Spatial strategies for a post-growth transformation

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1. Introduction

It becomes increasingly obvious that there is a disjuncture between the socio-economic developments that lead to increasing destabilisation and exploitation of ecological and social systems on the one hand and scientific concerns about these developments on the other hand. Research into possible forms of socio-ecological transformation is gaining corresponding significance in the social and spatial sciences. Aside from criticising social conditions, researchers and practitioners are exploring a range of alternative development options. Research into economic and political alternatives (Fuller/Jonas/Lee 2016; Leyshon/Lee/Williamet et al. 2003) comprises a series of complementary but also diverging concepts and research strands such as post-growth (Demaria/Kallis/Bakker 2019; Schmelzer/Vetter 2019), post-capitalism (Chatterton/Pusey 2019; Gibson-Graham 2006), commons (Helfrich/Bollier 2019), radical democracy (Barnett 2017), post-development (Kothari/Salleh/Escobar et al. 2019) and the solidarity economy (Exner/Kratzwald 2012; North/Cato 2017). All these approaches criticize political, economic and cultural practices that are based on increasingly severe encroachments in social and ecological systems and leading to the highly unequal destabilisation of communities and ecosystems.

Despite sound scientific knowledge about the consequences and effects of the prevailing lines of development and their contradictions, alternative concepts have received little attention, never mind implementation by (higher levels of) policy, planning or economic decision-making (Gills/Morgan 2019). Disillusioned by reforms 'from above', various forms of practice

have emerged that address these deficiencies 'from the bottom up' (Chatterton 2019; Schmelzer/Vetter 2019). These alternative projects and organisations include civil society initiatives as well as socio-ecological enterprises and protest movements – which can be characterised by different approaches, strategies and objectives.

Transformation – profound changes in the form and structure of socio-ecological relations – meanwhile is a fundamentally spatial process. Social change occurs in concrete locations, is embedded in immediate and more far-flung networks of relations and challenges existing boundaries. Some publications have highlighted the significance of space in processes of transformation (including: Bouzarovski/Haarstad 2018; Chatterton 2016; Chatterton/Pickerill 2010; Coenen et al. 2012; Hansen/Coenen 2015; Longhurst 2015; Raven et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2010; Vandeventer et al. 2019). Nonetheless, there is a lack of genuine geographical concepts in the theorisation of transformation and transition. Hansen and Coenen (2015: 105), for instance, argue that most studies on the spatiality of transformation draw on existing transition literature and seldom venture beyond the addition of 'spatial sensitivity'. There is little research, according to Hansen und Coenen, that develops genuinely spatial perspectives to address questions of socio-ecological transformation.

This article tackles precisely this research gap. It endeavours to develop a decidedly spatial perspective for the investigation of transformation processes. Two key questions provide a focus here:

1. Which spatial concepts can be used to think about transformation?
2. What strategies for socio-ecological transformation can be derived from a spatial perspective?

In order to address these questions, the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the essentials of a post-growth transformation. On the basis of an overview of the concept of transformation and the post-growth discourse, this section considers different transformation strategies. It draws on the typology proposed by Erik Olin Wright (2010), which distinguishes between symbiotic, interstitial and ruptural strategies. Section 3 addresses the spatiality of transformation using the spatial concepts of territory, network, place and scale. Each of these concepts provides a specific perspective on transformation processes. Subsequently, section 4 links the spatial and

strategic dimensions of transformation and develops spatial strategies for a post-growth transformation.

2. Post-growth transformation

Transformation

Transformation refers to fundamental changes in the form and structure of socio-ecological relations. At first, thereby, the term transformation does not indicate a specific direction in which these changes lead, nor which forces cause them. Transformation, therefore, can be specified along two lines. First, it must be determined whether transformation is viewed as a process that is to be actively shaped or as a change that emerges from largely undetermined forces (passive). In the latter, passive, sense, transformation describes diverse and interwoven social and biophysical processes of change like globalisation and climate change. Here the focus is primarily on determining which changes are occurring and how societies and communities can respond to them (adaptation and resilience). Considering transformation in a more *active* sense, meanwhile, foregrounds the individuals, organisations and institutions that affect change, or attempt to do so, for example in the context of social movements.

Second, the directionality of transformation must be determined. Transformation does not necessarily lead to more justice and sustainability. It is therefore particularly important that a critical perspective specifies which changes should be encouraged or prevented. As the direction of socio-ecological transformation should not be decided by a few while leaving out others, transformation research faces the challenge of using ecological, social and ethical principles for guidance while ensuring inclusive negotiation processes between different perspectives. The post-growth debate navigates this field of tension by combining collective decision-making and management processes with perspectives on global justice and ecological sustainability.

Post-growth

Post-growth brings together a range of theoretical and practical approaches that question the position of economic growth as the primary guiding principle of human societies. In doing so, post-growth perspectives call for a reflexive reorientation of economic, political and social institutions to enable temporally and spatially just, sustainable and dignified lives. Post-growth tackles the growth imperative of capitalist economies and takes seriously the notion that there are material and social limits to growth (Georgescu-Roegen 1977; Meadows/Randers/Meadows 2004; Rockström/Steffen/Noone et al. 2009). To date, there has been no sign of an (absolute) decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption, as postulated by green economy approaches – an option that appears increasingly unlikely (Fatheuer/Fuhr/Unmüßig 2015; Georgescu-Roegen 1977; Jackson 2017; Kenis/Lievens 2015; Paech 2013).

Regardless of whether further growth is possible, it stands to question how far it is even desirable.[1] Post-growth approaches point out the fact that prosperity cannot be reduced to market relations and therefore cannot be captured by the growth of economic indicators (Hayden/Wilson 2017; Rosa 2016; Rosa/Henning 2018). At the same time, growth and acceleration – when seen as an end in themselves – increasingly lead to conditions of physical and psychological exhaustion (ranging from dissatisfaction to burnout) (Fisher 2009), which are exacerbated by the continued fixation on growth. In contrast, post-growth posits satisfaction, frugality, moderation and leisure as basic positive qualities (Kallis 2019).

Various strands can be identified within the post-growth debate (for categorisations see van den Bergh 2011; Eversberg/Schmelzer 2018; Koepp/

1 Post-growth acknowledges that in certain contexts a further increase in material prosperity is required (especially in the Global South but also for socio-economically disadvantaged population groups in the Global North). However, it is becoming clear that this is, first, rather a question of wealth redistribution than a further increase in economic output. And that, second, an economy based on growth actually creates poverty (structural adjustment measures, volatility of the markets for food and raw materials due to financialisation, the break-up of traditional economic and social relations, focus on exports…). These and other issues are also discussed under keywords like 'imperial mode of living' (of the Global North) (Brand/Wissen, 2017), 'postdevelopment' (Kothari/Salleh/Escobar et al. 2019) and alternative visions of the good life (Gudynas 2011).

Schunke/Köhler et al. 2015) which adopt very different positions vis-à-vis existing institutions and which follow different visions and strategies of transformation. What they have in common is, however, that they all shift away from economism towards social and ecological justice (Latouche 2009; Martínez-Alier/Pascual/Vivien et al. 2010). Schmelzer and Vetter (2019) distinguish between three central objectives of post-growth.

Global ecological justice: first, lifestyles in the capitalist centres depend on the 'shaping of social conditions and natural conditions elsewhere' (Brand/Wissen 2017: 43). This 'imperial mode of living' (ibid.) is based on externalisation and 'cheapening' (Patel/Moore 2018: 22) and is neither generalisable (as it depends on an exploitable outside) nor just (as this exploitation creates and sustains asymmetric power relations) nor sustainable (as it destroys its own ecological and social foundations). Post-growth, therefore, does not aim simply for a shrinkage of the economy, but rather for a fundamental restructuring of economic relations to enable a just and sustainable way of life for all.

Good life: a second objective is basic material and social well-being that can in actual fact (and not just formally) be attained by all people. The 'good life' can only be defined via democratic and self-determined processes of negotiation and requires a re-politicisation of economic relations (Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham/Cameron/Healy 2013). Fundamentally, this involves a radical redistribution of resources and wealth, the provision of accessible and comprehensive basic services and a renegotiation of economic objectives (Schmelzer/Vetter 2019).

Growth independence: these changes require, thirdly, that economic institutions and infrastructures become growth-independent. Economic structures, social institutions and even the subjects of capitalist societies are fundamentally oriented towards growth and can therefore only be 'dynamically stabilised' (Rosa/Dörre/Lessenich 2017). In other words, institutions, infrastructures and subjectivities can only be maintained in their prevailing constitution by continued growth. Within current institutional orders, recessions and stagnation, but also frugality, leisure and contemplation,[2] lead to crises. Post-growth aims for not less than the fundamental restructuring of economic, social, political and cultural relations consonant with social justice and ecological sustainability.

2 Except for when contemplation and leisure are used to increase efficiency (Purser 2019).

Transformation strategies

In addition to in-depth analysis and critique of existing conditions and the formulation of possible alternatives, transformation research also requires a transformation theory that encapsulates how fundamental changes to social conditions can occur and be actively shaped. In an influential piece of work, Erik Olin Wright (2010) distinguishes between three transformation strategies: symbiotic, interstitial and ruptural (see Figure 1).

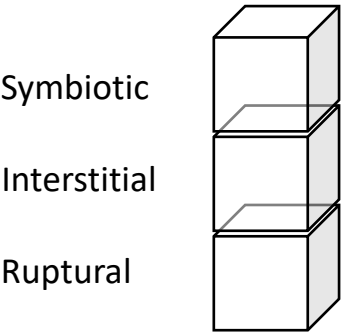
Symbiotic strategies, first, aim to strengthen emancipatory transformation processes within existing power structures by striving to achieve synergies between socio-ecological aspects and the objectives of dominant interest groups. Symbiotic strategies pursue a largely reformist policy and attempt to fundamentally change socio-ecological conditions in cooperation with existing institutions.

Interstitial strategies, second, are based on producing alternatives in in-between spaces of the incumbent order. Instead of cooperation with politically and economically influential actors, interstitial activities, projects and organisations remain largely outside (and often under the radar) of capitalist institutions. Compromises are replaced by the (anarchist-inspired) principle of prefiguration – the anticipation of desired relations in the here and now (Loick 2017).

Ruptural strategies, third, focus on revolutionary notions of transformation and try to attain change through direct confrontation, protest and resistance. In contrast to the gradual approach of symbiotic and interstitial strategies, ruptural strategies aim to build an organised counterforce to achieve abrupt and comprehensive changes. The primary orientation of ruptural strategists is antagonistic, breaking with existing conditions first and creating alternatives second.

Wright himself sees the best prospect for advancing fundamental socio-ecological change in the countries of the Global North in a strategic orientation 'mainly organized around the interplay of interstitial and symbiotic strategies, with perhaps periodic episodes involving elements of ruptural strategy' (Hahnel/Wright 2016: 103). A bottom-up emancipatory transformation, Wright argues, needs not only to make use of the various strategies but must also coordinate them with one another.

Figure 1: Strategic dimensions of transformation



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The actors of a post-growth transformation thus face the challenge of developing and implementing context-specific transformative strategies and of combining and harmonising different strategic orientations. I suggest that this can be supported by a resolutely spatial analysis of transformation processes. The following section specifies the spatialities of transformation using different concepts of space, before section 4 returns to the discussion of transformation strategies, further sharpening their focus through the addition of a spatial perspective.

3. The spatiality of transformation

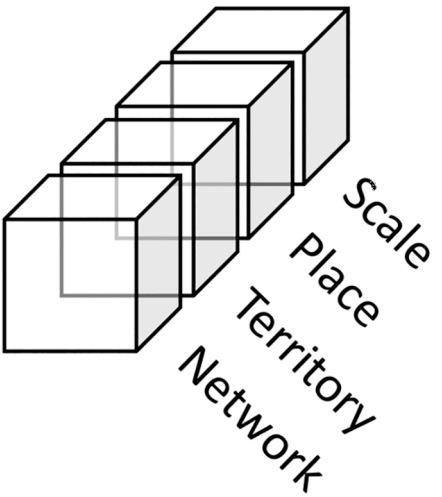
This section discusses transformation processes in the light of different forms of socio-spatial relations (see Figure 2). In their much-quoted article *Theorizing Sociospatial Relations*, Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) distinguish between four concepts of space: territory, network, place and scale. Each of these concepts embodies:

> its own logic and perspectives on the way in which space is produced in social practice … Place operates primarily with and through proximity, embeddedness and local differentiation. Networks are constituted by interdependences and connectivity, while scale indicates hierarchies and vertical differentiation. Territory is manifested though the drawing of boundaries,

subdivisions, inclusions and exclusions (Schmid/Reda/Kraehnk et al. 2019: 93 f., translated from German).

It is important to note that the discussion about socio-spatial dimensions is not exhausted by these four concepts. Nonetheless, they are particularly significant in geographical research and debate (Belina 2013). This section addresses key aspects of these four forms of spatiality and links them to the multifaceted transformation processes.

Figure 2: Spatial dimensions of transformation



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Place

Places are constituted by spatial encounters and interactions between bodies, artefacts, things, meanings and practices. They are meaningful locations in which historical paths of development meet, integrate, stabilise or transform. Place should not be understood as a spatially separate and self-contained unit, but as a locality with materialities, practices and meanings that always exist in relation to other places.

In light of the complex interactions between a place and 'elsewhere' it is easy to overlook the fact that this 'elsewhere' is also grounded in concrete places. Doreen Massey (2008), for instance, uses the City of London in her famous demonstration of how 'the global' is produced locally. Existing conditions as well as the potential for changing them do not lie in an abstract, placeless global sphere but start in specific places.

Just as far-reaching economic and political dynamics emerge from practices that are spatially and materially anchored, so too is the potential of emancipatory transformation interwoven in place-bounded contexts. Transformation, in this sense, does not occur in an a-spatial 'vacuum' but in concrete places. Longhurst (2015: 184), for example, underlines the significance of 'alternative milieus' as local concentrations of institutions and networks that promote alternative practices, experiments and new ideas. Authors who emphasise the importance of proximity also speak of 'informal local institutions' as central moments of transformative practice (Coenen et al. 2012; Hansen/Coenen 2015; Späth/Rohracher 2012) and point out how norms, values, trust, social networks and cooperation constitute alternative forms of economic activity and decision making. Many transformation initiatives, such as the Transition Town movement, therefore focus especially on the scales of neighbourhoods and municipalities, without being reducible to them (see below).

Network

A place-specific perspective is important for understanding the various constellations of values, communities and technologies from which transformative practices emerge. However, it is equally vital to capture the people, ideas and techniques that pass through the various places and create links between them. Through interactions between individuals, organisations and artefacts, horizontal relations emerge which can be comprehended as networked spatialities. Networks therefore are constituted by 'the horizontal links of entities and spaces created through their interactions' (Schmid/Reda/Kraehnk et al. 2019: 106, translated from German).

In transformation research, the horizontal spatiality of networks is a recurring figure of thought, particularly in approaches inspired by feminism and anarchism (Gibson-Graham 2006; Springer 2014; Chatterton/Pickerill 2010). Numerous projects and organisations are considered – such as food

networks (Rosol 2018), housing projects (Chatterton 2016; Metzger 2017), repair initiatives (Baier/Hansing/Müller et al. 2016), neighbourhood initiatives (Gibson-Graham 2006) and social-ecological enterprises (Johanisova/Fraňková 2017) – all of which are based on horizontal economic and political relations. Beyond individual projects, the possibility of building far-reaching networks is particularly relevant and has inspired many transformation narratives (Chatterton 2016; Habermann 2009; Mason 2016; Meretz 2014).

Although individual projects are usually strongly embedded in place-related contexts, their activities and impacts are by no means limited to the local. Places, as discussed above, should not be understood as independent and self-contained units but are linked to one another in diverse ways. Fair trade and sustainable production, for example, can improve living conditions and environmental conditions elsewhere (or rather initially simply reduce the negative impacts on other places). The places, people and communities involved in transformative practice are themselves linked with one another via umbrella organisations, urban networks, conferences and other cooperative formats and are thus involved in an exchange of ideas, values and technologies. The aforementioned Transition Town movement, for instance, comprises and links well over 1000 initiatives in more than 40 countries (Grossmann/Creamer, 2016).

Ultimately, the relationality of social conditions also affects large social phenomena like statehood or capitalist markets (Schatzki 2016a). Critical geographers challenge representations that portray states and markets as apparently coherent macrogeographical systems. These representations abstract from the multifaceted practices, processes and bodies that produce statehood or capitalist markets while differently positioned in their power structures (Gibson-Graham 2006; Marston/Jones/Woodward 2005; Springer 2014). Considering the concrete relations that produce social (macro-) phenomena at the same time reveals possibilities to break down existing institutions and to replace them with more emancipatory alternatives (Chatterton 2016).

Territory

Territories are another important form of social spatiality that are relevant in transformation processes. Territories are generally understood as bounded segments of space. Like places and networks, neither the boundaries nor the

territories themselves are givens, but are rather the products of social practice. Geographers therefore particularly emphasise processes of territorialisation (Belina 2013; Painter 2010).

Territories are relevant for transformation processes, both in their production and in their effects. Administrative entities generally constitute a 'reality' for transformative practice that cannot be simply ignored. Indeed, violating laws and regulations can have forcible consequences, as in cases of civil disobedience (Braune 2017). Local, regional, national and supranational legislation can promote, hinder or prevent sustainable and post-growth oriented practice. Simultaneously, actors can tactically resort to different administrative territories and scales to navigate political parameters, acquire funding and disseminate alternative practices. In doing so, they negotiate and transform the territorial dimension of society.

Scale

Scale refers to the vertical differentiation of social conditions. Traditionally, scale is related to different levels – from local to regional to national and on up to global – which, however, as will be shown, is conceptually problematic. Nonetheless, scale is of key significance for transformation research (Schmid 2019). Firstly, because the debate about scale is fundamental to an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of transformative practice. Second, because transformation inevitably includes forms of diffusion, dissemination and institutionalisation that are often discussed in a superficial manner. I briefly consider both these aspects in the following.

The debate about horizontal and vertical forms of spatiality is characterised by many misunderstandings – particularly by the conflation of ontological arguments and those concerned with existing social power relations (Moore 2008). Relational perspectives on space show that the a priori structuring of social relations in different scaler levels (local, regional, national, global) is not tenable (Jones/Woodward/Marston 2007; Marston/Jones/Woodward 2005). While horizontal perspectives are characterised by an inherent emancipatory moment, it is nonetheless important not to lose sight of the power relations that structure and limit the spaces and scope for action (Schmid/Smith 2020). This means that a critical scalar perspective requires both a spatial ontology that is not based on the presupposition of distinct structural levels, while at the same time recognising the socio-ma-

terial conditions that enable or constrain (transformative) practice. Vertical differentiations then become visible not as predefined givens but rather as social products.

Nevertheless, different positions are adopted vis-à-vis the opportunities and limitations of transformative practice. A 'politics of hope' emphasises the opportunities made visible by a 'flat ontology' (Schatzki 2016b). More sceptical approaches, in contrast, highlight the influence of institutional arrangements that – although socially produced –, still condition transformative practice, which is inevitably embedded in the context of existing social relations (Buch-Hansen 2018; Joutsenvirta 2016).

Notwithstanding different positionings in relation to the possibilities and constraints of transformative practice, scale itself is fundamental to concepts of transformation. Upscaling, polycentric shifts, diffusion, expansion and dissemination express different views about how changes unfold. A critical understanding of scale suggests that simple notions of scaling socio-ecological innovations and niche experiments are insufficient. Instead, the linking of scalar and network spatialities allows an understanding of transformation to emerge that grasps social change as an emergent, non-linear, polycentric and complex process.

4. Spatial strategies for a post-growth transformation

Place, network, territory and scale capture the multi-layered spatialities of transformation. Although different socio-spatial dimensions overlap and condition one another, an analytical separation – as presented in Section 3 – sharpens the focus of the transformation strategies discussed in Section 2. This fourth section attempts a synthesis by developing spatial strategies for post-growth transformation. Three social fields are considered which are central for a socio-ecological transformation: the economy, politics and community. Although these deliberations remain incomplete and in no way exclude alternative readings, they are intended to encourage debate on transformation strategies to focus more closely on space.

Networked interstitial strategies for an economic transformation

The complexity and opacity of globalised economic relations represent a great challenge to socio-ecological transformation. Subjects, organisations and places that are very differently positioned in terms of resources, decision-making power and agency are brought into complex relations of dependency and exploitation by (peri-)capitalist value chains (Tsing 2015). These relationships remain largely invisible under the surface of formal economies.

In this context, symbiotic strategies may be very limited in scope as they themselves build on the existing non-transparent value chains. Symbiotic strategies are based on compromises and cooperation and must navigate a narrow line between the subversion of and reintegration in incumbent social relations. Social enterprises, for example, are themselves situated in economic relationships that actually force the continuation of exploitative conditions through competition.

Ruptural strategies, on the other hand, lack a centre against which to direct their resistance (important exceptions here are clearly localisable practices such as lignite mining in Germany and the protests against it organised by the resistance movement '*Ende Gelände*'). However, targeting the complex of transnational enterprises and (supranational) legislation as a whole seems inconceivable without a broad (revolutionary) movement (which does not currently exist in the capitalist centres).

In contrast, interstitial strategies aim to establish transformative networks to replace exploitative and unsustainable economic relations. Interstitial strategies react to the complexity of extractive value chains by building fairer and – wherever possible – more local alternatives. They are based on the possibility of creating potentially autonomous 'circuits of cooperation' (Hardt/Negri 2017: 145) and thus on finding a decentralised answer to the structural irresponsibility of capitalist and peri-capitalist value chains.

In order to have a transformative effect, interstitial processes should not, however, remain limited to the production and maintenance of niches and in-between spaces. Criticism (some justified and some based on misunderstandings) has been directed towards the focus of many interstitial projects on their immediate context (Srnicek/Williams 2016). Explicitly thinking of interstitial strategies in terms of networked spatialities reveals the potential of alternative circuits of value for economic transformations. The networking of alternative practices introduces the prospect of cooperative networks

that gradually replace exploitative relations until they encompass entire fields of economic activity (Mason 2016).

Networked interstitial strategies for economic transformation, however, are often complicated and blocked by political parameters that focus on economic growth and thus prioritise profit over the common good – not to mention the fact that state structures in general are fundamentally dependent on growth-based politics. A simultaneous intervention in formal politics is therefore necessary. Interstitial strategies, thereby, match badly with the territorial organisation of political institutions, requiring the consideration of other spatial strategies.

Confronting territorially organised power

Territorially organised power jars with the networked character of dispersed and multiple economic exchange relations and dependencies. While political power is not only exercised territorially, legislative processes and their legal implementation generally play out in spatially bordered entities and have a fundamental role in the reproduction of existing social relations. The territoriality of political power formally precludes the option of interstitial spaces in which alternative forms of bureaucracy, administration and legislation could be tested and implemented. Grey zones of regulation and taxation, of course, provide important scope for counterhegemonic groups and socio-ecological organisations. However, the possibilities for extending and generalising alternative political and regulative mechanisms – in line with interstitial ideas related to economic practice – seem to be very limited.

Symbiotic strategies are *one* option for changing political parameters to ensure close attention is paid to social and ecological issues in regulation. In order to have a transformative effect, however, symbiotic strategies must 'interact to point beyond the capitalist, growth-oriented mode of production and defend and extend spaces where it can be overcome' (Schmelzer/Vetter 2019: 27, translated from German). In the current political sphere with its mostly reactive orientation, however, majorities supporting radical change are rarely found. The question thus arises as to whether and to what extent symbiotic strategies can lead on to overcome growth-based economic and social relations. Or are the changes possible in the context of these strategies so limited in their transformative effect that they ultimately contribute to the stabilisation of existing conditions?

Another option is provided by ruptural strategies. Although ruptural strategies are unable to locate an identifiable centre for confrontation in the context of the decentralised interactions described in Section 3, focusing on territorial power allows such a centre to become visible. Territories do not simply exist; they must rather be continuously produced and enforced. This work of reproduction reveals the centres from which the regulative, controlling and enforcing exercise of territorial power emanates – e. g. the government district of a capital city or the seat of an important financial institute. This opens options for place-based action and confrontation aiming to change the (territorially organised) political conditions.

Post-growth coalitions – the place-relatedness of symbiotic strategies

Ruptural strategies have a crucial disadvantage however: they have a divisive effect, distinguishing between 'us' – those who put up resistance and denounce injustices – and 'them' – who must be held accountable. This can lead to aggressive accusations, social disintegration and entrenched positions and even trigger counter movements based on a shared identity of being 'accused'. The antagonistic orientation of ruptural strategies can therefore lead to the reproduction and deepening of opposition rather than to solidarity and the joint tackling of socio-ecological wrongs. The abstract nature of territorial power and its distance from the populace may well require the exercising of ruptural strategies, but this type of strategy seems less appropriate for specific place-related problem solving.

Symbiotic strategies, on the other hand, are challenged by the fact that coalitions operating with and through the existing institutional landscape require a great deal of reflexivity, knowledge and trust to have transformative effects despite the compromises they have to make. Place, thereby, offers a possible strategic entry point for symbiotic transformative practice. While determinist and romanticised images of proximity and the local should be avoided, direct contacts, trust, personal relations and mutual knowledge are important resources for reflexive and emancipatory cooperation. On that basis, the selective perpetuation of unsustainable and unjust conditions caused by compromise can be assessed collectively and transparently.

Places where transformative practices are concentrated – alternative milieus (Longhurst 2015) – can act as central sources of further impulses and changes. This may involve specific establishments like a neighbourhood

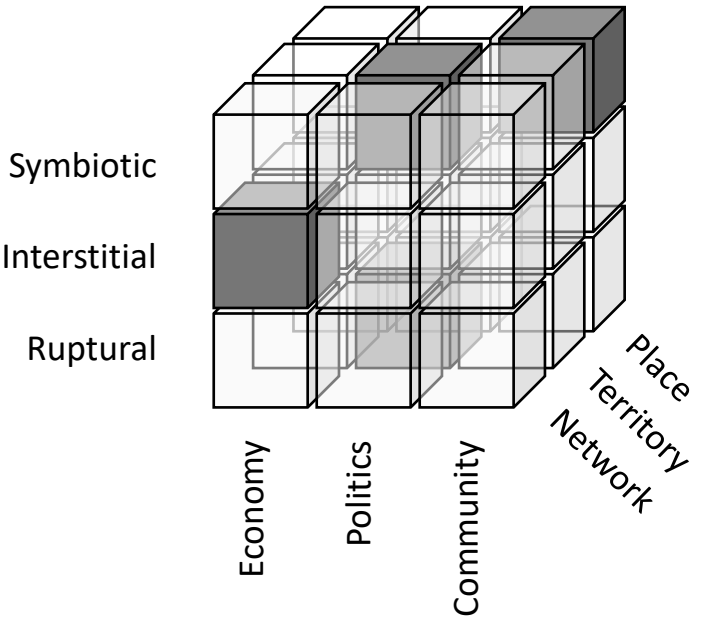
office or an open workshop (Smith 2019), but also includes beneficial (for a socio-ecological transformation) relationships between different actors from the sphere of politics and civil society (Barnes 2015). In this way, places also offer a shared frame of reference that promotes the forging of transversal coalitions. Post-growth discourses discuss the fundamental need for intact and liveable socio-ecological conditions that are not limited to specific political groups. Places offer experimental spaces for prefigurative practices and immediate experiences, which can then in turn have a positive effect on the transformative potential of these places.

5. Conclusion

Post-growth demands fundamental social-ecological transformation away from political, economic and cultural practice that leads to an increasing destabilisation and exploitation of ecological and social systems. The institutional restructuring implied by post-growth is so far-reaching that it challenges both our notions of what is feasible and encounters a great deal of resistance from people who feel afraid or want to maintain their privileges. As a consequence, it is insufficient to formulate convincing alternatives. What is required, furthermore, is a strategic orientation to push for a social-ecological transformation.

The typology drawn up by Erik Olin Wright with symbiotic, interstitial and ruptural transformation strategies offers a framework for the systematic investigation and organisation of different transformative practices. Compromise-based, interstitial and antagonistic approaches, thereby, must be scrutinised in terms of their social and spatial manifestations and interactions. By combining these strategic approaches with different spatial concepts, particularly robust socio-spatial post-growth strategies can be identified (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Socio-spatial post-growth strategies



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An economic transformation primarily requires a long-term focus on interstitial strategies aimed at creating alternative circuits of value. In the context of 'structural irresponsibility', ruptural strategies find it difficult to identify an economic centre against which resistance can be directed. Symbiotic strategies, in contrast, are themselves subjected to economic constraints and often appropriated.

Interstitial strategies, however, quickly reach their limits when faced with growth-oriented framework conditions and are less suited to confront political institutions. Ruptural strategies, on the other hand, can find a 'target' in the centres from which territorial power is exercised. Such an antagonistic approach may, however, be problematic, as it generates opposition where more solidary ways of living are envisioned. Particularly in contexts where proximity and trust can be established, symbiotic strategies in their attempts to achieve reasonable compromises are important.

The interplay of the various strategies discussed here supports Wright's assessment that a fundamental (emancipatory) restructuring of social conditions requires a combination of symbiotic, interstitial and ruptural strategies. A robust spatial perspective clarifies which roles can be assigned to the different strategic orientations in the context of a post-growth transformation. The elaboration of these three socio-spatial strategies is intended to encourage different socio-ecological developments, organisations, actors and practices to be considered in relation to one another. In concrete terms this involves focusing on the fact that while social movements, alternative economic organisations and socio-ecological initiatives demonstrate very different strategic orientations, there is also significant convergence in their objectives. Spatial strategies for post-growth transformation can provide an analytical framework for the better understanding and systematic organisation of these struggles.

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