

A 'TRANSFORMATION COMPASS' FOR SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY
ECONOMY INITIATIVES IN THEIR TRANSITION TOWARDS POSTGROWTH

*UNA 'BRÚJULA DE TRANSFORMACIÓN' PARA LAS INICIATIVAS DE ECONOMÍA
SOCIAL Y SOLIDARIA EN SU TRANSICIÓN HACIA EL POSTRECIMIENTO*

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ABSTRACT

The current climate crisis and global inequalities trigger intense debates on the need of achieving socioecological transitions towards environmentally and socially just scenarios. In this context, the Social and Solidarity Economy and Postgrowth paradigms could play a major role in leading these transitions. The strong convergence between their principles opens the door for this article's main contribution: a Transformation Compass. This tool allows Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives to approach a Postgrowth economy through a well-defined matrix, which incorporates Hinton's (2021) characterization of postgrowth businesses. In addition, this Compass helps to assess the factors and dimensions that affect different initiatives during this process.

Keywords: Transformation; Compass; Postgrowth; Social Solidarity Economy; Socioecological Transition.

RESUMEN

La actual crisis climática y las desigualdades globales desencadenan intensos debates sobre la necesidad de alcanzar transiciones socioecológicas hacia escenarios ambiental y socialmente justos. En este contexto, los paradigmas de la Economía Social y Solidaria y del Postcrecimiento podrían desempeñar un papel fundamental a la hora de liderar estas transiciones. La fuerte convergencia entre sus principios abre la puerta a la principal contribución de este artículo: una Brújula de la Transformación. Esta herramienta permite a las iniciativas de Economía Social y Solidaria acercarse a la economía del Postcrecimiento a través de una matriz bien definida, que incorpora la caracterización de Hinton (2021) de las empresas postcrecientistas. Además, esta brújula ayuda a evaluar los factores y dimensiones que afectan a las distintas iniciativas durante este proceso.

Palabras clave: Transformación; Brújula; Postcrecimiento; Economía Social y Solidaria; Transición Socioecológica.

JEL Classification/ Clasificación JEL: B52, D23, P48

1. INTRODUCTION

Progress in eco-social transition processes demands a deep reassessment of our current stance on economics, the environment, and social justice (Cigna et al., 2023; Krause et al., 2022). While various *alternative economies* are in existence, not all of them explicitly underscore the radical transformations essential for long-lasting sustainability (Zademach & Hillebrand, 2013). Recognizing the challenges of surpassing six out of the nine planetary boundaries (Richardson et al., 2023), addressing intra- and intergenerational inequities, challenging the prevailing influence of values such as consumerism, and mitigating the growing global and local disparities (Knappe & Renn, 2022; Martin et al., 2016; Summers & Smith, 2014) allows us to distinguish those alternatives that have the potential to truly steer us towards socially and environmentally just scenarios.

This conclusion also emerges from the recently published study *Beyond Growth: Pathways towards Sustainable Prosperity in the EU*, coordinated by Jensen under the auspices of a conference held at the European Parliament in May of 2023. Faced with sluggish economic growth and daunting climate challenges, the European Union and other advanced economies are opening a window to reexamining their economic narratives and seek a more comprehensive understanding of the ingredients of socio-economic progress (Jensen et al., 2023). To such an extent that, in the pursuit of transcending traditional growth models and nurturing sustainable prosperity within the European Union, the study underlines the need to focus on and promote paradigms such as 'Postgrowth' (hereafter PG).

This is the juncture where the importance of this research comes into focus. While PG has generally been studied at the macroeconomic level, there's still a significant journey ahead in exploring how it can be effectively implemented (Nesterova, 2020). Moreover, when it comes to designing and targeting public policies, the challenge of differentiating between economic activities and initiatives that steer us towards the mentioned socially and ecologically just outcomes remains highly complex (Hinton, 2021). In particular, the European Parliament's study (Jensen et al., 2023) highlights this as a strategic area for research and focus: on which dimensions of an initiative should we focus on to facilitate the progress of socio-ecological transition processes? What are the implications of focusing on some dimensions over others? This research aims to provide deeper insights into these questions.

Furthermore, it contributes to and enhances other major research projects funded by the European Commission, such as the one secured by such as the one secured by the Institute of Science and Environmental Technology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona ICTA-UAB (2022), which, in the coming years will “investigate how to move beyond the growth-based economy and ensure both social well-being and planetary sustainability” (para. 1). More precisely, in line with initiatives such as this, the present research clarifies how initiatives within the ‘Social and Solidarity Economy’ (hereafter SSE) have the potential to facilitate the indispensable processes for the eco-social transition, ultimately leading to the realization of a PG economy.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the methods used. Section 3 presents the main outcomes, which include the alignment of paradigms with the constructed Compass, along with its practical applicability. Finally, Section 4 discusses the core concepts, recognizes potential constraints, and suggests avenues for future research.

2. METHODOLOGY

Through an exhaustive analysis of the work of influential researchers (Coraggio, 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Hickel et al., 2022; Nesterova, 2020; Paech, 2017; Parrique et al., 2019), we have articulated and compared the normative and applied principles that underpin both paradigms – the PG and SSE. These paradigms have the potential to serve as guiding beacons, orchestrating scientific research endeavors within the domain of socio-ecological transition processes. This method of comparison in itself serves as a framework that facilitates the identification of practices that may play a crucial role in catalyzing eco-social transitions, driven by the impetus of PG processes. By revealing the intricate interplay and connections between these paradigms, and by building on Hinton’s (2021) work, we have been able to develop the *Transformation Compass* for a nuanced understanding of the PG potential inherent in the range of initiatives embodied in the SSE.

The development of this *Transformation Compass* is grounded on an extensive literature review, aimed at synthesizing existing theories and practices from the SSE and PG paradigms. This comprehensive review sought to identify key principles and challenges of ecosocial transitions, drawing on a wide range of academic articles, case studies and theoretical frameworks. The process involved a critical analysis of the literature to distil key insights and patterns that could inform the conceptualization of the compass. Emphasizing the bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, the review adopted an iterative process of conceptualization. This meant revisiting and refining our understanding of the literature as the framework of the tool began to take shape, ensuring that the compass was both rooted in strong theoretical foundations and had clear implications for practical application in SSE initiatives. This iterative approach facilitated a deep engagement with the

material and allowed for the nuanced integration of different perspectives and insights into the tool's design.

Furthermore, while the *Transformation Compass* is a product of theoretical exploration, its practical applications discussed here are intended to illustrate its potential utility. Future work will focus on empirical testing and validation to confirm its effectiveness and applicability in real-world settings.

3. RESULTS

3.1 ALIGNMENT AND CONSISTENCY BETWEEN NORMATIVE AND APPLIED PRINCIPLES OF THE SSE AND THE PG ECONOMY

As noted above, the current state of environmental degradation, climate change and the subsequent approach to planetary limits is largely caused by human actions (IPCC, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the appropriateness of the classical economic paradigm (or shareholder paradigm) that has dominated the public debate for much of the 20th century and the advent of the 21st century, championing the idea of accelerated growth in economic value alongside human production and consumption as a path to planetary development (Friedman, 1962; Groth et al., 1996; Laffer et al., 2011).

In this context, a transition that allows moving from the neoclassical framework of growth towards a PG society, which proposes a reduction and adaptation of human production and consumption to the biophysical limits of the planet, becomes especially important. For this reason, the study and incorporation of alternative movements and paradigms related to development is a fundamental element that will serve to know how the transitional process could be carried out.

Building on the previous premises, this article aims to analyze the contribution of a paradigm such as SSE makes in order to achieve a PG society. The SSE can be defined as a collective action project aimed at counteracting the socially negative tendencies of the existing system, with the real or potential perspective of building an alternative economic system that is based on the reproduction and development of life (RIPES, 2015). In this paradigm, solidarity is undoubtedly a supreme moral value, a willingness to recognize and care for others through cooperation and the collective sharing of resources and responsibilities (Coraggio et al., 2016).

The previous SSE narrative would be at odds with the traditional pro-growth paradigms, which are increasingly being contested by a growing proportion of the world's population and their countries (Hickel et al., 2022). Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus that the transition to a PG society will not be straightforward and simple (Taibo, 2021). Therefore, merely examining the SSE's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals is insufficient (Villalba-Eguiluz et al., 2020). The PG, by adopting a different path to the very historical conceptualization of the idea of development (Unceta, 2009), also

requires the SSE to elaborate new ways of thinking about how they are de facto an alternative (Santos, 2017). This involves developing new frameworks and tools, such as the one presented, to understand how SSE practices can align with and promote PG paradigms.

For the necessary socio-environmental transition to gain momentum, SSE could be considered in conjunction with other paradigms that share theoretical and practical similarities. More precisely, the movement of ‘degrowth’ represents a complementary paradigm to both PG and SSE, as it emphasizes the need for an alternative vision of the economy and human needs in order to adapt the economic activity to the biophysical and environmental limits of our planet, (Galli et al., 2007; Hickel, 2021). From a socio-economic perspective, degrowth would seek “a more equitable distribution of existing resources” and perceived income (Hickel, 2019, p. 12).

Indeed, in PG, after the appropriate transition, businesses should already be operating under sufficiency, sustainability, and not-for-profit objectives (Hinton, 2021). In this new paradigm, human relationships, cooperation, and consideration for non-human life will be the cornerstones of people’s lives. The state will ensure that education of the population will cement the survival of this PG mentality, taming any potential impulse to return to the previous unsustainable pro-growth stage (Nesterova, 2020). In this sense, PG could be considered as the long-term goal of degrowth principles, and thus the majority of degrowth principles would become ideal characteristics of future PG societies, if the transitions are carried out properly and simultaneously across societies.

We take the plural form as different transitions (social, environmental, economic, etc.) ought to take place in order to attain an ideal future PG state. However, despite the important theoretical robustness of the degrowth paradigm (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Hickel, 2019; Nesterova, 2020), its practical implementation is challenging due to the reluctance by different actors (firms, citizens, states) to part with the dominant social and economic development model of recent decades (Taibo, 2021). Despite these difficulties, we argue that degrowth principles should play an important role by acting as a beacon of change in the current planetary transitions.

As previously shown, the degrowth and PG paradigms share a wide range of similarities (Nesterova, 2020). Indeed, in the following table we mention the normative and applied principles of PG societies (also shared with degrowth) identified by Paech (2017) and relate them to the normative and applied principles of SSE (Coraggio, 2011). This comprehensive comparison not only facilitates self-diagnosis for organizations and communities, but also provides a framework for developing responses to PG transition pathways.

In the case of the first set of principles, the institutional innovation of PG would be directly related to the principles of democratic government of SSE. More specifically, PG’s institutional innovation refers to the transformative potential that the adoption of a culture of degrowth should have both at the company and at the social level. However, in order to be able to adopt these

TABLE 1 : NORMATIVE AND APPLIED PRINCIPLES OF PG AND SSE

PG normative pr.	PG applied pr.	SSE normative pr.	SSE applied pr.
1. Institutional innovation	1.1. Fostering a business culture that does not prioritize growth	1. Democratic government	1.1. Freedom of adherence and voluntary cooperation
	1.2. Gradual adoption of a PG social culture (role of education)		1.2. Independent decision-making from public administrations
1.3. Non-exploitation and non-discrimination of people			
1.4. Regulation of markets			
1.5. Democratic and participating processes			
	1.6. Transparency and democratic control		
2. Development of people's capacities	2.1. Reduced working hours to develop social skills	2. People's autonomy	2.1. Employment for all people
	2.2. Development of own production in essential goods		
	2.3. Care and promotion of relational goods		2.2. Access of workers to different forms of knowledge and production means
	2.4. Pursuit of voluntary self-limitation		
3. Sufficiency	3.1. Reduction in the use of inputs and wastes in carrying out economic activity	3. Care towards people and planet	3.1. Socially and environmentally sustainable goals and behavior
	3.2. Protection from environmental impacts on the most vulnerable groups and individuals		3.2. Primacy of social and environmental goals
			3.3. Defending human and environmental rights
			3.4. Innovation and sustainable technologies
4. Regional economy	4.1. Local production	4. Equity, solidarity, and interdependence	4.1. Cooperation between SSE initiatives
	4.2. Supporting the local economy		4.2. Reciprocity and redistribution between people and communities
			4.3. Local community and territory development

Source: Adapted principles from Coraggio (2011) and Paech (2017).

principles, it is necessary to develop autonomy, freedom and democracy, both at the level of the organizations and society as a whole. In this regard, education can be seen as a useful tool in the creation of free, equal, and critically aware human beings in order to carry out processes of future transformations towards sustainable and PG societies.

Concerning the second set of principles, both paradigms are strongly focused on the development of people's capabilities. The search for the satisfaction of people's needs as opposed to economic profit, the promotion

of social relations through measures such as work-life balance and reduction of working hours, the importance of activities that do not depend on economic exchange such as self-production and self-consumption, and the search for voluntary self-limitation are those principles applied to this end. As it can be seen, under both paradigms, 'businesses' mission would evolve from organizations focused on obtaining an economic surplus for the shareholder to organizations committed to the development of its stakeholders in different areas (social, emotional, environmental and not only economic).

In relation to the third set of principles, the PG's principles of sufficiency and regional economy would be linked within the block of care towards people and planet. Regarding sufficiency, its applied principles consisting of the reduction of both inputs and waste from economic activity, as well as the protection of environmental impacts, show a direct similarity to socially and environmentally responsible behavior, goals and technologies, as well as the defense of human and environmental rights. In the case of the regional economy, its applied principles that consist of encouraging and supporting local production may have a direct similarity to the development of the local community. Meanwhile, cooperation between social economy initiatives, reciprocity and redistribution between people and communities would show a sufficient but not direct relationship with PG's first normative principle about institutional innovation.

In essence, the complementarity and similarity of principles between PG and SSE paradigms reinforce their important role in the transition towards a PG scenario. This dialogue between principles represents a necessary and unavoidable condition for the subsequent establishment of the dimensions, factors and typologies to be fulfilled by those companies that aspire to assume an ideally PG character. Nonetheless, a plethora of different actors like businesses, public administrations and transnational organizations will need to be involved to widen the scope of this dialogue and to accelerate the transition towards a long-lasting PG society.

3.2 A TRANSFORMATION COMPASS: DISCOVERING THE WAYS IN WHICH SSE INITIATIVES COULD BE IDEAL WITH PG

At the macro level, the establishment of the normative and applied principles of the PG economy on the one hand and the SSE on the other, followed by their comparison and the identification of points of convergence and divergence, could be inferred as an instrumental outcome of the research itself. However, this task is primarily a necessary step to move forward in the micro level through the creation of a *Transformation Compass* that would aid SSE initiatives in approaching PG and, consequently, advancing in socioecological transition processes.

The research at the macro level has enabled us to understand that SSE initiatives and the normative and applied principles they advocate and promote are closely aligned with those of PG. However, this awareness and convergence between frameworks alone are not sufficient to effectively progress towards



these future scenarios. It is essential to develop tools at the micro level that empower SSE initiatives (as well as others established in different paradigms) to (a) access more comprehensive information about the dimensions influencing this task and (b) to comprehend the ease or difficulty of making progress in these dimensions. The proposed *Transformation Compass* serves this purpose. It enables initiatives to make more informed and consistent decisions while also increasing their understanding of the implications of those decisions.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSFORMATION COMPASS

The subsequent subsections elucidate the dimensions, typologies, and factors underpinning the construction of the *Transformation Compass*, which is visually represented in Figure 1.

HORIZONTAL AXIS: FIVE KEY DIMENSIONS OF PG BUSINESS

Moving from the macro to the micro level of analysis and taking an institutional approach, the following five dimensions defined by Hinton (2021) are the ones that should be taken into account more by businesses and policy makers in order to advance towards PG societies. Besides being more accessible for self-diagnosis, their applied formulation is closer to the business activity and its dynamics. Focused on institutional aspects, such as property rights, the purpose and goals of business or whether they are legally binding, Hinton (2021) identifies these five key dimensions:

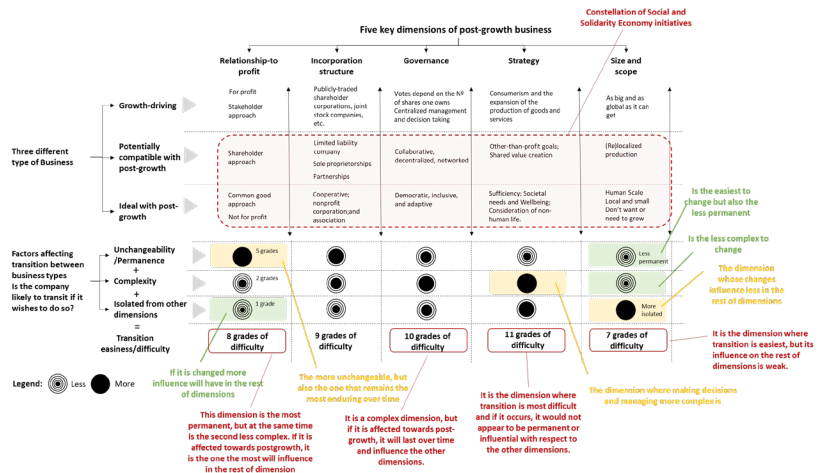
- 'Relationship-to-profit': also referred to as the legal or organizational structure, pertains to the legal categorization distinguishing between for-profit and not-for-profit businesses.
- 'Incorporation structure': also known as the corporate or legal form, signifies the specific legal entity under which a company is established and granted legal existence.
- 'Governance': encompasses the rules, norms, procedures, and mechanisms governing decision-making within a business. It focuses on how and by whom decisions are made, as well as who is excluded from this decision-making process.
- 'Strategy': involves the utilization of businesses resources to fulfill its mission. This encompasses elements such as business management, planning and business practices.
- 'Size and geographical scope': delineate how large or small a business is and whether it operates primarily on a local or global scale.

These five key dimensions of a company make up the horizontal axis of the PG compass proposed in this research. The influence and alteration of these dimensions represent a closer or further departure from the characteristics that a PG initiative should embody.

FIRST VERTICAL AXIS: THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUSINESS AND THEIR INTERSECTION WITH THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

In alignment with the importance given to Hinton’s (2021) work by the European Parliamentary Research Service (Jensen et al., 2023), the first vertical axis of the compass is composed of three types of businesses in which all existing entities within an economy could be categorized: (a) *Growth-Driving*, (b) *Potentially Compatible with PG Transition Pathways*, and (c) *Ideally suited for PG economies*.

FIGURE 1: THE DIMENSIONS, TYPOLOGIES, AND FACTORS COMPRISING THE TRANSFORMATION COMPASS



Source: Own elaboration based on Hinton (2021).

Here, another scientific contribution of this paper arises from the intersection of these five horizontally aligned dimensions with the three vertically positioned business types. Within the 15 quadrants resulting from this intersection, we delineate the characteristics that each type of business exhibits in each of the five dimensions. For this purpose, the previous work for the definition of the normative and applied principles of a PG Economy was used. For instance, in the 'Relationship-to-profit' dimension, a *Growth-Driving* business is primarily focused on maximizing shareholder value (shareholder approach), a business *Potentially Compatible with PG* has integrated consideration for the interests and needs of various stakeholders (stakeholder approach), and a business *Ideally Suited for PG economies* views its activities as a contribution to society at large based on principles of social and ecological justice and strong



sustainability on the basis of the Common good approach the Common good approach (Salustri, 2020).

Based on the normative and applied principles of PG and SSE that have been distilled previously, we can conclude that the initiatives within the latter category consistently fall into the types of businesses classified as *Potentially Compatible with PG* or *Ideally Suited for PG economies* (the two red shaded rows in Figure 1). The implications of this assertion are significant. In alignment with other researchers (Quiroz-Niño & Murga-Menoyo, 2017; Villalba-Eguiluz et al., 2023, 2020), it reaffirms the critical importance of support and collaboration from public administrations to ensure their longevity, their expansion, and their progress across less-explored dimensions on the challenging path of socioecological transitions.

SECOND VERTICAL AXIS: FACTORS AFFECTING TRANSITION AND THEIR INTERSECTION WITH THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

This second vertical axis, comprising three factors organized in rows, aims to shed more light on the relative ease or difficulty of moving across the quadrants within the five key dimensions of a PG business. It also qualitatively assesses the degree of relative complexity, permanence, and influence of these movements. This, in turn, contributes to more informed decision-making when determining how and where to focus efforts to advance the development of a SSE that most closely aligns with the *Ideally Suited for PG economies* business type.

- 'Unchangeability': refers to the capacity of movements between quadrants to endure and institutionalize over time. It's a reformulation of the Changeability factor introduced by Hinton (2021). Instead of emphasizing the changeability of movements occurring between the quadrants in various dimensions, we concentrate on the flip side: their permanence. In doing so, we organize the dimensions from relatively less permanent to relatively more permanent. This approach unveils the dimensions that would be most resistant to change due to their level of institutionalization.
- 'Complexity': among other elements, this factor organizes the five dimensions based on the number of actors, processes, and components involved in each of them and how these affect the operation and viability of the business (Estrada, 2023; San Cristobal et al., 2018; Sturmberg, 2017; Turner & Backer, 2019). For example, *Strategy* may entail greater uncertainty, dynamism, and creativity than *Governance*, which is more rooted in stability, order, and normativity. Crafting, implementing, and evaluating a *Strategy* could be more challenging than *Governance* since it involves clearer and more established criteria. Similarly, as it depends more on external and internal factors that may vary or be unpredictable, strategic decision-making entails a higher level of complexity than the *Incorporation Structure*. In contrast, the

choice of legal forms relies on more objective and stable criteria and is made from a predefined set of options regulated by the law.

- 'Isolation': based on the relatively greater or lesser influence that movements within the quadrants of one dimension have on the other five dimensions (Hinton, 2021). This nuanced perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationships between these dimensions. To determine which dimensions have less impact on other dimensions, it has been considered that the lower their influence, the more 'isolated' they are understood to be from the rest. This factor assumes that certain dimensions have varying degrees of influence on the wider framework, creating a spectrum of isolation.

This list of three factors is not exhaustive, and it is entirely possible to introduce other new factors, such as (1) the 'symmetry/asymmetry' of movements that may occur in each of the five dimensions or (2) the 'resilience' of each of the five dimensions. The *Transformation Compass* presented in this study should be seen as a further step in the generation of scientific knowledge aimed at translating paradigms and theoretical frameworks into practical applications and the best ways of doing so.

3.4 AN EXPLORATION OF THE BENEFITS OF THE TRANSFORMATION COMPASS: HOW DOES IT GUIDE US?

The *Transformation Compass* developed is a valuable tool that provides insights not only for enhancing self-awareness regarding one's initiatives but also for delivering substantial value to policymakers and practitioners. Just like any compass, this one can be used to determine the current position of an initiative and chart its course towards achieving the desired destination, which is the PG economy through eco-social transition processes. In reality, the Compass provides a clear picture of the eco-social transition processes that need to take place within a company in order to ultimately adopt a PG approach. While the compass proves valuable for businesses of all kinds, it is especially relevant for initiatives within the SSE. Examining micro-level practices is essential to understand how transitions can be complemented by individual and collective actions and behaviors within socio-ecological systems. This complements the macro-level analysis by shedding light on the role of actors, practices, institutions, and technologies involved in these transitions (Köhler et al., 2018). According to a publication in *Nature* (Hickel et al., 2022), proposal like degrowth can work. The question is how to do it from different spheres. Some examples are included in Table 2.

Following Table 2, consider the next scenario: an initiative wants to move towards PG, but has limited resources (e.g., 2,000€ and two available employees). Using the framework, the initiative will conduct a self-diagnosis and assess where it stands in relation to each principle. Once it knows where it stands, the factors listed above come into play. Depending on the

TABLE 2: DIMENSIONS FOR INTERVENTION BASED ON DESIRED TRANSFORMATION

<i>Type of desired transformation</i>	<i>The three dimensions that would contribute the most</i>
1. Relatively enduring over time, not relatively complex to manage, and influential on the other dimensions	1. Relationship to profit 2. Incorporation Structure 3. Governance
2. Relatively changeable, complex to manage, and influential on the other dimensions	1. Governance 2. Strategy 3. Incorporation Structure

Source: Own elaboration.

unchangeability, complexity and isolation, the initiative will be able to make decisions in the way that suits it best (taking into account opportunity costs). If it wants to influence the other decisions more, it will focus its efforts on making changes in the first and/or second dimension. On the other hand, if it wants to make a more cultural change, it will know that the fourth and fifth dimensions are a better option. Alternatively, the initiative could also follow the grades of difficulty in order to start with the easiest dimensions.

The recognition that some dimensions are inherently more changeable and complex than others underscores the importance of allocating resources judiciously and ensuring that initiatives have the support they need to navigate them. It becomes clear that 'Governance' and 'Incorporation Structure' dimensions coincide in both desired types of transformation. This could lead to the conclusion that by combining actions and interventions in both dimensions, it is possible to achieve the highest level of influence while simultaneously addressing scenarios that would be balanced in complexity and stability. Similarly, there is little uncertainty regarding the dimension of 'Size and Scope', which should require the least focus, as it is relatively less complex, less influential, and more subject to change when compared to the other four dimensions.

'Relation to profit' and 'Incorporation structure': given that these are relatively simple to transform, but which simultaneously last over time and have a significant impact on the rest, progress towards PG in these dimensions could be left to the initiatives themselves, provided they receive expert guidance. Conversely, owing to their distinctive characteristics, Public Administrations may choose these dimensions to enact substantial, far-reaching, and enduring transformations, requiring relatively modest efforts and resource allocation. In such a scenario, it might be beneficial for initiatives to place a stronger focus on dimensions that are more dynamic and intricate to manage, such as 'Strategy and Governance'. The complexity of both dimensions could require a more precise understanding of their multifaceted reality, and therefore, we suggest pursuing transition efforts in these domains, supported by adequate technical and financial assistance for their realization.

Based on these kinds of reflections, is possible to delve deeper into the implications of the *Transformation Compass*.

1. Strategic resource allocation: the recognition that certain dimensions are more changeable and complex than others underscores the need for strategic resource allocation. Initiatives should consider a tiered approach to allocate resources based on the complexity and potential impact of each dimension. For instance, dedicating the resources they require to 'Governance and Incorporation Structure', which are influential and complex, can be a prudent decision. This ensures that initiatives have the necessary support to navigate these crucial aspects of their transformation.
2. Synergistic dimensional alignment: recognizing the convergence of 'Governance' and 'Incorporation Structure' in both desired types of transformation opens up the opportunity for initiatives to explore synergies between these dimensions. By combining actions and interventions in these areas, initiatives can potentially unlock a higher level of influence. For instance, aligning governance strategies with changes in incorporation structure can create a seamless transition process, further enhancing the effectiveness of their eco-social transformation.
3. Customized transformation pathways: initiatives should be encouraged to tailor their transformation pathways based on their unique characteristics and objectives. For dimensions like 'Relationship to profit' and 'Incorporation Structure', which are relatively simpler to transform and have a lasting impact, initiatives may opt for self-guided transformations with expert guidance. However, Public Administrations can play a pivotal role in facilitating the transformation of these dimensions, especially when the initiatives themselves may not have the expertise. Public-Social collaborations can be explored to support these transformations efficiently.
4. Adaptive governance and strategy: recognizing that 'Governance' and 'Strategy' are changeable and complex dimensions, initiatives should focus on building adaptive governance structures and flexible strategic approaches. This involves embracing a learning and feedback-driven mindset. Initiatives should be encouraged to experiment and iterate in these areas, understanding that precise and intimate understanding of their complexities comes with time and experience. This adaptive approach allows for continuous improvement and resilience in the face of changing socio-ecological conditions.
5. Monitoring and evaluation: to ensure the success of these transformation efforts, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place. These mechanisms should not only assess the progress of each dimension but also capture the interplay and synergies between dimensions. This information-driven approach allows initiatives to make informed decisions, adjust strategies as necessary, and demonstrate the effectiveness of their initiatives to stakeholders and policymakers.
6. Knowledge exchange and collaboration: initiatives can benefit from knowledge exchange and collaboration. They should be encouraged to share best practices, lessons learned, and resources with one another. Creating a network of initiatives and organizations focused on eco-social

transitions can accelerate the collective impact and enhance the overall effectiveness of these transformations.

There is a multitude of combinations and possibilities for these transformations, and the most appropriate strategy and operational approach will be context-specific and time-dependent. However, despite the approach for these transitions will ultimately be determined by the involved stakeholders, the *Transformation Compass* furnishes essential insights into the elements that demand consideration at each juncture.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We have therefore inherited two factors ('changeability' and 'influence') proposed by Hinton (2021) that have an inverse and symmetrical relationship. In other words, these two factors cancel each other out. Although this feature can be disputed, it is difficult to deny that changeability and influence are two distinct elements with their own antagonistic entity. For this reason, this article accepts her contribution and proposes a third factor ('complexity'). This last one does not operate with the same direct and automatic logic, although it is subject to the same simplification (necessary to create a model, but open to debate).

That being said, one concern that could arise from the proposed framework would be the conditions that make a sector more or less ideal for PG. And, ultimately, whether all sectors can be ideal or not (e.g., mobility-related tourism, speculation, extractive or resource-intensive activities, marketing consultancy, etc.). In those where transition is possible, future research should explore questions related to how comprehensive sectorial transformations could be carried out, and how the conditioning factors of the sector itself, as well as the activities developed within it, may influence the possibilities for PG scenarios.

Similarly, we might ask whether PG is compatible with any political system or type of society. That is, does the PG enterprise need certain cultural or regulatory elements? Or, on the contrary, can it act voluntarily until it achieves PG, without being compelled by law or rewarded by the incentive system? This relates to the resilience factor mentioned above, where the capitalist incentives are key. While some dimensions may be easy to assess (e.g., whether a for-profit company is more likely to last than a non-for-profit company), others are less clear (e.g., whether a democratic company is as likely to last as a shareholder-run company). Reason why this factor has not been included in the compass.

Moreover, the idea of allowing stakeholders to shape the course of these transitions opens the door to a profound reflection on the nature of socio-economic change and the role of various actors in bringing about transformative shifts. It underscores the dynamic, evolving and context-dependent character of sustainable progress. At the heart of this idea lies the recognition that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to promoting the PG principles.

The complexity and multi-faceted nature of these dimensions require an adaptive approach. It could be positive to entrust stakeholders, whether they be individual initiatives or public institutions, with the responsibility of charting their own path within the broader framework of a PG transition.

This empowerment of stakeholders would underscore not only the importance of expert guidance, but also the potential need to foster a sense of ownership and agency among those who are actively engaged in this journey. Embracing diversity in strategies and to appreciate the potential contributions of various actors, acknowledging that each dimension, whether *Relationship to Profit*, *Incorporation Structure*, or others, could be playing a significant role in the larger context of socio-economic transformation.

In parallel, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the evolving role of public administrations, which can strategically target dimensions to instigate large-scale and lasting change. By carefully selecting their areas of focus, public institutions could have the opportunity to maximize their impact and direct resources more efficiently. This approach would open up the opportunity for further research into the pivotal role they can play in steering societies towards a PG paradigm. In essence, the paper also invites stakeholders and policymakers to think critically about their roles and responsibilities in this transformative process, fostering a sense of shared purpose and a commitment to a more sustainable and equitable world.

In this sense, our society could not be ‘mature’ enough to embrace degrowth/PG. Despite its necessity, its distance from the conventional economic model may seem like an abysmal paradigm leap. This difference could have implications on the short-term welfare levels. Especially if the right balance between market and reciprocity labour is not achieved (cf. Andreoni & Galmarini, 2014, for a model of well-being within degrowth). Following the question of maturity, according to Parrique (2023) there are still several barriers to the transition, including the need for greater progress in innovation. At present, the potential of recycling is limited; it still requires a large amount of raw materials and energy. Similarly, technological advances, although significant, are not being directed towards those factors focused on achieving greater sustainability, nor are they succeeding in displacing undesirable technologies (Parrique, 2023).

Finally, this framework complements previous contributions that have defended different approaches or criteria, but share a similar practical spirit. For example, Bocken and Short (2016) proposed a hierarchy of waste, in which a list of ecological behaviours was listed according to their environmental preferability. Their article emphasized the strategy of ‘sufficiency’ to mitigate the environmental impact of the business activity – through a more sustainable production methods and supply chains – and to better distribute the benefits among stakeholders. More recently, Niessen and Bocken (2021) presented a ‘Business for sufficiency’ framework. Their matrix juxtaposes the concepts of ‘rethink’, ‘reduce’ and ‘refuse’ on one hand, with less clutter, speed, distance, and market on the other hand. However, compared to the compass proposed

in this article, their framework may be more difficult for an initiative to grasp due to its conceptual complexity.

In summary, this paper makes significant progress in the applicability of Hinton's (2021) theoretical work and its relationship to the SSE paradigm, thanks to the creation of a *Transformation Compass*, a conceptual model based on theoretical insights that is being empirically tested to consolidate its effectiveness and reinforce its practical relevance for facilitating ecosocial transitions. It also provides a meaningful picture of what such a move towards socio-ecological transition might look like. To do this, the maximum degree of each dimension (*ideal with* PG) has been built on the normative and applied synthesis of the SSE paradigm (after certifying its kinship with PG). In addition, three factors ('unchangeability', 'complexity' and 'isolation') have been proposed to judge the level of difficulty to alter in each dimension. In this way, initiatives and policy-makers are given the opportunity to delve into, both, the practical criteria for assessing an initiative or a policy, and the theoretical contributions for understanding the current debate.

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