

Degrowth's identity problem: the case of the Marchfeld - Vienna's 'breadbasket'

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Degrowth has an identity problem

- Assumption that **localization** naturally generates **identification with place**, which in turn leads to care and ecological responsibility
 - This linearity obscures complex, contested and power-laden processes through which place-based identities are constructed
 - **Identitarian risk**: mobilization of degrowth ideas by far-right ecological movements
 - We need to take processes of identity construction seriously and engage with the 'politics' that drive it in specific contexts

The (bio-)regional scale

- Degrowth research on identity requires a **regional** focus
 - Othering processes
 - How identity creation acts as a mediator of the urban-other divide
- **Bioregional** perspective: centers soil and ecological values & overcomes urban-other divide

Case study: Vienna-Marchfeld metropolitan region

Mechanisms of identity mobilization:

- 1) Obscures extractivist relations (sand and gravel extraction)
- 2) Co-optation of agricultural identity to further economic growth (bioeconomy)

A) Urban policy dimension

- Legislative and regulatory divide (different jurisdiction)
- Little to no official knowledge about extent of extractive relations and resource flows between urban and other
- Super-regional organizations focus on mobility (jobs in Vienna, growth-oriented)

→ Bioregional planning approach places rural/non-urban communities in extractive zones at the center of policy making. Enlarges traditional urban focus of regional governance

B) Spatial imaginaries

- Regenerative relations between urban & rural
 - True regionalization of food production
 - Agricultural identity understood as integral part of the region
 - Landscape that reflects the agricultural identity
- The region as a poly-centric system of places with different uses and social profile in balance with each other

C) Pathways to the future of the European Metropolitan Space

- Understanding of political processes that hide material interdependence and extractivism (including utilization of identity)
- Attempts to establish ecological areas (ie. Biotopes) – without considering divide between cities and their providing ecosystems (particularly food and raw materials supply)
- Bioeconomy/circular economy/energy transition policies reveal new environmental struggles on a regional scale