04 - 05 december 2025
university of kassel

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN TIMES OF REGRESSION

international symposium

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

b-tu Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus - Senftenberg
Chair of Economic and Industrial Sociology

KIS Kassel Institute for Sustainability

UNIKASSEL VERSITÄT | SOCIAL SCIENCES

organized by Department of International Relations with focus on Latin America

FURTHER INFORMATION

PANEL

SHIFTING GLOBAL ORDERS

geopolitics of decarbonisation

Amid rising geopolitical tensions between China and the U.S., Trump's customs policy, and ongoing military conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, countries in the global North and South are striving to enhance their international competitiveness, particularly with regard to the decarbonisation of economies and energy systems. The EU and U.S. are working to reshore critical raw material supply chains, moving them to their own territories or to politically aligned countries in the Global South, particularly in Latin America and Africa. Simultaneously, incumbent industrial companies are threatening to close factories or relocate production to pressure trade unions, lower the labour costs and maintain high profits, while financial capital increasingly influences which sectors and technologies receive investments in the energy transition, thus impacting the trajectory of decarbonization.

Against this background, the panel interrogates the how and to what extent current geopolitical and political economic shifts impact socio-ecological struggles, both within and beyond national borders. The state's role is thereby crucial, as it shapes transformation processes through industrial, economic and labour policies. However, the state is not a neutral entity; it is influenced by various actors, institutions, and interests across different geographical scales.

Guiding questions:

- What are key features and characteristics of shifting political, economic and geopolitical orders?
- What role does the state play in navigating and shaping geopolitical reconfigurations in the context of decarbonization?
- How are different factions of capital adapting their strategies to the changing geopolitical and political-economic realities? What role does finance play in processes of decarbonization?
- How do geopolitical shifts alter global power dynamics and North-South relations?

Eco-imperial tensions and the limits to capitalism

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Historically, advanced capitalist societies benefited from the possibility to externalize their socio-ecological costs across space and time. This possibility, however, can no longer be taken for granted. The visibility of the climate crisis— even within the global North— indicates that the temporal limits of the externalization have been reached, while the conflicts over planetary resources and (carbon) sinks indicate that spatial externalization is increasingly contested. The menaces thus return to their origins in the global North (Wolfgang Sachs) and give rise to eco-imperial tensions in international politics. I will argue that this constellation must be seen against the background of three intersecting crises phenomena: a crisis of the capitalist formation, i.e. post-Fordism; a crisis of the mode of production, consisting in the fact that the capacities of the advanced capitalist economies to cope with their socio-ecological contradictions seem to be exhausted; and, a planetary crisis, in which the geological and climatic background conditions of human development have ceased to be background conditions, and have begun intervening in history through catastrophic events. Although there are respective attempts, the intersecting crises cannot be resolved through "green capitalism", since the latter itself spurs conflicts over resources and aggravates eco-imperial tensions. Rather, they foster the emergence of "monsters" in the form of the extreme right, an authoritarian turn of the political center, a fossil-fueled backlash and militarization. Yet these monsters themselves are contradictory, such that— even under adverse political conditions— there is space for emancipatory social forces.

Chinas "green" accumulation strategy and the geo-economic dimensions of decarbonization

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Current geopolitical shifts are deepening the geoeconomic dimension of decarbonization strategies pursued by governments and transnational corporations. China's economic rise plays an important role in this dynamic - not only with regard to generally increasing geoeconomic competition. Backed by state capitalist coordination and subsidies, the Chinese economy has become a powerhouse in developing low-carbon technologies, leading in the production of photovoltaic panels, electric vehicles, and batteries, as well as in processing the critical raw materials necessary to make these technologies. Moreover, Chinese capital is expanding its "green" investment across the (semi-)periphery. Some observers, therefore, emphasize the opportunities that China's decarbonization strategy offers for achieving global climate targets or enabling green development in the Global South. However, China's "green" accumulation strategy reflects a techno-fix approach linked to ongoing growth and the expansion of extractivism, rather than a commitment to a fundamental transformation. China's role in "green" markets is also seen as a threat in the US and the EU, fuelling a race for technological supremacy, market shares, and access to resources. This impacts decarbonization efforts and the power relations between progressive environmental

movements and fossil capital around the globe. This contribution explores these different dynamics of China's role in the geoeconomics of decarbonization from a (global) political economy perspective. First, I analyze China's "green" accumulation strategy and the role of the state in this development. Second, I discuss the different geoeconomic dimensions of this development and consider their implications for solidaric perspectives.

Green industrialism, extractive capitalism and democratic backsliding: a deep dive into the mega-extraction of critical minerals in Africa

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The aftermath of the 2007–2009 Great Recession, which wiped out more than US$2 trillion of the global economy, brought about a new world order, notorious for its complex crisis distinctiveness. The resurgence of Keynesian-style economic recovery policy pathways provides a pretext for the rising tide of the Global Far-Right, whose internal logic of reviving and entrenching illiberal and authoritarian governments across the world correspondingly led to the retreat or crisis of Left politics and a democratic recession. What follows is anarcho-capitalism – the violent intensification of extractivism where there is extensive and intensive extraction, expropriation and exploitation of nature, labour and bodies. The high-stakes global geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic imperatives of the global decarbonisation agenda, which is ratcheting up the extraction of critical minerals and rare earth elements in Africa, are taking place against the background of this poly-crisis situation. In the Global South world, where these minerals and elements are highly concentrated – with over 30% of the world's proven reserves of them located in Sub-Saharan Africa – the extractivist logic of the Commodities Consensus is further reprimarising the Southern economies, intensifying transnational corporate preponderance in the Southern extractive industries, and ramping up the war on nature. The knock-on effect of this modern extractivist logic is increased subalternity, precarity, marginality, and liminality conditions in the source countries of the South, while the recipient countries of the North, China, India, Russia, and many other Asian countries continue to accumulate through this global decarbonisation agenda violently.

After the decarbonization consensus: reflections on the geopolitics of overshoot and carbon removal

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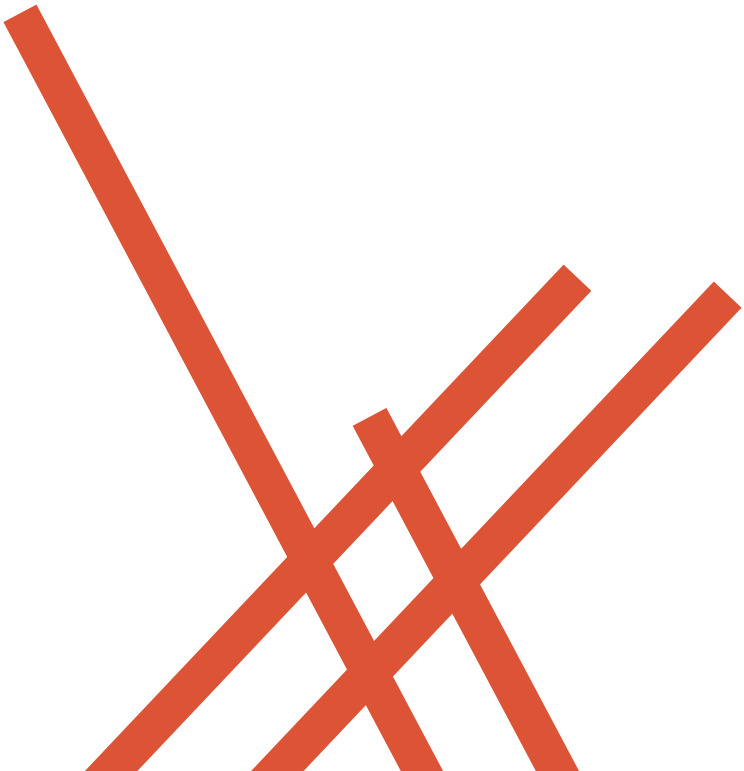
Following the 2015 Paris Agreement, the late 2010s were marked by an unprecedented wave of climate movements pressuring governments and corporations around the world to adopt relatively ambitious climate targets and decarbonization policies. While specifically the European Green Deal was criticized as a 'passive revolution' shielding dominant social power relations through incremental techno-economic adjustments, the ensuing 'decarbonization consensus' (Svampa) unleashed a new green-extractivist scramble for resources considered critical for decarbonization amid heightened geopolitical tensions. However, in the mid 2020s, confronted with its own structural limitations, the decarbonization state project faces a fossilist in part openly neofascist backlash. Moreover, ongoing geopolitical rivalry and economic decoupling between the US and China point to a bifurcation of the global political economy into a fossilist (US-centred) and decarbonized (China-centred) techno-economic paradigm. This bifurcation makes overshooting the remaining carbon budget for 1.5° or 2° Celsius inevitable, requiring large-scale deployment of carbon dioxide removal technologies to compensate for this overshoot and avoid catastrophic climate change impacts. Against this background, this presentation attempts to provide some initial reflections on what the social-ecological struggles, conflicts between capital fractions, and geopolitical tensions likely to emerge over carbon removal in this overshoot conjuncture, and the implications these raise for critical social science and progressive politics.



KEYNOTE

Ownership's frenzy: neofascism as liquidation of phantom possession

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Fascism in the 21st century is a global phenomenon, emerging as liberal democracies, ravaged by neoliberalism, tip into a rapture of authoritarian defensiveness. Against a progressive cycle of movements characterized by their concern for "life" – from Black Lives Matter to the international climate justice movement – a new style of right-wing politics openly affirms destruction in the name of "freedom." Right-wing movements have perfected a political rhetoric of resistance against phantasmatic dispossession. Actual material losses incurred by markets or climate disasters, are naturalized as "force majeure" and remain unaddressed. Yet losses of elevated—, or merely familiar— social status positions and consumption habits are reified as sacred entitlements. From gender norms to farming diesel, from ethnic homogeneity to heating systems, right-wing propaganda reinvents social issues as domains of rightful possession for privileged groups. Propertization enables the restaging of the modern, colonial logic of property as a legitimate mode of relation. Property as full dominion— the sovereign right to destroy and dispose— takes precedence over life, especially the life of the other. This bleak, nihilistic affirmation of destruction – what Wendy Brown calls "apocalyptic populism" and Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor describe as "end-times fascism" – in fact offers a gain. Openly affirming the ecocidal trajectory of fossil modernity within selective, enclosed spheres allows lets subjects to partake in the phantasmatic freedom of the owner, thereby briefly realizing the already broken promise of modernity. To counter this presentist, death-driven project, the talk develops the concept of "freedom to stay" — a collective commitment to ecology and solidarity.

Dialectics of regression

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We are currently witnessing a profound crisis of democratic values and imaginaries, both globally and locally. This crisis is not only evident in the rise of radical and extreme right-wing leaderships but also in increasingly aggressive forms of social relations leading to a 'new' anti-democratic ideology which exposes its violence and cruelty by hindering one of the key tasks of criticism: uncovering the hidden. When everything seems to be out in the open, the task of uncovering something hidden can seem pointless. Nevertheless, persisting in critical engagement remains imperative despite the challenges. To better understand the dynamics of the crisis and engage with it critically, I propose a threefold approach. This approach is based on my experiences and observations in Argentina while also taking into account global economic and ideological-political trends. First, I suggest interrogating what is presently in crisis at the macro-structural level. Second, identifying and scrutinizing the principal ideological nuclei that underpin contemporary authoritarian political discourses, aiming to expose their internal dialectical tensions. Third, analyzing the material conditions which, through the lens of subjective experiences and prejudices, render both these discourses and the closure of their immanent dialectics effective. The ultimate aspiration is to carve out, through this inquiry, a path that might divert us from the one-way trajectory in which we currently find ourselves entrenched.

PANEL

CONTESTED FUTURES

social movements and the reproduction of life

In this panel, we will examine the role of social movements in driving radical social-ecological transformations, with particular attention to their emancipatory potential, strategies, and the challenges posed by current backlash dynamics and shrinking democratic spaces. We will ask: Which protest movements hold transformative potential, and what does this entail? What strategies are mobilized? However, where do we also observe social movements contributing to the emergence of regressive dynamics? This discussion will bring together diverse perspectives to examine the intersections of struggles across various fields of political action – from urban and rural movements to anti-extractivist, feminist, agrarian, and other movements – in both the Global North and the Global South. Central to this dialogue is the question: To what extent can these struggles be conceived as collective efforts for the reproduction of life itself? By analysing both empirical examples and conceptual frameworks, the panel seeks to illuminate agents of change, the challenges they face, and the possibilities they envision.

Key topics:

- **Struggles in shifting times**
  What strategies and responses do social movements deploy in response to the shifting geopolitical constellations and the intensifying social, ecological, and economic crisis?
- **Challenges for actors of emancipatory transformation**
  What are the central obstacles faced by movements pursuing for social and ecological justice, particularly in the face of backlash from regressive political forces? How do they adapt their strategies?
- **The potential of struggles about socio-ecological reproduction**
  How do struggles over social reproduction drive broader emancipatory transformations? How can everyday experiences and interactions lay the foundation for socio-ecological change and political mobilisation? What role could Social Reproduction Theory play in linking the analysis of diverse struggles that defend livelihoods and socio-ecological reproduction against capitalist expropriation and environmental degradation?
- **Transnationalization of struggles**
  How have opportunities for transnational solidarity and the globalization of social movements evolved? How do these movements engage across border

What do the anti-mining movements teach us about what needs to be transformed to resist extractivism in times of recession?

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On March 23, 2003, the Municipality of Esquel held an historical plebiscite resulting in overwhelming rejection of a proposed large-scale gold mine located approximately 7km from the city. This Plebiscite was the result of an intense socio-environmental mobilization that articulated a diverse coalition of actors and strategies. The mobilization not only succeeded in halting the project but also to foster the aadoption ofregulatory measures restricting large-scale mining at both municipal and provincial levels, challenging mining narratives and imaginaries deployed by private and public actors. Esquel triggered a national process of anti-extractivist mobilization that has led to enduring institutional, relational and cultural transformations in Argentina and beyond.
In March 2023, Esquel "no a la mina" Assembly commemorated the 20th anniversary of the struggle by organizing a series of activities to reflect on its history, lessons, and ongoing challenges of the struggle. In this presentation, I reflect on the experience of revisiting Esquel after 20 years and share different formal and informal lessons drawn from this celebration.

Rural Women and Political Strategy: everyday life and social reproduction in agrifood systems (cancelled)

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This presentation draws on three case studies from Portugal to examine the broader political significance of rural women's roles within agrifood systems. Focusing on women's migrant labour, their engagement during revolutionary periods, and grassroots innovations led by peasant women, it explores how everyday life, care work, and the processes of social reproduction simultaneously generate vulnerability and foster resistance. By foregrounding these often-overlooked aspects, this talk proposes a reimagining of political strategy—grounded in embodied resistance and collective care as tools for transformation.

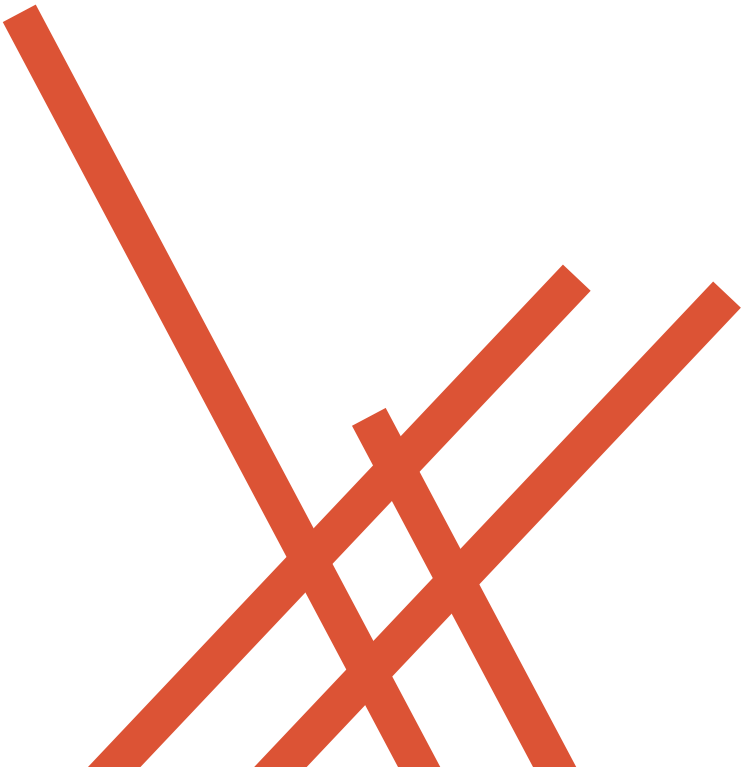
Confronting right-wing exclusion through radically inclusive communing

friederike habermann

commons-institut

Already characterized as the “first revolution of the 21st century” shortly after their uprising in 1994, the indigenous Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, not only proclaimed, "We don't need to conquer the world. It is enough to recreate it. Today. By us“, but implemented the establishment of commoning structures as part of their daily activities. In the years after, activist scholars inspired by them (such as Massimo de Angelis) brought the commons and the associated needs-oriented logic, as well as the necessary fundamental break with market logic (such as John Holloway), into the left-wing international debate. Thirty years later, the Zapatistas intensify these efforts and called for a renewed international meeting this summer, posing the question how other movements are practicing no propiedad y el comun „in the storm“ – making clear that for many the storm is already reality – „and for the day after“.

A month later, in Germany, the first camp of a growing Collapse Awareness Movement took place. It was attended by many who had already begun to build their own, essentially commons-based structures. However, the concerns expressed by some movement actors in the Global South that Collapse Awareness could lead to a retreat into the still very privileged local sphere are justified and currently unanswered. However, the more hegemonic positioning of European activists enables a dual strategy: demanding a commons logic of cooperation instead of competition, of needs orientation instead of the naturalization of market mechanisms on every scale. Activists from different movements identify with the three transformation paths of the Network of Economic Transformation, NOW NET: to dismantle the market, to democratise democracy and thus countering rising fascism with the vision of a commons society.



Authoritarian neoliberalism, war politics, and patriarchy. Feminist and human rights action for the expanded reproduction of life in Ecuador

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The global context increasingly reveals how the process of expanded capital reproduction is assuming an authoritarian, militarized, form characterized by profound socio-environmental devastation. These traits are not new from a historical perspective, and they are particularly prevalent in Latin America. However, we are currently seeing the activation of political and social expressions that legitimize and amplify extreme exploitation and extraction, patriarchal verticality, the criminalization of mobility, the persecution of gender and sexuality dissidence, and the sacrifice of territories and racialized people. This, which has been occurring for some time, is now clearly stated and acquires public legitimacy, whether through the electoral support of authoritarian and fascist candidates or through a micropolitics that cultivates suspicion, resentment, and revenge. The formal framework for guaranteeing rights (including human rights) and the scientific evidence on the environmental crisis and gender inequalities are now being questioned and even blamed for hindering markets or inflating and exploiting the welfare state, generating deficits. In Ecuador, authoritarian neoliberalism has found militarization to be a central strategy for authorizing the right-wing project. The fight against so-called organized crime creates a narrative of punishment and death against the youngest and most impoverished sectors of society. This hegemonic narrative— explicitly racist and sexist— and the policies that accompany it are not only useless in the "war on drugs," as long demonstrated by the experiences of Colombia and Mexico, but have also generated sacrificial bodies along lines of race, age, and gender. The recent disappearance and death of four Afro-Ecuadorian children from the Las Malvinas neighborhood in Guayaquil, involving the military, is a case in point.

In this context, the humanizing action of women and mothers in popular neighborhoods and the work of community-based and anti-punitive feminist, human rights, and cultural action organizations with youth and families reveal a politics of resistance. The expanded social and cultural reproduction within these environments, alongside the forms of struggle they engender pose new challenges, new strategies, and new counternarratives— of which I will explore in this presentation. Specifically, I will focus on a research and activist project to strengthen a *Network Against Violence*, organized around three nodes/territories in Ecuador. This project is one of the initiatives of the *Expanded Reproduction: Food, Body, Environment, and the Commons* research program promoted by teachers and students at FLACSO Ecuador.

PANEL

THE DUAL ROLE OF LABOUR

driver of crisis or transformation?

The deepening socio-ecological crisis has redirected the attention of social science and struggles over the direction of crisis management to labour, highlighting the connection between ecologically destructive production relations and consumption patterns. The organization of work—both within the workplace and globally—shapes the conditions of social reproduction and the relationship between society and nature. In this context, labour emerges as both a driver of socio-ecological crises and a potential site for progressive transformation.

Labour, in a broad sense, encompasses material conditions and collective agency, exposing the tensions between socioeconomic interests and ecological sustainability. While it can foster social cohesion by providing workers autonomy and meaningful engagement in their work, it can also fragment society through alienation, exacerbating conflicts between social and ecological interests. This fragmentation risks steering socio-ecological change in a regressive direction.

For instance, in the public transportation sector, an alliance between workers and environmentalists to promote a mobility transition is likely. In contrast, in industries such as lignite coal mining or the automotive sector, workers have often fought to preserve jobs despite the environmental consequences of production.

The dual nature of labour underscores the importance of understanding how work processes, workers' interests, and their perceptions of the environmental crisis shape the trajectory of socio-ecological transformation. Whether this transformation is progressive or regressive hinges critically on how labour is structured and whether it aligns with—or obstructs—the necessary ecological and social transformation.

Guiding questions:

- What role does labour play in the socio-ecological transformation?
- How does labour contribute to the formation of subjective and collective interests in the context of the socio-ecological transformation?
- How does the externalization of ecological costs to the "Global South" shape labour conflicts over socio-ecological transformation in these regions?
- Under what conditions do alliances between workers, environmental movements, and other actors emerge? What factors prevent these alliances?
- What specific challenges exist for the transformation in industries such as the automotive sector?

Grounding labour regimes in ecology: production networks, materiality and social reproduction

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Understanding the ecological relations that underpin global production— and the systems of work, employment, and labour that are both structured by and constitutive of contemporary capitalism— is a critical issue, especially in the context of ongoing biodiversity and climate crises. This presentation sets out a labour regime framework of global production, designed to mediate and explain the relationship between planetary-spanning circuits of capital and distinct places where labour is exploited and nature appropriated. It argues that labour regime analysis can enhance our understanding of the ecological relations, conditions, and implications of production and social reproduction in the world economy today: How can we understand the dynamics of labour and production relations in the context of rapid transformation of local ecologies, eco-systems, and planetary systems? In what ways— and to what extent— does ecology articulate with and through labour regimes? This presentation develops and advances a theorisation and analytical framework for the study of ecology and labour regimes by teasing out the materialities of the human body, the commodity, the workplace, and global production networks in natural resource industries.

Contradictions in environmental thinking: the everyday of work and utopias of the good life

nora räthzel
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Everybody knows it: workers want to keep their jobs. Trade unions have fought to slow the closure of coal mines, arguing that workers need their employment. However, 85% of workers in Scotland's oil industry stated they would gladly work elsewhere—if only they could. When we asked trade unionists in Spain and the United Kingdom to paint a picture of the society they would like to live in, their visions included local community spirit, access to nature, education, mutual care, and a life with less work and more living.

The question is: how can union environmental policies—or environmental policies in general—connect with such needs? How can workers become agents of transformation—one that incorporates their desires for a good life and is not dominated by the fear of losing existing jobs? How can utopias be meaningfully integrated into everyday politics?

The fear of uselessness: from the normalization to the enjoyment of ecological destructiveness

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Resistance to climate change mitigation has become a core issue for right-wing populism across the globe. Such politics can mobilize a widespread normalization of ecological destructiveness. This paper argues that climate protection provokes such outrage because it appears to negate all the sacrifices made in the name of work. Thus, the normalization of destructiveness relates to a fear of uselessness common to the modern subject. Right-wing anti-climate protest harnesses this fear and reconfigures it into something positive to be enjoyed. This phenomenon is illustrated through interviews with Swiss construction workers reflecting on their experiences with climate change.