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## **Socio-Ecological Reduction**

Climate Policy Emergency Brake, Communicative Strategy for and  
Entry into a Degrowth Transformation?

# 1 Background: changed socio-ecological constellation in Germany/ the EU

- **Climate targets will be missed** on hegemonic path of technology fixed and growth-based Ecological Modernization
- Social inequalities are increasing – higher energy prices burden budget of low and middle income groups – this **tends to strengthen anti-ecological right wing**
- **Danger of watering down climate** policy goals and/or fostering risky (geo engineering) technologies
- **Hegemonic paradigm behind:**  
total amount of (green) energy demand for a growing economy is the fixed starting point -  
no object of targeted socio-ecological reductions

## 2 Response: Socio-Ecological Reduction

### Central aims:

- reducing energy demand as directly and rapidly as possible
- without extensive material investments (with rebounds..)
- through politically enforceable strategies of ecologically targeted, democratically legitimised and socially just reduced scope of economic activities,
- primarily in such areas that tend to improve quality of life for majorities

### Guiding principles

- precaution
- polluter pays
- (economic) democracy

## 2 Response: Socio-Ecological-Reduction

First „candidates“:

Products, practices, sectors

- which are ecologically scandalous and
- which can be reduced without loss of quality of life for majorities

Reductions can be achieved through

- bans or moratoria on investments which cement harmful path dependencies
- continuously decreasing limits for problematic consumption of nature
- abolition of ecologically harmful subsidies
- Reduced working hours

Strengthening

- reproductive and regenerative services (education, health, care)
- public basic goods
- innovations for long life and repairable products etc

### 3 Interim Conclusion/ Clarification:

„Social-Ecological Reduction“ is

- no additional theoretical concept besides „Degrowth“, „Sufficiency“ and other degrowth related approaches, movements etc.
- but a communication strategy/discours intervention in order to bring their common degrowth-affine contents/urgent political conclusions into broad public

At the one hand

- it can tie various debates, concepts, demands, is their common political consequence
- It can be linked to new experiences in everyday life and politics that irritate previous normalities (flood catastrophes, stronger regulatory interventions in market mechanisms, shortages, political contingencies and prioritisation, dependencies on fragil global production chains, debates on capped or socially graduates prices on basic goods, ..)

## 4 Counter Reactions /Objections to SER

At the other hand

- it is a **provocative attack** on hegemonic paradigms (primacy of market regulation, eco-technology and (green) growth as problem solvers) and
- will **trigger fierce counter reactions** which will meet widely shared fears (danger for growth, jobs, prosperity, stability, migration of key industries..)
- But: **SER as answer on climate emergency** opens discourse opportunities

## 4 SER endangers stability?

### Unemployment?

- Reduction of working hours
- New forms of basic social security

### Pension and health systems at risk?

- Long term stability possible through using all types of income, taxing, prevention

### Quality of life?

- In all areas of basic needs (mobility, food, housing, time well-being,...) less consumption doesn't hinder better life quality (as many studies show)
- But active, preventive, egalitarian, redistributive state policies necessary

## 4 SER hindering unions redistribution?

How to reach better working conditions under SER conditions?

- Wage increases as **priority for lower income groups**
- **Choices** between higher wages and more leisure time
- „**Good Work**“ as basic condition for stopping growing consumption needs
- Pressure on state social and tax policies can **relieve collective distribution struggles**



## 5 Summary: Social-Ecological Reduction as need and as chance

- Changing conditions make it more urgent to communicate SOR as a degrowth related approach and to focus on strategies which can be implemented politically
- Public discussion of „reduction“ can be tied with related directions of thought/ new social experiences
- At same time it provokes fundamental ideological resistance and doubts from potential partners
- It is an unavoidable challenge and opportunity to broaden public discourse and to pave the way for first socio-ecological reductive steps

Comments welcome!

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