophy, sitting half-way between the folklore, prevalent in selected social groups and the philosophy, science and economics of appointed specialists (cf. Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971). Within this framing, we aim to illustrate some instances of counter-hegemonic common senses, and expose the roots of the hegemonic ones, found in the European semi-periphery.

We propose to start with a theoretical introduction to the concept of common senses and its role in the transformation of the socio-institutional structure from a degrowth perspective. This is followed by the presentation of survey results from Croatia, Europe’s post-socialist south-east, on the prevalence of degrowth-compatible attitudes towards post-capitalist economics, environmental limits of growth and the anti-materialist turn. From Estonia, Europe’s post-socialist north-east, we present the case of food self-provisioning as an everyday form of resistance (Scott 1985) against economic, social and individual dimensions of the metabolic rift. Finally, in the reflection on the common senses prevalent in different expert communities in Croatia, we present the results of research into attitudes of early career scientists, across the disciplinary spectrum in Croatia.

We propose the groundwork for a synchronisation of appropriate common senses across Europe; for a shared vision of a thriving convivial society with reduced environmental and social exploitation, and thus provide more optimistic future scenarios for global core, semi-periphery and periphery alike. Against the prevalent “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000) that reproduces the expectation that the semiperipheral states ought to simply emulate and “catch up” with the metabolic structure and volume of the “core” if they want to enjoy the

benefits of emancipation hegemonic in the core self-presentation, this session aims to contribute to the orchestration of common senses around Europe, starting from the “backward” Europe.

Role of Gramsci’s common sense in understanding different societal (mal)adaptations – Giacomo D’Alisa and Mladen Domazet

Why aspirations and daily metabolic practices differ across geographical regions of a globalised society, despite notional subscription to the hegemonic fetish of growth-fostered development? Why do resistances to alienating consequences of the development fetish engender stable practices in some regions and falter in others, despite relying on similar metabolic structures? The obvious answers of culture, history or biogeography don’t go far enough to inform the potentials for degrowth-oriented transformations aimed at ecologically healthy and socially just convivial societies. In this session we argue for embedding the understanding and application of values, attitudes and practices in the Gramscian notion of common senses. Common sense for Gramsci is an *“uncritical and largely unconscious way(s) of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in a given epoch”* (Gramsci 1971, 322). From this definition of common sense one should understand that the common senses are always plural and are historical and geographical determined. On the other hand, exploration and categorization of mapped common senses serves as an epistemic tool for practical evolution of effective non-capitalist modes of production and societal biophysical and cultural reproduction. The interesting task in rethinking Europe’s degrowth-embracing future is to illustrate the operational utility and stability of the concept of common senses, especially in their counter-hegemonic articulation emerging from (semi-)peripheral performativity (García López et al. 2017) and transformational imaginary. This contribution provides the framing for the illustrative case-studies that follow it.

Degrowth-compatible attitudes among population in Croatia – Mladen Domazet, Branko Ančić and Marija Brajdić Vuković

In 2017, almost ten years after the latest economic crash and a few years after the introduction of the ‘degrowth vocabulary’ into public discourse (cf. Domazet and Dolenc 2016; Matutinović 2012), a battery of specifically designed degrowth-attitudes items was applied to a national sample in a survey (building on Drews and van den Bergh 2016; ISSP Research Group 2012; EVS 2008), providing a more detailed mapping of attitudes in Croatia than the comparative analyses previously reported on. We show the main characteristics of the degrowth-supportive population in relation to sociodemographics, political activation and orientation, and social network involvement. This mapping provides the tentative conclusions about some essential qualities of degrowth-compatible common senses prevalent among different strata of the Croatian population.

“Dacha Resilience” as an answer to the metabolic rift on an ecological, social and individual scale – Lilian Pungas

As agriculture is not only an essential nexus between society and nature, but in its industrial form also a possible threat to the nutrient cycle and social metabolism, this article explores how a potential alternative to the conventional agrifood system – Food Self-Provisioning (FSP) in (semi-)urban spaces – can in the instance of our case study mend the occurring metabolic rift (Marx, 1981; Foster, 1999). Using McClintock’s (2010) three-dimensional framework of metabolic rift that consists of ecological, social and individual dimensions, and drawing from our fieldwork in Estonia, we demonstrate how FSP contributes to the de-commodification of fictitious commodities such as land, labour and food. The region-specific post-socialist FSP practice, characterized as entrenched and widespread by Jehlička and Smith (2013) serves as an example of a sufficiency economy, by re-connecting people to places, giving them back the self-efficacy of their livelihoods and de-alienating them from nature as well as from the (fruits of) their labour. We illustrate how, following this analysis, the motivation and the practice of FSP in Estonian case rest on a tacit common sense counter-current to developmentalism and agrifood system’s productivism.

Disciplinary cultures of scientists and their role in social engagement with global environmental change – Marija Brajdić Vuković and Mladen Domazet

In 2014, quantitative research on the sample of young Croatian researchers from different disciplines has exposed disciplinary culture of disengagement that leads engineering scientists to an underestimation of the global biophysical and social consequences of climate change (Brajdić Vuković, 2017; Brajdić Vuković & Domazet fth.). Culture of disengagement works through three main ideological pillars, de-politicisation, a technical/social dualism, and the belief in meritocracy (Cech, 2013, 2014). However, in our 2014 research, the main driver for the culture of disengagement was positioning of the disciplinary culture related to anthropocentric/eco-centric values of researchers. This paper presents results of the qualitative research, building on previous findings, and conducted with 30 scientists from various disciplines. It aims at understanding and describing of the set of values that underpin different disciplinary cultures enabling or disabling them to become cultures of (dis)engagement. We approach this from the degrowth perspective and discuss findings in terms of common senses upheld by scientists as the proponents and the opponents of the imposed, normative culture, and thus of the social status quo.