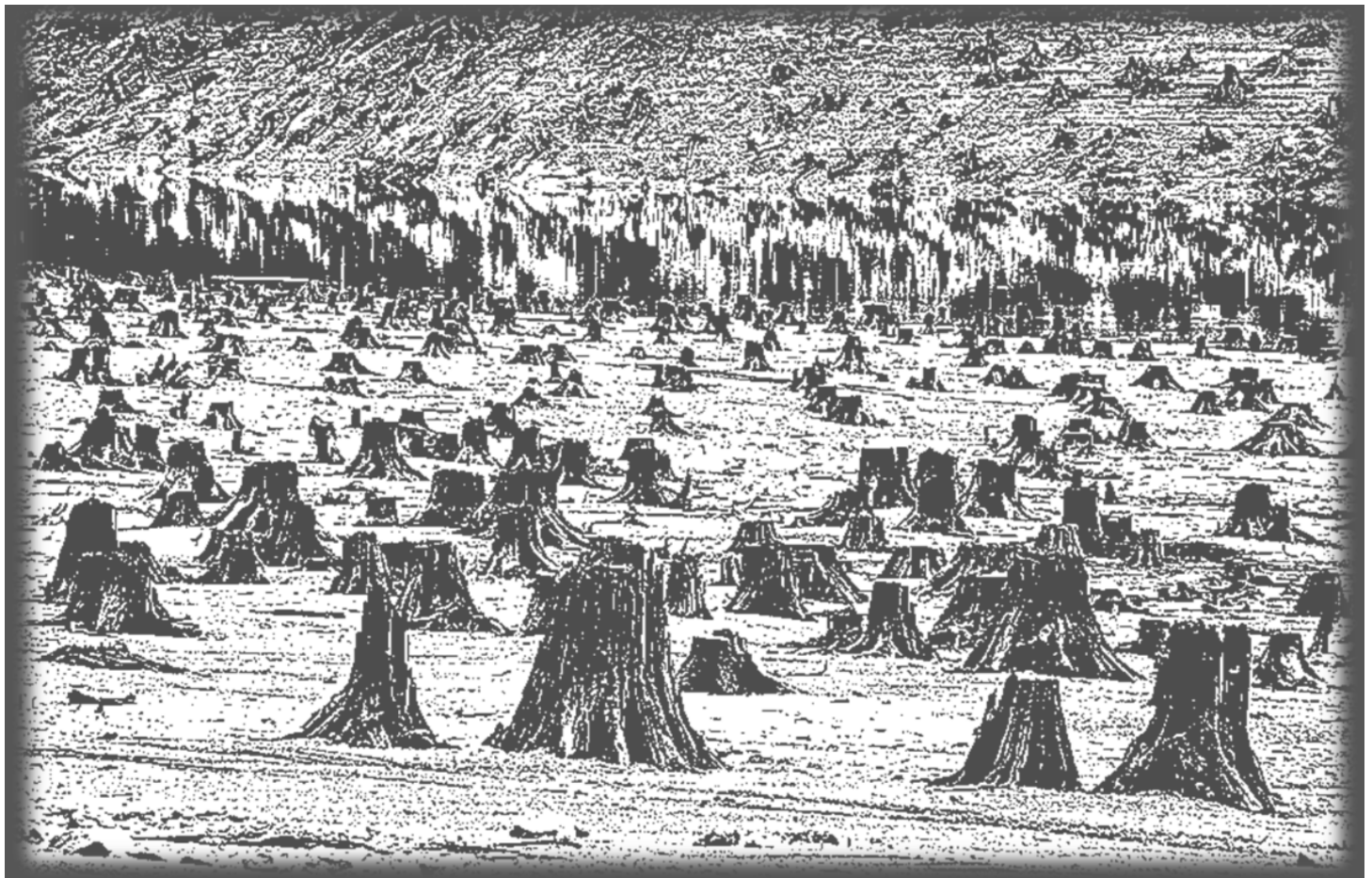


Ecological Authoritarian Maneuvers: Leninist Delusions, Co-optation & Anarchist Love



Alexander Dunlap

Forward

Below is a leaked excerpt from the introduction of a book in preparation with Pluto Press. The contract is not signed, the current book title is potentially provisional and there are many more chapters to write, but this book seeks to join the popular academic debates based on—what will be once the book comes out—ten years of working on environmental conflicts in Latin America and Europe. I dare not say the title of the book as it might change or fail to appear. This leaked excerpt from the introduction emerges because of the lack of critical appraisal, if not deserved hostility, towards eco-Leninism. This excerpt highlights the bad faith, academic dishonesty and shameless Leninist manipulations employed by Andreas Malm, which—in Leninist fashion—seeks to disarm and discredit anarchists and, to a lesser degree, (anti-state) Indigenous land defenders. Anarchists and Indigenous peoples are two broad signifiers—containing a great diversity—who are still alive, as well as they can be, and who obstruct the Leninist project in the past and present. Obstructing state capitalism, modernism and Marxian teleology (e.g. faith in historical materialism), earned rural and self-organized people Lenin's scorn and hatred. Autonomy, spontaneity and direct action will always threaten high-modernist ideologies and resist the social engineering demanded by 'socialist modernism'.

The book introduction begins by briefly reviewing key tendencies in this academic debate. This includes, among trying to officially burying the term Anthropocene, presenting Degrowth, the Green New Deal and Green Authoritarian tendencies. While this categorization is a bit simplified for popular audiences, this is the general terrain in the spotlight of popular academia. The excerpt below, again, emerges from the general shock that academics and climate activists have largely failed to confront and discredit ecological authoritarianism, and have watched comfortably as Malm slanders people on the frontlines of social war, fighting in defense of land, sea, and dignity.

There have been a handful of articles, notably Bue Rübner Hansen's,¹ which go into greater depth with Malm's body of work. Despite their forthright critique, Hansen also demonstrates confusion regarding the politics of attack, or decentralized direct action, when they refer to both the actions of "Earth First! or Earth Liberation Front (ELF)" as "vanguardist ecotage." The academic 'Left' demonstrates a poverty both in terms of understanding, but also in taking the time to study—let alone experiencing the dilemmas of direct action and political struggle. This excerpt remains a contribution to this gap, as there appears to be a political, but

¹ Hansen BR. 2021. The kaleidoscope of catastrophe – on the clarities and blind spots of Andreas Malm. *New Left Review*, Available at: <https://mronline.org/2021/09/28/the-kaleidoscope-of-catastrophe-on-the-clarities-and-blind-spots-of-andreas-malm/>

also an academic incompetence that will have a generational impact. This excerpt, again, is a reaction to academics, not just Malm, who in their accidental or intentional totalitarian or liberal ignorance or lack of fighting spirit haphazardly erase or mischaracterize the histories as well as the existing struggles undertaken by anarchists. This mischaracterization and omission naturally stultifies movements, performs a subtle pacification and, in the Leninist case, a demagogic function to wrangle younger rebels becoming or without a cause. Malm, by all means, is just an archetype and point of focus due to their current platform offered to them by Verso books, academia and the media. Yet, we should expect many more ‘Malm types’ to come as socio-ecological conditions worsen. As we will see below, the future green authoritarians are likely become more intelligent and cunning than Malm. The saddest thing about all of this—even having to write or give power of attention to these characters or topics—is that Malm represents a qualitative decline in the popular conversations concerning the direct action, sabotage and a diversity of tactics. These conversations are not new, even if largely hosted outside academia by anarchist publishers and magazines, and for the obvious reasons. This writing serves as a reminder of what has been, what continues to be and the manipulations published with little hesitation from reparable “radical” and “independent” publishers.

This excerpt is for the new generations of rebels, and the ones that follow, looking to take an active part in resistance—

but remain lost or paralyzed. It is worth studying those who have tried to save rivers and forests, risking life, limb and imprisonment. The secret is to really begin, but also to listen to yourself, the terrain where you play and those committed to creating liberated ecologies. Not talking heads from within knowledge factories—like myself.

Towards happy cats, healthy rivers and vibrant soils.

Alexander Dunlap, Portugal, October 2022.

Meet Degrowth, the Green New Deal & Green Authoritarians

When it comes to conversations on socio-ecological solutions, the Green New Deal, degrowth and authoritarian leftism are some of the alternative solutions debated right now. The Degrowth school, while containing multiple and differing voices, can all agree that in order to avert socio-ecological catastrophe, a planned reduction of energy and resource throughput must be organized until the economy is back in “balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being.”¹ The expansive tendencies of capitalism – transforming the planet into urbanized environments that produce toxic and nuclear wastes – consumes labor, hydrocarbon, mineral, timber, and kinetic energy resources, which is placed front and center in the degrowth analysis. A key strength of degrowth is that its focus on reducing material throughput – the “taking” and “grabbing” – which positions it, in the word of Corinna Burkhardt and colleagues, as “the most radical rejection of the eco-modernist mainstream of growth-centredness, extractivism and industrialism.”² Degrowth confronts the dominant myths of ecological modernism and “green growth,” which believe that technological solutions (e.g. low-carbon infrastructures, carbon capture storage, nuclear power, geoengineering) can remediate climate change and socio-ecological degradation while maintaining economic

growth as we know it.³ While there are various eco-modernist positions, which believe in state administration of large-scale technological projects and a command economy, others believe that capitalism and market mechanisms can correct ecological degradation through market-mechanisms and by decoupling economic growth from ecological degradation. The economy can grow, while ecological degradation can decrease. Eco-modernism, importantly, is an expression and continuation of the existing modernist, capitalist or state capitalist trajectories, even if many eco-modernists might argue the state is not doing enough with geoengineering, nuclear development, increasing urban densities and investing in technological innovation.⁴ This position, however, has been thoroughly discredited at length by ecological economists and degrowthers.⁵ Jason Hickel and Giorgos Kallis, for example, conclude:

This review finds that extant empirical evidence does not support the theory of green growth. This is clear in two key registers. (1) Green growth requires that we achieve permanent absolute decoupling of resource use from GDP. Empirical projections show no absolute decoupling at a global scale, even under highly optimistic conditions. While some models show that absolute decoupling may be achieved in high-income nations under highly optimistic conditions, they indicate that it is not possible to sustain this trajectory in the long term. (2) Green growth also requires that we achieve permanent absolute decoupling of carbon emissions from

GDP, and at a rate rapid enough to prevent us from exceeding the carbon budget for 1.5°C or 2°C. While absolute decoupling is possible at both national and global scales (and indeed has already been achieved in some regions), and while it is technically possible to decouple in line with the carbon budget for 1.5°C or 2°C, empirical projections show that this is unlikely to be achieved, even under highly optimistic conditions.

The empirical evidence opens up questions about the legitimacy of World Bank and OECD efforts to promote green growth as a route out of ecological emergency, and suggests that any policy programmes that rely on green growth assumptions – such as the Sustainable Development Goals – need urgently to be revisited. That green growth remains a theoretical possibility is no reason to design policy around it when the facts are pointing in the opposite direction.⁶

Other studies are finding similar results. Reviewing 179 articles that contain evidence of decoupling, Vadén and colleagues conclude that “the empirical evidence on decoupling is thin” and “the evidence does not suggest that decoupling towards ecological sustainability is happening at a global (or even regional) scale.” Vadén and colleagues continue that analysis of decoupling “needs to be supported by detailed and concrete plans of structural change that delineate how the future will be different from the past.”⁷ These findings, indeed, raises serious questions of legitimacy concerning international financial, governance and higher-

learning institutions that ignore the reality of ecological modernism and degrowth.

Degrowth, as opposed to capitalist liberalism and eco-modernism, gets to the root of human exploitation and nonhuman extraction, questioning developmental modes requiring enormous amount of raw materials and energy. This also includes critically reflecting on the productivist work regimes organized, whether liberal capitalist, state capitalist or otherwise. Degrowth, while retaining differing tendencies within it, seeks to create a public space for socio-ecological remediation and promotes a largely anti-authoritarian developmental pathway by advocating “degrowth values,” such as autonomy, care, conviviality, equity and direct democracy.⁸ Degrowth is the organized and planned reduction of energy and material consumption with the intention of improving the quality of people’s lives by moving towards more convivial and fulfilling lifeways rooted in community-supported agriculture, commoning land, cooperative economies, switching to localized renewable energy production and political systems built around direct democracy and more.⁹ Degrowth represents an autonomous, feminist, democratic and anarchistic approach to social development. Degrowth, as you can imagine, is not without its critics, from ecological modernists to the authoritarian leftists chastising their failure to have a planned program or pronounced focus on the working class.¹⁰ Likewise, there are sympathetic critiques from feminists and anarchists North

and South of the Globe, pointing out their relevance, degrowthers' separation from political struggles (with middleclass positionalities) and failure to be clear about political strategy and action.¹¹ Degrowthers, however, are working through these criticisms,¹² which is compounded by the conflictive reality of capitalism and the state. This means charting a viable path towards social transformation and that degrowthers' "strategic orientation thus needs a strategy for [how to engage] the state."¹³

The issue of the state quickly leads to the hopes surrounding the Green New Deal in all of its variants. While readers might be more familiar with The Green New Deal (GND) as it spread across headlines in 2019, it was initially a term proposed by the infamous conservative economist and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman in 2007. The GND refers to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that responded to the Great Depression with social and economic reforms. In January 2019, congressional representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey proposed the GND in United States Congress. While it failed to pass in the Senate, it created enormous enthusiasm for renewing public policy with a variety of energy, housing, agricultural and industrial reforms. Numerous authors advocated the Green New Deal,¹⁴ among them Noam Chomsky, and the program was further elaborated on by economist Robert Pollen.¹⁵ Later, the GND was further developed under Bernie Sanders presidential campaign,¹⁶ while the European Commission began enacting

the European Green Deal (EGD). Trade unions and non-governmental organizations also began articulating their proposals, only slightly departing from the original US proposal.

The GND and EGD remained “green growth” strategies that claimed to organize a (socio-technical) energy transition from fossil fuels to so-called renewable energy meanwhile ignored the amount of minerals, hydrocarbon resources, manufacturing and transportation supply-chains necessary to rollout low-carbon infrastructures. Sanders’ fiery rhetoric against hydrocarbon industries did not account for this material reality for “achieving 100% renewable energy” in the United States¹⁷—or similar claims within Europe.¹⁸ The GND, however, offered a valuable proposal to create “green jobs,” agricultural reform, recognizing Indigenous rights, housing reform and promoting “just transitions” among others, which could have made incrementally positive social changes domestically, potentially redirecting and restricting the use of hydrocarbons. Then again, unless the economic, energy and material growth imperatives of capitalism and corresponding low-carbon infrastructures and electrification are capped—or have a limit—nothing structurally changes within this socio-technical shift that continues private or state capital accumulation. In the end—as usual—ecologies and habits would be overlooked and sacrificed in the name of low-carbon infrastructures that leave untouched the (neo)colonial global supply-chains predicated on unequal exchange,

violence and racist discrimination.¹⁹ Not to forget, nobody really knows how much fossil fuels are actually used to produce a wind turbine, solar panel or a dam. These issues are discussed further in the next chapter, with an emphasis on the arithmetic, models and science propelling these aspirations.

While degrowth advocates initially advocated the GND, seemingly uncritically—overlooking the realities discussed in this book²⁰—it still led to heated and antagonistic debates with environmental economists and modernist socialists.²¹ Despite the needed social reforms of the GND, the mainstream versions still never questioned economic growth, energy markets and the expansive reality of capital accumulation responsible for socio-ecological catastrophe. Because, as James O’Conner reminds us, “over time, capital seeks to capitalize everything and everybody.”²² If the GND is anything like Roosevelt’s New Deal, Gelderloos reminds us, then it is designed to prevent “a real solution” and “to save capitalism,” placing “the brunt of this new industrial onslaught” onto the laps of the marginalized and poor of this world lower on the capitalist pyramid scheme.²³ From this perspective, the GND proposals sought to blunt revolutionary demands for socio-ecological transition, meanwhile developing and expanding green capitalism.

Implicit, and most appealing, about the GND is the state as an agent of administering social change. Experts, however, agree governments across the world, especially Euro-American

governments influencing international policy, have resolutely failed for thirty—if not forty—years to develop adequate environmental policies that produce results.²⁴ Some people blame this on hydrocarbon companies lobbying politicians, hiding and falsifying science,²⁵ but this accepts the other deleterious socio-ecologically destructive impacts of urbanization, the proliferation of plastics, chemically intensive industrial production and low-carbon infrastructures (dependent on fossil fuels) that are normalized by capitalist states in their quest for territorial control and technological supremacy. This fossil fuel versus renewable energy dichotomy emblematic of the GNDs, and inundating corporate propaganda, remains central to the socialist modernist position.

The socialist modernist position takes on various intensities, yet have a core set of beliefs. “Softer” socialist modernist positions join the GND bandwagon, which celebrates centralized planning and technological innovation. “Solving climate change undoubtedly requires massive new industrial infrastructure in energy, public transit and housing,” explains Matt Huber.²⁶ This perspective, however, breaks with capitalism with a presumed ethic of egalitarianism and a pronounced concern with the “working class” and “global proletariat.” This position celebrates and encourages “techno-fixes” such as carbon capture storage (CCS), nuclear power and the state as administrator.²⁷ “Clearly, the productive forces must develop beyond their historically

entrenched reliance upon fossil fuels,” explains Huber.²⁸ This somehow implies, possibly influenced by Marxian stage theory, low-carbon infrastructures and electrification can be separated from hydrocarbons to enter a new stage of decarbonized and renewable (socialist) industry. This tendency, moreover, tends to operate in the abstract with repeated references to Marxian theorists, for example, criticizing degrowthers for missing “the concrete class relationships that both inhabit such transformations or might bring them about.” While Huber has been rebuked by other Marxian scholars,²⁹ it is strange how he failed to engage with Joan Martinez-Alier’s “environmentalism of the poor,”³⁰ which connects ‘the poor’—Indigenous and working class—to ecological struggle. Socialist modernism, we can say, is eco-modernism with egalitarian intentions. Huber’s variety does not depart from representative democracy, strengthening electoral political strategies and union organizing.³¹ Degrowth, from this position, is understood as a “hard sell” to the working class and political campaigns, because challenging economic growth and the consumerist lifestyles—or imperial modes of living—have become habitual and questioning this is not a popular position in the voting polls. While both agree on some form of democracy, socialist modernism confronts degrowth by asking how their proposed socio-ecological transition will be accomplished.

Green Authoritarianism: Fear, Power & Doubling-Down on Statism

Ignoring the impact of technological production—specifically low-carbon infrastructures, electrification and uranium mining—remains a key attribute of eco-modernism, be it with a capitalist or statist emphasis. The eco-modernist position is enabled by reductive science in general, the central discussion in Chapter 1, but specifically this technique of “climate reductionism” that reduces the ecological crises to a simple technocratic question of atmospheric carbon.³² Mining or industrial processes systematically pollute through contamination and kill ecosystems and nonhuman existences, which are systematically ignored, or calculated away with carbon metrics, by democratic politicians and eco-modernists alike. The framework of climate change tends toward subordinating, if not erasing, everyday practices of ecological degradation—related to specific factories, mines, production processes, or products—that people can organize against, prevent and stop. Reflecting reductive science that reduce complexity through numerical quantification, it reduces the sensitive, immediate and crucial contributors to ecological degradation—and consequently climate change—to focus instead on the “big,” “planetary,” and “earth system” scales. Political activity is further rendered symbolic, focusing on grabbing attention with mass protests designed to lobby the state and governmental leaders at, for example, the Conference of the Parties (COP)—instead of stopping, slowing

or preventing ecologically destructive processes where you live, as chapters 2-6 discuss. Following Feminist energy researchers,³³ we might call this an expression of “climate masculinities,” emphasizing grand scales, reductionist data, rooted in approaches of scientific domination of the planet, which marginalize or ignore other processes of ecosystemic breakdown that contributes to larger planetary degradation. Climate reductionisms assists in permitting technological fetishism, which ignores the contaminating, material and energy intensive realities of the proposed technological solutions themselves. This perspective leads toward fetishizing the state and large-scale technologies. Contrary to democratically inclined socialist modernists, authoritarian dictatorship remains the other pathway for subverting climate catastrophe.

The historical conditions of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, with all the post-war crisis and turbulence that entails, Andreas Malm equates with the climate emergency of the present. Climate catastrophe, said differently, is an opportunity for ecological Leninism to come to power and, despite expected hardships, save the day through an ecologically-oriented dictatorship. This includes implementing, akin to Lenin, an “ecological war communism” that entails:

learning to live without fossil fuels in no time, breaking the resistance of dominant classes, transforming the economy for the duration, refusing to give up even if all

the worst-case scenarios come true, rising out of the ruins with the force and the compromises required, organising the transitional period of restoration, staying with the dilemma. It does not mean cosplay re-enactments of the Russian Civil War. That war deposited a poison of brutalised power in the heart of the workers' state, to which it eventually fell victim. Another legacy of the period, however, fared better.³⁴

This exposition undoubtedly reads romantic and ambiguous, and any (anarchist) historian would contest the civil war as the reason for the onset of Leninist dictatorship.³⁵ The “effective establishment of a one-party dictatorship aggravated tensions between state and society under circumstances of economic and political crisis,” explains James Ryan. “Bolshevik dictatorial rule and the suppression of strikes, uprisings and other socialist parties were not consequences of the White threat [³⁶—though this threat certainly helped Bolshevik leaders to justify these measures—and they continued and in some respects intensified after the White challenge.”³⁷ Regardless, Malm’s idea is to seize state power presumably through a coup d'état (like Lenin) or revolutionary movement and to defeat “fossil capital” by aggressively rolling out wind, solar, dams and other energy technologies—which might include nuclear and geoengineering—and create climate friendly laws like mandatory veganism.³⁸ Fossil capital, like climate change, reduces the complexity of the problem, creating a single foe

and ignoring other capitalist industries and divers of ecosystem degradation.

While confronting and utilizing the state is of course an understandable desire for any socio-ecological transformation, preaching an eco-Leninist dictatorship and War Communism is alarming to say the least. Noam Chomsky reminds us: “The Leninist system was one of the greatest blows to socialism in the 20th century, second only to fascism.”³⁹ The suppression (even amongst the Bolsheviks) and the elimination (e.g. execution, imprisonment and torture) of left revolutionaries and anarchists is appalling—killing and imprisoning all who would resist Lenin’s order beginning in April, 1918.⁴⁰ During Lenin’s political rule, between December 1917 and February 1922, conservative estimates suggest “28,000 executions (excluding battlefield deaths) on average per year directly attributed to the Soviet State, a sharp contrast with the approximate total figure of 14,000 executed by the Russian Tsarist regime between 1866 and 1917.”⁴¹ This does not seek to make the “West” seem innocent—as the crimes of Euro-America are horrendous—but we do not have critical scholars preaching ecological Churchillism or eco-Rooseveltism. *Lenin’s Terror*⁴² and *Bloodstained*⁴³ offer detailed historical exposes, primary sources and analysis in need of serious consideration before promoting statist dictatorship—Left or Right. The “State idea, State Socialism, in all its manifestations (economic, political, social, educational),” explains Emma Goldman in 1924, “is

entirely and hopelessly bankrupt. Never before in all history has authority, government, the State, proved so inherently static, reactionary, and even counter-revolutionary in effect. In short, the very antithesis of revolution.”⁴⁴ Goldman speaks from within Russia at this time, and watched the free assembly, worker self-organization and direct action that was the platform for Lenin’s ascendance to power get murdered and disciplined into soviet state capitalism. Said kindly, the cynical carelessness and disregard for the victims of Lenin demonstrated by Malm is antithetical to climate (or ecological) movement building.

Malm, in their advocacy for eco-Leninism, is calling “for escalating the climate struggle and diversifying the movement by taking up property destruction.”⁴⁵ While, of course, an important aspiration, Malm’s Leninism tends towards a manipulative historical revisions, a lack of knowledge (and likely experience) with ecological struggles and (purposefully?) systematically omitting scholars and discussions on “diversifying the movement by taking up property destruction,” demonstrating academic negligence. This negligence emerges from failing to reference or engage the books that have been discussing protest tactics and political struggle the last twenty or thirty years. Why did Malm ignore Ward Churchill’s (1998) *Pacifism as Pathology*,⁴⁶ Derrick Jensen’s (2006) *Endgame*⁴⁷ or Peter Gelderloos’ *How Nonviolence Helps the State* (2007)⁴⁸ and *The Failure of Nonviolence* (2013)?⁴⁹ Why not read the edited volumes,

stories and reflections on Latin American Urban Guerrillas,⁵⁰ the Red Army Faction,⁵¹ Black Panthers,⁵² Weather Underground,⁵³ Angry Brigade,⁵⁴ George Jackson Brigade,⁵⁵ Action Direct,⁵⁶ and anarchist critiques on armed groups,⁵⁷ never mind how militant ecological struggle developed, continued and, contrary to manipulative inferences by Malm, that ecotage stopped in the 1990s and 2000s.⁵⁸ Ecotage never stopped and it is a global phenomenon.⁵⁹ Actions only lessened in the United States due to severe repression, while intensifying in England⁶⁰ and elsewhere⁶¹ but not under the banner of the “climate movement.” The poverty of Leninist peer-review rears its head, missing key scholars and batching historical readings, understanding and events still in motion.

“When writing interventions on contemporary events,” Malm writes recently, “one’s best hope is that comrades of all stripes will engage with them closely and critically.” This humble line is rather different from the assuming and arrogant writing style of Malm’s books or interviews. The following statement made by Malm during an interview does not inspire collaboration, let alone dialogue: “Anarchist ideas should be combatted; they will take us nowhere. I think it’s time to start experimenting with things like ecological Leninism or Luxemburgism or Blanquism” (emphasis added). Remembering Lenin was no friend of anarchists or autonomists, and Malm echoes Lenin himself, which begins to explain the academic omissions and manipulative writing style a bit better. In *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, Malm ignores

the influence anarchism has had on the environmental direct action movement and the collaboration between anarchists and Indigenous warriors, instead only mentioning “deep ecology” and “animal liberation” to limit the relevance and impact of anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas.⁶² Malm’s knowledge of deep ecology is limited, appearing to reference controversial statements by Dave Foreman (and others?) in the 1980s, which are not adequately discussed, specified or cited in the book. This is matched by Malm ignoring what deep ecology actually is, let alone the diversity and tensions within that movement and its continued relevance. Deep ecology, with its emphasis on ecological relationships, implicitly challenges socialist modernism and earns itself selective and purposeful mischaracterization.⁶³

While numerous authors have critiqued the Pipeline book for minimizing Indigenous struggles,⁶⁴ the introduction to *Property Will Cost Us the Earth*, Verso Report,⁶⁵ begins with him celebrating North American Indigenous resistance to pipeline construction, specifically the February 17, 2022 action where land defenders seized, vandalized and overturned tractors and trucks, making ditches and barricades. This acknowledgment is welcome, along with reviving issues of sabotage and direct action (in Scandinavia). Yet—once again—it is ignored that anarchists have always appreciated rural self-sufficiency and action (unlike the Bolsheviks),⁶⁶ which extends to cultivating relationships with Indigenous groups—historically from Elisée Reclus to Floras Magón.⁶⁷

And, in this particular instance of pipeline resistance, anarchists have been collaborating and developing relationships with the First Nations occupied by Canada since the 1970s viewing the state as a common enemy and subjugating force.⁶⁸ Not to forget, indigenous people often identify as anarchists themselves or see a high-level of affinity between Indigenous traditions and anarchism.⁶⁹ This collaboration has been so productive, a recent interview with Sleydo, the spokesperson for the Gidimt'en checkpoint (Wet'suwet'en nation)⁷⁰—and later informational video⁷¹—announced:

You know we have seen this relationship between Indigenous warriors and anarchists that has been developing over the years and I think that combining those two groups, particularly, is a really powerful move against the state. It is a real threat when we act together.

Ignoring this history, struggle and movement knowledge is negligence, performing the erasure of struggles. Then again, maybe indigenous and anarchist rejection of the state threatens Malm's vision of exercising "coercive state power to break up and abolish fossil capital in a situation of extreme climate emergency."⁷² Indigenous, anarchist and autonomous fighters are at the frontline of this struggle.

This leads to their near total lack of knowledge about Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front, which are different

types of organizational and action networks even if they can retain some overlap with participants and general tactics. Malm could have watched the documentary, *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* (2011), which could have streamlined research effort (even if the documentary is “a story” and “came off as somewhat victimistic and defeatist”).⁷³ But, again, it appears Malm did not even do this when they decided to criticize Earth First! (EF!) and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as “not performed in a dynamic relation to a mass movement, but largely in a void.”⁷⁴ This statement is ironic considering Malm’s advocacy of sabotage, vandalism and nominal acceptance of pipelines “blowing up.” This reveals not only a lack of historical awareness of these movements, but forgets how direct action tends to create divisions in mainstream movements and result in severe repression, in this case the FBI’s Operation Backfire. Malm advocates militant direct action, but then slanders and erases the nonviolent action groups, prisoners and its appearance as a global phenomenon—not just in Euro-America—of Earth Liberation and Eco-Anarchist action groups fighting to stop, slow and damage extractive megaprojects.⁷⁵ There are books, academic articles and countless anarchist magazines and direct action websites ignored in academic hubris.⁷⁶ Accused (and later acquitted) of being associated with 325, an anarchist magazine and website documenting direct actions, Toby Shone was abducted, imprisoned and tortured for over three years in England.⁷⁷ Overall, it remains hard to tell if

Malm's work is the product of arrogance bathing in academic negligence or purposeful Leninist manipulation and recuperation of ecological struggles. This disposition is academically unacceptable, demonstrating ignorance and political opportunism at the expense of real lives and consequences.

Finally, as Madeline Ffitch also noted,⁷⁸ it is horribly inaccurate to conflate Deep Green Resistance (DGR) with EF! and ELF. This mistake, moreover, was used as a sleight of hand to avoid actually understanding the history, content and failure of DGR. This is strange as DGR is the closest thing to what Malm is advocating: Eco-Leninism. There are numerous failures related to DGR, from tactical advocacy⁷⁹ to transphobia⁸⁰ and more recently members giving interviews (and changing their earlier positions) on neofascist podcasts. Relevant for Malm, however, is DGR was a grassroots formation that came out of two decades of Derrick Jensen's writing, speaking and roots within radical Indigenous and anarchist milieus. If one was going to be advocating eco-Leninism, Maoism or Blanquism, it would mean a close study of what others have done before and why they failed—something I was eager to see Malm negotiate—but they did not. Instead preferring to employ manipulative writing techniques, blurring distinct political tendencies, forms of organization and all backed up by historical omissions with an unjustified confidence, meanwhile making indirect jabs based on political clichés—"Targets were chosen promiscuously."⁸¹

This also included making false or unsubstantiated claims: “All those thousands of monkeywrenching actions achieved little if anything and had no lasting gains to show for them.”⁸² This statement is not supported by evidence, and no criteria is offered (other than vague references to mass movements and Ende Gelände). Why blame people engaging in sabotage who might have saved forests or extended their lives from 3 months to a decade, delayed or made infrastructures projects too costly to complete, and made publicly available manuals and inspired others to take action?

Malm’s Leninist agenda has blinded him to any past and continued ecological struggles, which includes ignoring the Hambach forest occupation (see Chapter 3), instead fetishizing Ende Gelände organizing efforts. It is worrying, as Malm notes, that this new wave of climate youth (2018-2019) mobilizations and resulting movements, Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, with few exceptions, were quick to ignore the Indigenous peoples, anarchists and environmentalists already taking militant direct action. Malm and Verso Books, however, are not doing the next generation any favors in this regard. Attention to social struggles will show a need to cultivate and support the existing movements, groups and individuals in struggle now, taking up evasive maneuvers, withholding against repression and be decentralized. If fighting socio-ecological and climate catastrophe is a priority, then join the struggle and work towards this common goal—not slander eco-warriors, erase

their history, conflate groups and attempt to seize academic or political power off their backs. This book emerges as a correction to this erasure, which is taken further by revealing the complications and intricacies of fighting megaproject developments and how conventional (hydrocarbon) companies are connected with so-called “green” and “renewable” extraction industries. While revealing the webs of destruction, the book also explores the existence of committed ecological resistance from autonomists, anarchists, farmers, fisherpersons and migrant day labors that transcend multiple identities and ethnicities. This struggle, however, is ongoing, generational and concerns everyone, which means we should not be satisfied with easy solutions or authoritarian solutions pitched by the metaphorical used car sales man.

- ¹ Hickel J. 2020. What does degrowth mean? A few points of clarification. *Globalizations*: 1-7.
- ² Burkhart C, Nowshin T, Schmelzer M, et al. 2022 Who shut shit down? What degrowth can learn form other socio-ecological movements. In: Barlow N, Regen L, Cadiou N, et al. (eds) *Degrowth and Strategy: How to bring about social-ecological transformation*. London: Mayfly, p.129.
- ³ See: Asafu-Adjaye J, Blomquist L, Brand S, et al. 2015. An ecomodernist manifesto. *Ecomodernism.org*, Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5515d9f9e4b04d5c3198b7bb/t/552d37bbe4b07a7dd69fcdbb/1429026747046/An+Ecomodernist+Manifesto.pdf>
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Parrique T, Barth J, Briens F, et al. 2019. Decoupling debunked: Evidence and arguments against green growth as a sole strategy for sustainability. *European Environment Bureau (EEB)*, Available at: <https://eeb.org/library/decoupling-debunked/>; Hickel J and Kallis G. 2020. Is green growth possible? *New Political Economy* 25(4): 469-486; Tilsted JP, Bjørn A, Majeau-Bettez G, et al. 2021. Accounting matters: Revisiting claims of decoupling and genuine green growth in Nordic countries. *Ecological Economics* 187(1): 1-9; & Vadén T, Lähde V, Majava A, et al. 2020. Decoupling for ecological sustainability: A categorisation and review of research literature. *Environmental science & policy* 112: 236-244.
- ⁶ Hickel J and Kallis G. 2020. Is green growth possible? *New Political Economy* 25(4), p. 82.
- ⁷ Vadén T, Lähde V, Majava A, et al. (2020) Decoupling for ecological sustainability: A categorisation and review of research literature. *Environmental science & policy* 112, p. 243.
- ⁸ Barlow N, Regen L, Cadiou N, et al. 2022. *Degrowth and Strategy: How to bring about social-ecological transformation*. London: Mayfly, p. 23.
- ⁹ For more see: Hickel J. 2020. *Less is more: How degrowth will save the world*. London: Random House.

- ¹⁰ This critique remains rather general from Orthodox, but some heterodox, Marxists. The careless attacks by Leigh Phillips and Matt Huber are text book examples.
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- ⁶⁸ Ex-urban guerrilla Anne Hansen discusses anarchist and communist relationships with Indigenous people and solidarity networks in the 1970s in their recent interview with Submedia.tv in Transmissions Part I: Origins, available here: <https://sub.media/transmissions-part-one-origins/>. Moreover, Hansen (2002) mentions this in passing in *Direct action: Memoirs of an urban guerrilla* (Oakland: Ak Press). In a recent interview dialogue Gordon Hill and Allan Antliff discuss the various Indigeneous and anarchist connections, solidarities and action report magazines in North America, see here: Hill G and Antliff A. 2021. Indigeneity, Sovereignty, Anarchy: A dialog with many voices. *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 7(1): 99-118.
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Malm's idea is to seize state power presumably through a coup d'état (like Lenin) or revolutionary movement and to defeat "fossil capital" by aggressively rolling out wind, solar, dams and other energy technologies—which might include nuclear and geoengineering—and create climate friendly laws like mandatory veganism. Fossil capital, like climate change, reduces the complexity of the problem, creating a single foe and ignoring other capitalist industries and divers of ecosystem degradation.

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