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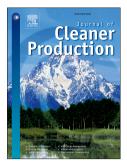
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Degrowth, energy democracy, technology and socialecological relations: discussing a localised energy system in Vaxjö, Sweden

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Abstract

This paper offers a combined theoretical and empirical assessment of energy democracy and degrowth in relation to the case study of a city's municipally-owned energy company in Sweden. Energy democracy is a fairly new concept and is a normative proposal that aims at articulating prospects for reduction of consumption, resource efficiency, use of renewable sources of energy and community empowerment. Though degrowth and energy democracy have similar goals and orientation, a combined analysis of both normative proposals remains underdeveloped. The focus on energy democracy serves us to articulate a deeper discussion on how technology, energy use and sustainability challenges interplay with definitions and meanings of degrowth vis-à-vis processes of capital accumulation. Empirically, we use the case of a municipality-based project of energy extraction and distribution in Sweden to discuss degrowth and energy democracy perspectives in this context. Theoretically, we develop insights from critical theories of technology. A main conclusion of the paper is that prospects for energy democracy and degrowth are limited in the energy project approached in the paper as it is based on the use of forest resources- a contested resource in the area and also because this project assumes the development of economic processes oriented towards economic growth within the framework of capital accumulation.

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