



Winning while Waning? The Cunning of Ecological Reason.

Journal:	<i>European Journal of Social Theory</i>
Manuscript ID	EST-24-0167
Manuscript Type:	Original Manuscript
Keywords:	Modernity, Eco-emancipatory project, Anthropocene, Sustainability, Regression
Abstract:	<p>More than fifty years have passed since the eco-emancipatory project (EEP) was launched in the wake of the silent revolution triggered by new social movements. A response to the side-effects of first (industrial) modernity, the EEP helped to shape a second (reflexive) modernity that was supposed to democratise society and liberate nature. But the EEP seems to have failed on that account — hence the post-apocalyptic turn within environmentalism. However, the fate of the EEP is more nuanced than it seems. In this paper, I argue that the latter has been by and large successfully assimilated by liberal societies. The ecomodernist response to the Anthropocene, which pursues human and nonhuman emancipation by means other than those of the EEP, attests to that. It also signals a way out of late modernity, heralding a third modernity characterised by the post-utopian management of socio-natural relations in increasingly liberal albeit not fully democratic societies.</p>

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1

2

3 **Winning while Waning?**

4

5 **The Cunning of Ecological Reason**

6

7

8

9 **Abstract**

10 More than fifty years have passed since the eco-emancipatory project (EEP) was launched in
11 the wake of the silent revolution triggered by new social movements. A response to the side-
12 effects of first (industrial) modernity, the EEP helped to shape a second (reflexive) modernity
13 that was supposed to democratise society and liberate nature. But the EEP seems to have failed
14 on that account — hence the post-apocalyptic turn within environmentalism. However, the fate
15 of the EEP is more nuanced than it seems. In this paper, I argue that the latter has been by and
16 large successfully assimilated by liberal societies. The ecomodernist response to the
17 Anthropocene, which pursues human and nonhuman emancipation by means others than those
18 of the EEP, attests to that. It also signals a way out of late modernity, heralding a third modernity
19 characterised by the post-utopian management of socionatural relations in increasingly liberal
20 albeit not fully democratic societies.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

31 **Keywords**

32
33 Modernity, eco-emancipatory project, sustainability, Anthropocene, regression.
34
35

36
37
38 Years have passed since sociologist Frederick Buell (2003) pointed out that environmental
39 apocalypse had become 'a way of life' in Western societies. His ambiguous claim — which can
40 refer to the normalisation of the environmental crisis or to the shallow assimilation of green
41 values by members of those societies — has gained new meaning since the rise of climate
42 change as a widespread public concern. On the face of it, the notion rings truer than ever: as
43 global warming worsens, the public seem shockingly unmoved. Despite the subject having been
44 picked up by media outlets and the entertaining industry across the globe, radical action is not
45 taken and green parties do not win elections. In sum, the climate crisis seems to have been
46 *accepted* by the very societies that created it. Or at least that is what environmental theorists
47 conclude when they see that their warnings are not heeded.
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56

57 In view of this picture, it can be asked what happened to the eco-emancipatory project (EEP)
58 that emerged in the 1970s with the aim of emancipating human beings (and other species) from
59
60

1
2
3 political subjugation and existential alienation. This is the topic of this Special Issue, which
4 adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. At the same time, the SI aims to contribute to the
5 social theory of modernity, diagnosing its current metamorphosis. Insofar as the EEP and global
6 environmental change happen in a particular stage of modernity, it can be assumed that the
7 trajectories of the EEP *and* that of modernity are intertwined. To put it differently, the rise to
8 prominence and fall into obscurity of the eco-emancipatory project is connected to material and
9 cultural changes that alters the shape and direction of modernity.

10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17 These are complex phenomena that can be interpreted in different ways. While endorsing
18 Beck's (1994, 2009) conceptual distinction between first (industrial) modernity and second
19 (reflexive) modernity, I share with Ingolfur Blühdorn (2024) the view that the EEP itself is an
20 *outcome* of first modernity, i.e. a novelty that comes out in a *second modernity* which in the
21 meantime seems to have run its course. Has the EEP just failed? As Blühdorn himself points
22 out, the fact that established values, notions and narratives of progressive politics have been
23 undermined does not mean that there are no progressive outcomes at all — and neither should
24 it be concluded that the eco-emancipatory project has been simply 'neutralised' in late modern
25 societies. On the contrary, many of its values and demands have been assimilated by liberal-
26 capitalistic societies, which have gone so far as to adopt sustainability — a concept that emerges
27 after, and is distinct from, the EEP — as their goal. Therefore, sustainability is not a failed
28 paradigm to be replaced by an alternative one (see Benson and Craig, 2017), but rather proof
29 that the EEP has left its signature on the institutions and values of late modernity.

30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41 Such assimilation has involved a partial devaluation of the goals set by the eco-emancipatory
42 project as originally formulated in the 1960s and 1970s. Following Boltanski and Chiapello's
43 (2007) argument, co-opting the EEP would have enriched the ideology that justifies
44 engagement in capitalism — an ideological threat to the capitalistic order is thus neutralised
45 through partial assimilation. The mainstreaming of the EEP thus means that the latter has lost
46 its critical edge, but at the same time has become broadly influential within liberal societies. It
47 should be noted, however, that the EEP adopted from the outset an utopian form and often —
48 *pace* Blühdorn — clashed against liberal-democratic norms. For liberal societies, co-optation
49 was the only way to integrate the EEP's values; an untarnished EEP can only be realised in a
50 society that might be democratic by other means but certainly not liberal.

1
2
3 As for the social theory of modernity, the EEP emerged when post-industrial societies were
4 transitioning from the economic affluence of the so-called *Trente Glorieuses* to the panic
5 induced by the oil crisis and the financial troubles of the 1970s. New social movements and
6 their intellectuals made demands back then that contributed to the *deepening* of late modern
7 social reflexivity, as theorised by Beck (1992) and his 'risk society'. What Blühdorn
8 conceptualises as the EEP is, in fact, the project of what Beck calls second modernity (see Beck
9 2009). Beck himself does not foresee an end to second modernity: whereas reflexivity means
10 on the one hand that industrial society is confronted with the undesired side-effects of its own
11 development (*risk society*), it points on the other to the request that such side-effects are
12 confronted in particular ways (*reinvention of politics*). In my view, though, this should in turn
13 lead to a *third* modernity in which the problems created by the first one, confronted and
14 compounded by the second, are addressed and solved. Although others have spoken of third
15 modernity in different terms (see Blühdorn, 2024, pp. 237-252), the reflexivity introduced by
16 second modernity is supposed to *work* during third modernity. To sum this up: first modernity
17 *produces* industrial societies, second modernity *faces* their unwanted consequences, third
18 modernity is expected to *respond* effectively to them.
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 So far, human societies are stuck on late modernity, i.e. second modernity. The claim that we
33 now live in the Anthropocene suggests so: the socionatural entanglement brought about by
34 industrial development has thickened and it should be recognised by now that there is no way
35 out of it. Yet being stuck in late modernity produces effects of its own — hence Reckwitz's
36 (2019) claim that we are living the 'end of illusions' created by first modernity. This suggests
37 that the social process by which the dangerous and undesired effects of first modernity are
38 recognised and confronted is still very much ongoing. Relatedly, modernity is some 250 years
39 old now and a great deal of historical experience has accumulated in the meantime. For my
40 purposes in this paper, such knowledge is doubly useful: it urges us to reappraise the dynamics
41 of modernity, but it also invites a reconsideration of the eco-emancipatory project itself. This
42 theoretical operation aims to *update* the latter, which otherwise runs the risk of becoming
43 *outdated* as it clings to dead ideas and obsolete beliefs. I will briefly use the COVID-19
44 pandemic, an event misunderstood by most social theorists, to illustrate these latter points.
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55

56 The paper is organised as follows. In the first section, I explore the trajectory of modernity,
57 rearranging the latter's periodization in a manner that allows a nuanced understanding of the
58 relation between industrialisation, reflexivity, and the EEP. In the second section, I focus on
59
60

1
2
3 the latter, making sense of the transition from early understandings of the sustainable society to
4 the institutional assimilation of this ideal. While I use the pandemic to illustrate how unrealistic
5 the expectations of radical social change have become, I point out that degrowth is now the
6 main response to the climate crisis on the part of neo-ecologism. In the last section, I argue that
7 the fate of the EEP deserves a nuanced appraisal: although it is not current anymore, it has not
8 exactly become anachronistic either. In this regard, I present the ecomodernist approach to
9 socionatural relations as the outcome of the EEP's impact on liberal societies.
10
11
12
13
14
15
16

17 **TRAJECTORIES OF (LATE) MODERNITY**

18
19
20 Where are we? How can the course of modernity be described and how does the EEP fit into
21 the resulting picture? In which ways have the EEP and modernity influenced each other,
22 generating what kind of progressive and regressive effects and side-effects? Different
23 conceptualizations have been put forward. Whereas Andreas Reckwitz distinguishes between
24 bourgeois, industrial and late modernity, Hartmut Rosa refers to early, high, and late modernity
25 (see Reckwitz and Rosa, 2021). On his part, Beck (2009) describes a reflexive or second
26 modernity that follows on the industrial or first modernity, while the term 'late modernity' is
27 attributed by Blühdorn (2023) to the later moment (now) in which the hopes of the EEP
28 becomes unsustainable, as reflexive modernisation has failed and experimental politics is
29 unable to deliver real transformation of contemporary societies.
30 societies.
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

41 In my view, a slightly different conceptualisation of Western modernity is apposite. Beck
42 (1995) was right when he described the risk society produced by early modernization as 'the
43 age of unforeseen side-effects'. Still, it is confusing to claim that the latter was meant to be
44 overcome in second modernity thanks to an increasing social reflexivity. It would be more
45 accurate to say that the unfolding of industrialisation in Western societies corresponds to *first*
46 modernity, the unexpected side-effects of which become apparent in the 1960s and 1970s —
47 the moment of reflexivity in which new social movements emerge and request greater quality
48 of life, political democratisation, personal self-determination, and the liberation of nature. In
49 the following decades, the side-effects of modernisation were *problematized and confronted*
50 *but not solved*. And yet the gradual adoption of sustainability as a societal goal reflects a
51 growing awareness of the need to deal with socionatural relations. Therefore, the apparent
52 failure of the EEP should not be equated with the failure of reflexive modernity writ large. And
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 while I agree with Blühdorn's claim that we are now in an interregnum between the world of
4 second modernity and the coming of a third modernity (see Blühdorn, 2024), the latter is more
5 ambivalent — less unsustainable — than his analysis suggests.
6
7
8
9

10 It should be noted that the EEP took shape as post-war stability was coming to an end: after
11 years of relative civic peace and economic growth, the oil shock caused an economic recession
12 that took years to absorb and political violence erupted within liberal democracies. Even though
13 new social movements fought for a better society, the future soon ceased to be the place where
14 utopia would be realised and acquired instead a new menacing quality. It was only between the
15 fall of the Soviet Union and the financial crisis of 2008 that some degree of collective optimism
16 grew across the Western world and beyond (see Brooke-Smith, 2022, Gillespie, 2018, pp. 143-
17 184). Such optimism has been later contemplated as a «confidence trap» (Runciman, 2013)
18 inadvertently laid by liberal overreach (see Gray, 2009). In the years since, a cultural and
19 political turn has certainly taken place in which the nostalgia for an idealised past, particularly
20 for the period 1945-1975, has gradually crept in (Reckwitz, 2019, p. 15). As a result, creating
21 new political narratives has become increasingly difficult because of the criticism to which the
22 modern understanding of history as a teleological process towards ever-growing social progress
23 has been submitted.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 In modernity, the present is seen as a time of transition towards a *better* future — a *Neuzeit* that
37 stands in contrast with an obscure past (Koselleck, 2004). Humans themselves make that future;
38 modernity is the time in which reason takes control and seeks to create societies in which
39 autonomous human beings can fulfill their life plans under conditions of material abundance.
40 Admittedly, modernity has a dark side that features Western colonisation, socioeconomic
41 inequality, messianic violence, and environmental damage. However, its achievements should
42 not be underestimated. As DeLong (2022) has argued, the years between 1870 and 2010 saw
43 humanity slouching towards utopia — i.e., transitioning from near-universal dire material
44 poverty to a world that is richer than ever, albeit grossly unequal too. It cannot be claimed that
45 *a good life for all* has been provided, even less *within planetary boundaries*, but it cannot be
46 denied either that *a good life for many* has been fulfilled. That so many disasters have happened
47 in the meantime — from wars to genocides — attests to the ambiguous nature of modernity and
48 perhaps human history writ large. Modernity does not only produce risks but actually *multiplies*
49 them, thus carrying the risk of a great catastrophe. It has both up- and downsides, so that it is
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 unclear yet what its fate will be. When judging the outcomes of first and second modernity,
4 then, Kant's (1992) skepticism towards the 'messianic faith in history' comes to mind.
5
6
7

8 While the promise of betterment formulated by liberalism is not altogether false, the «futurist»
9 regime of historicity finds itself in crisis (Hartog, 2017). Societies have proven fragile, and
10 progress is not linear — former expectations are thus now perceived as delusions (Reckwitz,
11 2019, pp. 9-11). As a result, generic appeals are routinely made to 'imagine a different way of
12 being in this world where more science, more technology, more private enterprise, more
13 progress cannot provide the means of repair' (Hoggett, 2023). Other than that, a defensive
14 strategy of *adaptation* is prevalent (see Staab, 2023). However, to claim that there has been
15 progress in the history of Western modernity is just to claim that 'sociopolitical problems have
16 been identified and solved by recourse to action in line with modern normative commitments',
17 while also acknowledging that there is no guarantee that further long-term progress will
18 continue to happen (Wagner, 2012, p. 42). In other words: modernity has not been devoured by
19 itself, but the unlimited expectations created by the modern *narrative* cannot be fulfilled so
20 easily in the Anthropocene. As climate change and other environmental challenges add new
21 pressure on late modern societies, we remain apparently stalled. But Reckwitz (2019, p. 15) is
22 onto something when he claims that the 'end of illusions' is an opportunity for a critical
23 perspective that is neither nostalgic nor dystopian. I will use the COVID-19 pandemic to
24 suggest a theoretical way forward before turning my attention to the EEP and the rise of neo-
25 ecologism.
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

41 Unsurprisingly, the critical literature saw the pandemic as a confirmation of modernity's failure.
42 It was identified as the 'Great Accident' which — according to Paul Virilio (2007) —
43 contemporary societies were secretly expecting, that of which industrial disasters and terrorist
44 attacks were only a prefiguration. Hence the claim that the 'juggernaut of modernity' (a concept
45 from Giddens, 1991) had reached a breaking point, incapable of delivering unlimited progress
46 and challenging contemporary society to develop an alternative to the neoliberal paradigm
47 (Lusardi and Tomelleri, 2020). When the globalised world came to a halt and lockdowns were
48 enforced all over the globe, many commentators argued that this reaction *proved* that there
49 *exists* an alternative to the liberal-capitalistic order (e.g. Latour, 2020). However, the pandemic
50 did *not* for a minute produced a viable alternative order — it just forced the temporary
51 suspension of most economic and social activity, which was resumed after a while without any
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 lasting, significant change. The claim that the latter was the chance to radically transform the
4 world was a political fantasy out of touch with current political realities.
5
6
7

8 And yet the pandemic should not be interpreted as a *consequence* of modernisation (see Arias-
9 Maldonado, 2023). Zoonotic spillovers have occurred throughout history, ever since human
10 beings started to live sedentarily. Moreover, they also occurred when human societies had a
11 relatively moderate impact on their environment (see McNeill, 1998). The pandemic was less
12 a crisis of intelligibility — we know what has happened and knew that it could happen — than
13 a crisis of predictability, since we did not know *when* or *how* an epidemic of such magnitude
14 might take place. What tells modernity apart from other historical periods is the confidence
15 with which human societies have confronted the future. It has certainly been alleged that the
16 modern attempt to suppress uncertainty has obscured the existence of 'radical uncertainty' (Kay
17 and King, 2020), so that modern societies would have become victims of a 'myth of
18 measurability' of their own making (Reddy, 2006). But it may simply be the case that modern
19 societies have grown more complex and hence less predictable — regularities can be calculated,
20 but deviations cannot be anticipated.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 A normative prescription can be deduced from these insights, namely, the injunction to
33 conceptualise modernity in a way that takes into account its uneven, dynamic, and bumpy
34 trajectory. This requires a balancing act: as much as the optimism featured by early moderns
35 cannot be sustained, a fatalistic account of its development — one that ignores material and
36 moral progress — is not warranted either. Likewise, the eco-emancipatory project must be
37 revised under this new light, i.e. according to an empirically informed understanding of the
38 tangled relations between reason and history in the course of modernity. In other words, the
39 expectations of progress must be consistent with the conditions under which that progress is
40 pursued:
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49

50 'The history of modernity is not a smooth unfolding of basic ideas and principles as they move
51 towards concretization in historical reality. Rather, it is a struggle over the interpretation of such
52 ideas and principles, a struggle in the course of which central problems of human social life
53 need to be addressed and in which any solution to these problems may engender new problems
54 to be addressed in the future' (Wagner, 2012, p. xii).
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 To complicate matters, modern societies can be described as constantly requiring a 'dynamic
4 stabilization' that results from their need of material growth, technological augmentation, and
5 cultural innovation (Rosa, Dörre, Lessenich, 2017). Their development is meant to be turbulent,
6 delivering goods and inflicting harms to groups and individuals whose interests and viewpoints
7 will inevitably enter into conflict. As a result, thinkers and movements alike have dreamt of an
8 alternative model in which disasters do not happen and social as well as socionatural relations
9 are stable and plentiful. Among them is the eco-emancipatory project that seeks to provide *a*
10 *good life for all within planetary boundaries* (see Blühdorn in this SI). In the next section, I
11 deal with the question of whether the EEP has failed, providing a reformulation of the eco-
12 emancipatory ideal in tune with the conception of modernity that I have just outlined.

21 22 **THE PROMISE AND LIMITS OF (ECO)EMANCIPATION**

23
24
25 If the aspiration to push forward a socio-ecological transformation amid the pandemic revealed
26 a lack of awareness of the condition in which Western societies find themselves, it is doubtful
27 that the EEP had a better chance to realise its goals when it emerged in the wake of the so-called
28 «silent revolution» of the 1970s (Inglehart, 1977). As it happens, the EEP was always a minority
29 agenda. As a regulative ideal, it could and it did influence both politics and culture. But in view
30 of its utopian aspirations, its success or failure should not be judged by the measure in which
31 its agenda was literally carried out by and within liberal societies.

32
33
34 Nevertheless, the fate of the EEP is often described as a failure in which great hopes are
35 disappointed and progressive movements are rendered powerless in the face of the ongoing
36 ecological crisis. For instance, Blühdorn (2004, 2007) believes that liberal environmental
37 policies are 'simulative politics' whose implementation aims to give the impression that
38 something is being done about sustainability while the «authentic politics» embodied by radical
39 environmentalism — those espoused by the EEP — remain unfulfilled. Lately, he has come to
40 the view that even the narratives and social practices that revolve around post-capitalism and
41 degrowth *contribute* to the politics of unsustainability, as they provide hope for a 'new eco-
42 political departure' that will never take place (Blühdorn, 2023). There is no way out, it seems,
43 as even those who fight against the current social order end up reinforcing it.

44
45
46 In this reading, a truly *sustainable society* is not just a liberal society that manages to become
47 sustainable, but one in which the eco-emancipatory project is fully achieved. As Blühdorn
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 himself points out, the ecologism that emerges within so-called new social movements seeks
4 from the beginning much more than to protect the environment (Blühdorn, 2022: 485). Their
5 idea of the sustainable society meant a radical departure from the existing order, a veritable
6 transvaluation of values that should eventually lead to small-scale, self-governed societies in
7 which people would live autonomous lives in harmony with nature (see De Geus, 1999). As
8 soon as existing liberal societies committed themselves to sustainability, though, the concept of
9 the sustainable society as envisioned by greens lost its original meaning as the site for a total
10 reinvention of society and was deprived of its utopian potential. From the standpoint of the
11 EEP, liberal sustainability is about *resilience* and not *transformation* — sustainability without
12 ecologism only seeks to prevent the ecological collapse of capitalist societies (see Blühdorn,
13 2023: 486).

14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24 In the meantime, disappointment has turned into despair: the growing belief among
25 environmentalists that ecological collapse is very likely this time around suggests a different
26 interpretation of Buell's claim about apocalypse being our way of life. And yet the emphasis on
27 collapse and extinction is hardly new. Back in the late 1960s, Paul Ehrlich (1969) depicted an
28 overpopulated world that would soon be incapable of feeding its inhabitants and wrote that
29 'most of the people who are going to die in the greatest cataclysm in the history of man have
30 already been born'. Likewise, best-selling pamphlet *Blueprint for Survival* (Goldsmith, 1974)
31 announced that the 'irreversible disruption of the life support systems on this planet' would
32 happen 'possibly by the end of the century' if radical action was not taken. In the face of such
33 existential danger, some theorists claimed that democracy should be replaced by an eco-
34 authoritarian state devoted to securing the conditions for human survival (see Ophuls, 1977,
35 Hardin, 1977). Unsurprisingly, the request for more personal autonomy and democratic self-
36 determination coexisted in the EEP with anti-pluralistic and anti-liberal trends — take
37 Marcuse's injunction not to tolerate those who live according to the false ideals of liberalism
38 (Wolff, Moore and Marcuse, 1969) or Foucault's vindication of the Iranian revolution (see
39 Afary and Anderson, 2005).

40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
The apocalyptic discourse of early environmentalism was assimilated in the 80s and 90s by
liberal societies when they adopted ecological modernisation as a strategy towards
sustainability. But this time it is different: while the prospect of abandoning the comfort zone
of the Holocene — transitioning towards a more unstable and certainly hotter Anthropocene —
has brought environmental catastrophism back into life, there is no hope left that sustainability

1
2
3 or liberalism are up to the task of securing global sustainability. The belief that the human
4 species may go extinct in a disrupted Earth features more prominently than ever in mainstream
5 narratives, while environmental political theory has returned to positions that are both radical
6 and familiar: either liberal-capitalistic societies are turned into post-growth communities or else
7 humanity will suffer first and perish later (e.g. Foster, 2020).
8
9

10
11
12
13 This rhetoric can be seen as an attempt to *awaken* the public's consciousness — the human
14 species might perish *if* radical action is not taken right away. Yet within the ranks of neo-
15 ecologism, that which emerged in the wake of the financial crisis, there are also those who take
16 collapse for granted and stress the need to prepare for it (see Servigne and Stevens, 2015). Still
17 others adopt a position that has been labelled 'post-apocalyptic environmentalism' (Cassegard
18 and Thorn, 2018). They argue that catastrophe is already happening and some disadvantaged
19 groups have been suffering its consequences for some time now — among them blacks or
20 women who are equated with nature and suffer accordingly (see Mitman, 2019). Post-
21 apocalyptic environmentalism departs from a tradition of thought in which the anticipation of
22 future disaster is meant to elicit fear, thus sowing the seeds for green utopia. In contrast, this is
23 an utterly pessimistic worldview in which the eco-emancipatory project simply does not figure
24 and instead there is an invitation to 'learn to die in the Anthropocene' (Scranton, 2015).
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 A more optimistic prospect is presented by the degrowth movement, which is pushed forward
37 by activists and academics alike. Its goal is to create some kind of post-growth society where
38 people live in small democratic communities off renewable resources and enjoy life according
39 to a whole new set of values — austerity, creativity, relationality, spirituality, and the like (see
40 Demaria et al ., 2013; Kallis, 2019). The resulting picture is not that different from the 'classless
41 society' devised by Karl Marx, as post-growth society promises a new escape from the realm of
42 necessity. Unsurprisingly, Saito (2022) has advocated a 'degrowth communism' that manages
43 to revive Marx — all traces of Prometheanism duly erased — while offering a vision of a post-
44 scarcity society in which abundance has less to do with unlimited desires than with the fulfilling
45 of human potentialities. In a similar vein, Latour and Schultz argue that emancipation itself
46 must be liberated 'from the narrow register of ideas of liberty explored by liberals and socialists
47 alike, within the sole framework of production at the service of human beings' (Latour and
48 Schutz, 2022, p. 33).
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Remarkably, the post-growth vision is consistent with the EEP's critique of Western modernity.
4 The latter's main point is that the ecological crisis is value-driven, as it reflects the alienation
5 suffered by the modern subject in a disenchanted world dedicated to the empty task of
6 producing unlimited economic growth (see Kassiola, 2002). Hence Soper's (2022) claim that
7 we need a cultural revolution in thinking about prosperity, as well as the abandonment of
8 growth-driven consumerism. At the same time, though, these visions remain vague and elusive.
9 As Rosa et al. (2017) acknowledge, 'we are very far from having a clear outline either of the
10 structures and institutions of a post-growth society or of a viable path for the transformations
11 needed to get there'. The gap between normative ideals and the conditions required for its
12 implementation is as wide as it was in the 1970s, but at the same time it feels and looks much
13 wider — fifty years have passed without the sustainable society *as described by the EEP* being
14 closer to its realisation.
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

25 On top of that, as I have argued, the pandemic has shown that the public does not support the
26 kind of socio-ecological transformation advocated by radical environmentalists. They may have
27 good reasons for it. Even though a post-growth society entails a significant reduction in the
28 available choices and most people reject a *voluntary and planned* reduction of their material
29 comfort, advocates of degrowth simply expect that people living in rich societies will peacefully
30 adopt the welfare standards of Sierra Leone, while the inhabitants of the Global South would
31 give up the prospect of reaching the level of dignity and welfare enjoyed in the Western world
32 (Wissenburg, 2021, p. 791). Supposedly, members of a post-growth society *would not feel* that
33 their choices are restricted, since the cultural shift that is necessary for transitioning towards a
34 post-growth society would have changed their minds already (see Cannavò, 2016). The
35 argument is circular: degrowth can only happen once a new worldview has been adopted, but
36 nobody knows how that is supposed to happen — nor whether this *could* happen at all.
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 Moreover, it should not be taken for granted that degrowth — in the unlikely event that all
49 human societies became post-growth societies — could provide *a good life for all within*
50 *planetary boundaries*. This is a key question, since it is also unclear whether the original eco-
51 emancipatory project had a viable social model in mind. While Dobson (2013) wonders whether
52 values such as democracy or freedom depend on conditions of abundance, Quilley (2013)
53 argues that the trade-offs involved in the move to smaller-scale societies are hardly recognized
54 in the degrowth literature, even though such move would surely be 'politically and socially
55 regressive'. Moreover, degrowth theorists tend to overlook the possibility that the scarcity
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 produced by economic contraction might lead to more autocratic forms of governance
4 (Crownshaw et al., 2018, p. 129). In this regard, it is hard to see how the lack of economic
5 growth could create the conditions that seem necessary for a harmonious social life — from
6 food security and energy provision to health care and climate adaptation.
7
8
9

10
11 Be that as it may, the political success of degrowth is nowhere in sight. The conclusion that
12 follows is apparent: fifty years into its launching, the EEP has been part of a wider history of
13 eco-political transformation and progress which, however, has not brought about the very kind
14 of socio-ecological transformation advocated by radical environmentalism. According to
15 Blühdorn, this is due to the success of its own logic (see his contribution to this SI), while others
16 routinely put the blame on neoliberalism and global capitalism (see Brand and Wissen, 2018).
17 In the concluding section, I offer my own view on the subject.
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

25 **THE CUNNING OF ECOLOGICAL REASON**

26
27
28
29 The trajectory of the EEP is more ambivalent than it seems. In fact, my argument is that the
30 latter has been successfully assimilated by liberal societies. It has failed *despite* its influence,
31 or rather *because of* its influence. As the EEP could not simply be adopted as such by liberal
32 societies, liberal societies have *co-opted* it successfully. Therefore, it is not waning but winning,
33 or rather winning while waning: the goal of achieving *a good life for all within planetary*
34 *boundaries* has more supporters than ever, as the need to stabilise the Earth system is recognised
35 by an increasing number of political actors and common people across the world. It is not a
36 unanimous goal, as the difficulties to push forward the socio-ecological agenda comes to show.
37 But this hardly qualifies as a regression — Kant (1992) would say that it amounts to moral
38 progress — and it is compatible with the rising tide of right-wing populism and political
39 extremism that is taking place within Western democracies. Two social phenomena can happen
40 at the same time, a testimony to modernity's essential ambivalence.
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

51
52 It goes without saying that this hypothesis will be rejected by those who cling to the eco-
53 emancipatory project as it was originally conceived, namely as pursuing a thorough
54 transformation of modern societies that involves the end of capitalism. And yet moderating our
55 expectations allows us to see the eco-emancipatory project as a relative success, one that still
56 has a long way to go in late-modern societies as they confront the dangers of the Anthropocene.
57 In this regard, the standard of comparison for empirically observable societies should not be a
58
59
60

1
2
3 utopian alternative that stands a slim chance of being put into practice in existing societies.
4 Although the *feasible* is not popular among non-ideal social scientists, the challenges posed by
5 climate change and the Anthropocene do *ask* for feasibility (Wissenburg, 2021, p. 791). Hence,
6 we need to look carefully into Western societies to appreciate the extent to which environmental
7 concerns and values have penetrated them.
8
9
10
11
12

13 Admittedly, the rise of populism in the aftermath of the financial crisis has seemingly increased
14 the contestation against such values (see Lockwood, 2018). However, it has also been argued
15 that populist radical right parties are just responding to the greater visibility that climate change
16 has acquired in the last decade (see Oswald and Broda, 2021; Schwörer and Fernández-García,
17 2024). Their response is not uniform, either — the wish to protect the heartland has led many
18 of them to articulate a 'climate nationalism' which offer policy proposals of its own (see Ruser
19 and Machin, 2019). At the same time, climate mitigation and adaptation also take place under
20 the radar, as technological change and new environmental standards are gradually adopted by
21 economic actors and civil societies across the globe.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

31 Progress is thus happening in liberal societies, even though the EEP has not been fully realised
32 but rather co-opted and mainstreamed. In the same vein, sustainability did not dash
33 environmental hopes — it just translated them into a language that democratic societies could
34 understand. To put it differently: late-modern societies have assimilated as many values and
35 goals of the EEP as they could. Although a distinction must be made between a regulative ideal
36 and its sociological expression, the sociological expression of a regulative ideal cannot be
37 dissociated from the support that it is able to mobilize through different means — from political
38 parties to social movements, public intellectuals, and civic actors. Did the eco-emancipatory
39 project ever have a strong social platform of its own? It did not. However, environmental values
40 have never been so popular: two-thirds of U.S. adults and 87% of European citizens say that
41 the developing of renewable energy sources should be prioritized, while 86% of people across
42 the world endorse pro-climate social norms and 89% demand intensified political action (see
43 Pew Research Center, 2023; European Commission, 2024; Andre, Boneva, Chopra and Falk,
44 2024).
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55

56 Arguably, the social dissemination of progressive values inevitably entails some degree of
57 trivialisation — by which I refer to its disengagement from a wider body of beliefs oriented
58 towards radical social and political change. While such values penetrate into society and
59
60

1
2
3 reconfigures expectations and norms, they cease to be closely associated to the project of
4 overcoming liberal democracy or the capitalistic economy — as advocated, for instance, by the
5 EEP. But then again, the fact that established values, notions, and narratives of progressive
6 politics have been undermined does not mean that there are no progressive outcomes at all.
7
8 Moreover, the idea that the only modernisation that *counts* as progressive is the one that results
9 from the thorough implementation of the EEP should be resisted. The same goes for the
10 normative association that is subsequently established between the sustainability of
11 socionatural relations and the meaning that the EEP attributes to that concept. A more complex
12 picture emerges from the realisation that the unfolding of the EEP *both* fails to persuade the
13 democratic public that radical social change is warranted *and* leads to the adoption of
14 sustainability as a societal goal. And so the 'victory-crisis' of modernisation, as theorised by
15 Beck (1994, p. 2), could yet end in the victory of modernisation over the climate crisis.
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

25 Change is uneven, sometimes contradictory, often frustrating and maybe too slow — but it is
26 happening. As Wolfgang Merkel (2023) has argued, the current erosion of liberal democracies
27 across the Western world may put them on the defensive, but this development is compatible
28 with important moral and cultural progress in realms such as the protection of sexual minorities,
29 women's empowerment, or the spread of environmental values. Even China, a vast country
30 experiencing a long process of modernisation, is progressing towards achieving the UN
31 Sustainable Development Goals (see Xu et al., 2020). The ambiguity of modern societies
32 reveals itself once again — there is no such thing as immaculate progress or total regression,
33 but a mixture of progress and regression that the energy transition comes to embody as it is
34 simultaneously fostered and resisted, both embraced as a worthy goal and contested in view of
35 its burdens.
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44

45 This suggests that the standard of judgement for measuring the success of the eco-emancipatory
46 project should not be provided by a utopian account of what an *ideal* sustainable society is.
47 Adopting the latter makes it impossible to recognise any real progress in existing societies,
48 leading supporters of the eco-emancipatory project to take shelter in a theoretical fantasy where
49 the planet's inhabitants embrace a political agenda that promises to reduce their material welfare
50 and constrain their life choices. Accordingly, the diffusion of environmental values and the
51 enacting of environmental laws across the Western world is insufficiently recognised in the
52 literature. Citizens everywhere show support for climate policy — they just do not want to be
53 worse off because of their implementation and often do not endorse the catastrophic narratives
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 deployed by environmentalists. As a result, there is a social base for *normalising* an eco-
4 emancipatory project that gives up the goal of abolishing the liberal-capitalistic system and
5 pursues instead its ecological reform.
6
7
8
9

10 What is relevant for this paper, however, is the descriptive side of that normalisation. Leaving
11 aside normative arguments about what is best or what interpretation of modernity should
12 prevail, an alternative to the EEP is taking shape that defends the ecological modernisation of
13 society as the means to achieve emancipatory results for people across the globe. That is what
14 ecomodernism stands for, as the growing literature on the subject comes to show (see Asafu-
15 Adjaye J. et al., 2015; Karlsson, 2018; Symons and Karlsson, 2018; Symmons, 2019; Hallmark,
16 2023; Ellis and Lynas, 2023). A philosophical-cum-political body of thought that stems from a
17 minority strand of green thinking, ecomodernists claim that state-led technological change plus
18 social and cultural innovation will make it possible for human beings and non-human species
19 to thrive in a sustainable planet where poorer countries do not give up economic growth and
20 the natural world is protected for its own sake. Needless to say, this vision has been challenged
21 by critics and the pace of reform can certainly be deemed too slow (see Grunwald, 2018;
22 Fremaux and Barry, 2019). But ecomodernism does seek to deliver *a good life for all within*
23 *planetary boundaries* by means other than those of the EEP.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 Needless to say, the «good life» as defined by ecomodernism differ from the «good life» as
37 defined by the EEP, even though both emphasize personal autonomy and self-determination;
38 the same goes for the idea of living 'within planetary boundaries'. From a socio-theoretical
39 perspective, however, what counts is that ideals such as sustainability or that of achieving a
40 'good Anthropocene' (see Arias-Maldonado, 2019) are formulated by new theorists and actors
41 in a different manner. Ecomodernists reject the vision for sustainability advocated by the EEP
42 and the degrowth literature alike, as well as the claim that ecological collapse is happening or
43 bound to happen soon. They are not alone — others have defended that environmental policies
44 must be paired with economic growth (Leigh, 2015) or the argument that adopting a risk
45 perspective is more fruitful than taking collapse for granted (Heise, 2017, p. 142). In such
46 scenario, the EEP survives in the form of local initiatives that keep the ideal of a green
47 communitarianism alive — such as the Transition Town movements or local money schemes.
48 The regulative ideal of the EEP thus becomes another expression of moral and political
49 pluralism within liberal society, i.e. an alternative way of living that complements and enriches
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 a larger process of social transformation while contributing to cultural change and the gradual
4 spread of green values.
5
6

7
8 Interestingly, it is only thanks to the politisation of industrial modernity brought about by the
9 EEP that ecomodernism may emerge in late modernity as an alternative to both liberal inaction
10 and neo-ecologist catastrophism. And while it can be argued that ecomodernism is just
11 ecological modernisation by other name, this is not the case. Although ecomodernism is a heir
12 to ecological modernisation, which flourished in the 80s and 90s, they differ substantially.
13 Whereas the latter chose market actors and entrepreneurs as the key actors of environmental
14 reform, ecomodernism 'embrace a strong public role in addressing environmental problems and
15 accelerating technological innovation' (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015, p. 30); the ecomodernist state
16 is, in fact, conceived of as an entrepreneurial state (see Symons, 2019). Furthermore, ecological
17 modernisation bets on the *precautionary* principle regarding the use of technology, while
18 ecomodernism endorses state-led *proactionary* innovation as it believes in the healing powers
19 of some key individual technologies (see Lara, 2025). It should also be noted that
20 ecomodernism insists on the need to 'leave nature alone', decoupling economic growth and
21 social development from nature's exploitation, thus showing a strong concern with the
22 preservation of the nonhuman world, both for its own sake and for the sake of human enjoyment
23 (see Marris, 2021). As a response to climate change and the Anthropocene, therefore,
24 ecomodernism's scope is wider and deeper than that of ecological modernisation.
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38

39 Hence an argument can be made that the EEP is winning while waning, as it has decisively
40 contributed to shape a political vision that couples the values of first modernity (economic
41 growth, material comfort, liberal democracy) with those of the second or reflexive modernity
42 (sustainability, personal autonomy, nature's protection, global justice). While this is happening
43 in late (or second) modernity, such vision is to be fulfilled in a third modernity that will
44 eventually result from the acknowledgment that the socionatural entanglement cannot be
45 disentangled but only managed — which is the crucial lesson imparted by the Anthropocene.
46
47
48
49
50
51
52

53 Whether this happens or not, it yet remains to be seen. But the normative core of this emerging
54 project revolves around the belief that the toolkit of Western modernity can be successfully
55 employed to deal with global environmental change. Most of the problems faced by human
56 beings in late modernity are thus socionatural problems that can be fixed through human
57 ingenuity and social cooperation (see Lehner, 2023). While it is time to clean up our industrial
58
59
60

act, turning human societies into more efficient and less polluting places, people should not be confronted with the choice between sustainability and freedom. For ecomodernists and other reformist thinkers, this is also the kind of narrative that may convince people to support environmental policies and green technologies — including those voters that by endorsing populist and right-wing discourses already put freedom before sustainability. A bleak vision of the future, on the contrary, remains politically ineffective. To take the label employed in the past for describing environmentalists, ecomodernists present themselves as a 'vanguard for a new society' (Milbrath, 1985). More than fifty years after the EEP was launched, its advocates cannot be seen anymore as heralds of novelty. Still, a different world is emerging and the EEP has contributed to it, if only in ways that do not fit the expectations it once helped so much to create.

REFERENCES

- Afary J and Anderson K (2005) *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution. Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Andre P Boneva T Chopra F *et al.* (2024) Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action. *Nature Climate Change* 14: 253–259. DOI: 10.1038/s41558-024-01925-3
- Arias-Maldonado M (2019) Towards a Good Anthropocene? In: Arias-Maldonado M and Trachtenbert Z (eds.), *Rethinking the Environment for the Anthropocene: Political Theory and Socionatural Relations in the New Geological Age*. London: Routledge, pp. 137-150.
- Arias-Maldonado M (2023) What's in a Pandemic? COVID-19 and the Anthropocene. *Environmental Values* 32(1): 45-63. DOI 10.3197/096327122X16452897197
- Asafu-Adjaye J *et al.* (2015) *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*. Available at: <http://www.ecomodernism.org/>
- Beck U (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck U (1994) The reinvention of politics. In: Beck U, Giddens A and Lash S (eds) *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck U (1995) *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck U (2009) *World at Risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Benson MH Craig RK (2017) *The End of Sustainability: Resilience and the Future of Environmental Governance in the Anthropocene*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.

- 1
2
3 Blühdorn I (2004) *Post-ecologist Politics: Social Theory and the Abdication of the Ecologist*
4 *Paradigm*. London: Routledge.
5
6 Blühdorn I (2007) Sustaining the Unsustainable: Symbolic Politics and the Politics of
7 Simulation. *Environmental Politics* 16 (2): 251-275. DOI: [10.1080/09644010701211759](https://doi.org/10.1080/09644010701211759)
8
9 Blühdorn I (2022). Post-Democracy and Post-Sustainability. In: Bornemann B. Knappe H and
10 Nanz P (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Democracy and Sustainability*. London & New
11 York: Routledge, pp. 476-494.
12
13 Blühdorn I (2023) Recreational experientialism at ‘the abyss’: rethinking the sustainability
14 crisis and experimental politics. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 19(1). DOI:
15 [10.1080/15487733.2022.2155439](https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2022.2155439)
16
17 Blühdorn I (2024) *Unhaltbarkeit: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
18
19 Brand U and Wissen M (2018) *The Limits to Capitalist Nature: Theorizing and Overcoming*
20 *the Imperial Mode of Living*. London: Rowan & Littlefield.
21
22 Brooke-Smith J (2022) *Accelerate! A History of the 90s*. Gloucestershire: The History Press.
23
24 Buell F (2003) *From apocalypse to way of life: environmental crisis in the American century*.
25 New York: Routledge.
26
27 Cannavò P (2016) Environmental Political Theory and Republicanism. In: Gabrielson T et al.
28 (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University
29 Press, pp. 72-88.
30
31 Cassegard C and Thorn H (2018) Toward a postapocalyptic environmentalism? *Environment*
32 *and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1(4): 561-578. DOI: [10.1177/251484861879](https://doi.org/10.1177/251484861879)
33
34 Crownshaw T et al. (2019) Over the horizon: Exploring the conditions of a post-growth world.
35 *The Anthropocene Review* 6(1–2): 117–141. DOI: [10.1177/251484861879](https://doi.org/10.1177/251484861879)
36
37 De Geus M (1999) *Ecological Utopias. Envisioning the Sustainable Society*. Utrecht:
38 International Books.
39
40 DeLong JB (2022) *Slouching Towards Utopia: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century*.
41 New York: Basic Books.
42
43 Demaria F Schneider F Sekulova F Martínez-Alier J (2013) What is degrowth? From an activist
44 slogan to a social movement. *Environmental Values* 22(2): 191–215. DOI:
45 [10.3197/096327113X13581561725194](https://doi.org/10.3197/096327113X13581561725194)
46
47 Dobson A (2013) Political Theory in a Closed World: Reflections on William Ophuls,
48 Liberalism and Abundance. *Environmental Values* 22: 241-259. DOI:
49 [10.3197/096327113X1358156172](https://doi.org/10.3197/096327113X1358156172)
50
51 Ehrlich P (1969) *The Population Bomb*. New York: Sierra Club.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Ellis E Lynas M Nordhaus T (2023) Ecomodernism. A Clarifying Perspective. *The*
4 *Anthropocene Review (Ahead of Print)*. DOI: 10.1177/20530196231221495
5
6 European Commission (2024) *Special Eurobarometer 550: Attitudes of Europeans towards the*
7 *environment*. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3173>
8
9
10 Foster J B (2020) Why ecological revolution? In: King L and Auriffeille DM (eds.)
11 *Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 35-
12 48.
13
14
15 Fremaux A Barry J (2019) The 'Good Anthropocene' and Green Political Theory: Rethinking
16 Environmentalism, Resisting Eco-modernism. In: Biermann F and Lövbrand E (eds.),
17 *Anthropocene Encounters. New Directions in Green Political Thinking*. Cambridge:
18 Cambridge University Press, pp. 171-190.
19
20
21
22 Giddens A (1991) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
23
24 Gillespie A (2018) *The Long Road to Sustainability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
25
26 Goldsmith E (1974) *Blueprint for Survival*. New York: New American Library.
27
28 Gray J (2009) *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. London: Granta Books.
29
30 Grunwald A (2018) Diverging pathways to overcoming the environmental crisis: A critique of
31 eco-modernism from a technology assessment perspective. *Journal of Cleaner Production*,
32 197(2): 1854-1862. DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.07.212.
33
34 Hällmark K (2023) Politicization after the 'end of nature': The prospect of ecomodernism.
35 *European Journal of Social Theory* 26(1), 48-66. DOI: 10.1177/13684310221103759
36
37 Hardin G (1977) The Tragedy of the Commons. In: Hardin G. and Baden J. (eds.), *Managing*
38 *the Commons*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, pp. 16-30.
39
40 Hartog P (2017) *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time*. New York:
41 Columbia University Press.
42
43
44 Heise U (2017) *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. Chicago:
45 The University of Chicago Press.
46
47
48 Hoggett P (2023) Imagining Our Way in the Anthropocene. *Organisational and Social*
49 *Dynamics* 23(1): 1-14.
50
51 Inglehart R (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western*
52 *Publics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
53
54 Kallis G (2019) *Limits: Why Malthus Was Wrong and Why Environmentalists Should Care*.
55 Stanford: Stanford University Press.
56
57
58 Kant I (1992) *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press.
59
60 Karlsson R (2018) The high-energy planet. *Global Change, Peace and Security* 30(1), 77-84.

- 1
2
3 Kassiola J (2002) The "Tragedy" of Modernity: How Environmental Limits and the
4 Environmental Crisis Produce the Need for Postmodern Values and Institutions. In: Kassiola
5 J (ed.) *Explorations in Environmental Political Theory: Thinking About What We Value*.
6 London: Routledge, pp. 14-36.
7
8
9
10 Kay J and King M (2020) *Radical Uncertainty. Decision-Making for an Unknowable Future*.
11 New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
12
13 Koselleck R (2004) *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia
14 University Press.
15
16
17 Lara D (2025) Making Sense of Ecomodernism: Normative Implications and Rational
18 Consumption. *Environmental Politics* (forthcoming).
19
20
21 Latour, B. (2020). La plasticidad del orden mundial. *El País*, 4th May.
22
23 Latour B and Schultz N (2022) *On the Emergence of an Ecological Class: A Memo*. Cambridge:
24 Polity Press.
25
26 Leigh P (2015) *Austerity Ecology & the Collapse-Porn Addicts: A Defence of Growth,*
27 *Progress, Industry and Stuff*. Winchester/Washington: Zero Books.
28
29 Lehner F (2023) *Deliberative Governance for Sustainable Development. An Innovative*
30 *Solution for Environment, Economy and Society*. London & New York: Routledge.
31
32 Lockwood M (2018) Right-Wing Populism and the Climate Change Agenda: Exploring the
33 Linkages. *Environmental Politics* 27 (4): 712–732.
34
35
36 Lusardi R and Stefano T (2020) The Juggernaut of Modernity Collapses. The Crisis of Social
37 Planification in the Post COVID-19 Era. *Frontiers in Sociology* 5. DOI:
38 [10.3389/fsoc.2020.611885](https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.611885)
39
40
41 Marris E (2021) *Wild Souls: Freedom and Flourishing in the Non-Human World*. London:
42 Bloomsbury.
43
44
45 McNeill W (1998) *Plagues and Peoples*. New York: Anchor Books.
46
47
48 Merkel W (2023) *Im Zwielficht: Zerbrechlichkeit und Resilienz der Demokratie im 21.*
49 *Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
50
51
52 Milbrath L (1985) *Environmentalists: Vanguard for a New Society*. New York: State University
53 of New York Press.
54
55
56 Mitman G (2019) Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway
57 and Anna Tsing, *Edge Effects Magazine*, June 18th, 2-19.
58
59
60 Ophuls W (1977) *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and
Company.

- Oswald MT Fromm M Broda E (2021) Strategic clustering in right-wing-populism? ‘Green policies’ in Germany and France. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 15: 185–205. DOI: 10.1007/s12286-021-00485-6
- Pew Research Center (2023) *What the data says about Americans views of climate change*. Available at: <https://pewrsr.ch/3saE1wX>
- Quilley S (2013) De-Growth Is Not a Liberal Agenda: Relocalisation and the Limits to Low Energy Cosmopolitanism. *Environmental Values* 22: 261-285. DOI: 10.3197/096327113X13581561725310
- Reckwitz A (2019) *Das Ende der Illusionen. Politik, Ökonomie und Kultur in der Spätmoderne*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Reckwitz A and Rosa H (2021) *Spätmoderne in der Krise. Was leistet die Gesellschaftstheorie?* Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Reddy S (2006) Claims to expert knowledge and the subversion of democracy. The triumph of risk over uncertainty. *Economy and Society* 25 (2): 222-254. DOI: 10.1080/03085149600000011
- Rosa H Dörre K Lessenich S (2017) Appropriation, Activation and Acceleration: The Escalatory Logics of Capitalist Modernity and the Crises of Dynamic Stabilization. *Theory, Culture & Society* 34(1): 53–73. DOI: 10.1177/0263276416657600
- Runciman D (2013) *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ruser A Machin A (2019) Nationalising the Climate: Is the European Far Right Turning Green? *Green European Journal* 27. September. Available at: <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/nationalising-the-climate-is-the-european-far-right-turning-green/>
- Saito K (2022) *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwörer J Fernández-García B (2024) Climate Sceptics or Climate Nationalists? Understanding and Explaining Populist Radical Right Parties’ Positions towards Climate Change (1990–2022). *Political Studies* 72(3): 1178-1202. DOI: 10.1177/00323217231176475
- Scranton R (2015) *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene. Reflections on the End of a Civilization*. San Francisco: City Light Books.
- Servigne P and Stevens R (2015) *Comment tout peut s'effondrer. Petit manuel de collapsologie à l'usage des générations présentes*. Paris: Seuil.

- 1
2
3 Soper K (2020) *Post-Growth Living: For an Alternative Hedonism*. London: Verso.
- 4 Staab P (2023) *Anpassung: Leitmotiv der nächsten Gesellschaft*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- 5
6 Symons J and Karlsson R (2018). Ecomodernist citizenship: rethinking political obligations in
7 a climate-changed world. *Citizenship Studies*,22(7). Doi:10.1080/13621025.2018.1508414.
- 8
9 Symons J (2019) *Ecomodernism: Technology, Politics, and the Climate Crisis*. Cambridge:
10 Polity Press.
- 11
12 Virilio P (2007) *The Original Accident*. Polity: Malden.
- 13
14 Wagner P (2012) *Modernity: Understanding the Present*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity.
- 15
16 Wissenburg M (2021) The Anthropocene and the republic. *Critical Review of International*
17 *Social and Political Philosophy*, 24(5): 779-796. DOI: 10.1080/13698230.2019.1698152
- 18
19 Wolff RP, Moore B, Marcuse H (1969) *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- 20
21 Xu Z Chau SN Chen X et al. (2020) Assessing progress towards sustainable development over
22 space and time. *Nature* 577: 74–78. DOI: 10.1038/s41586-019-1846-3
- 23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60