

Postgrowth = agrowth

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Green growth

- Promise of *win-win* hard to resist for human brains
- Green growth may be possible, but risky climate strategy
- Green growth may lead to ‘growth disappointment’
- Many voters/politicians not convinced of green growth:
 - *Revealed preferences*: Copenhagen summit failed, Paris agreement without policy coordination (no global carbon price)
 - Many *pay lip-service* to it: avoids opposition & criticism
- Many believe serious environmental/climate & social/equity policies will harm growth. This forms a *serious political barrier* and is my main motivation to moderate the focus on growth.

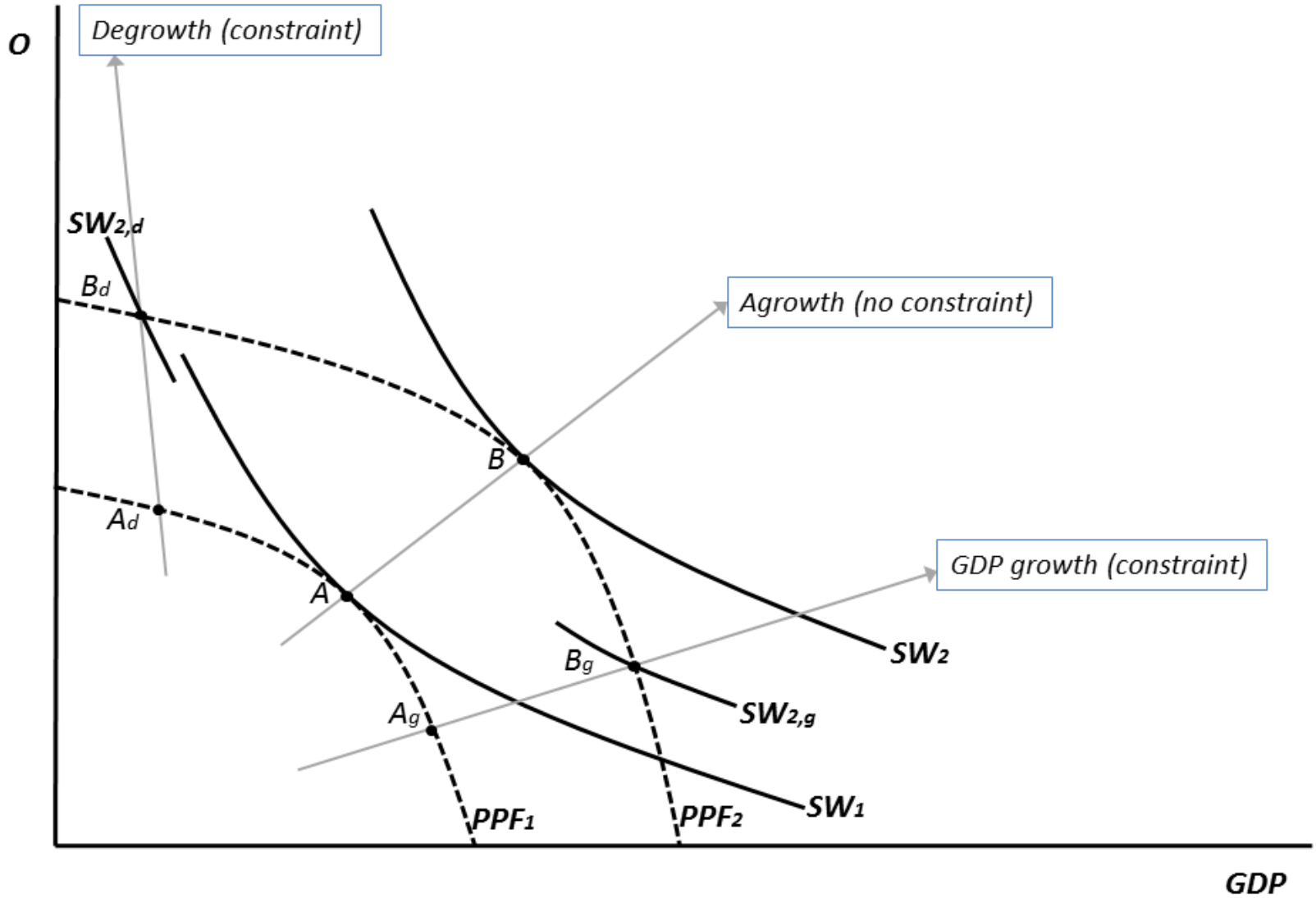
Anti-growth / degrowth

- Diversity of interpretations makes for unclear debate: shrinking market economy, negative GDP growth, less consumption, or even anti-capitalism
- Message “income down” unlikely to soon or ever get broad voter and political support
- Other factors than income growth co-determine emissions. As optimal balance is unknown, any degrowth goal is arbitrary
- Attaining climate goals may reduce income, but that doesn't imply **reverse causality**. Income or consumption degrowth is too crude & ineffective approach to solve environmental problems.

Agrowth

- Critical of both green growth & degrowth: no need to choose between these – evidence inconclusive
- Third option: not unconditional pro/anti-growth. Instead *agnostic, neutral, indifferent about growth*
- Consistent with GDP not being a social-welfare indicator
- *Agrowth* means removing constraint “always/unconditional growth” that limits the search space for welfare progress
- Instead, an orientation on urgent social/environmental issues and *effective precise policies* without any ‘growth preoccupation’

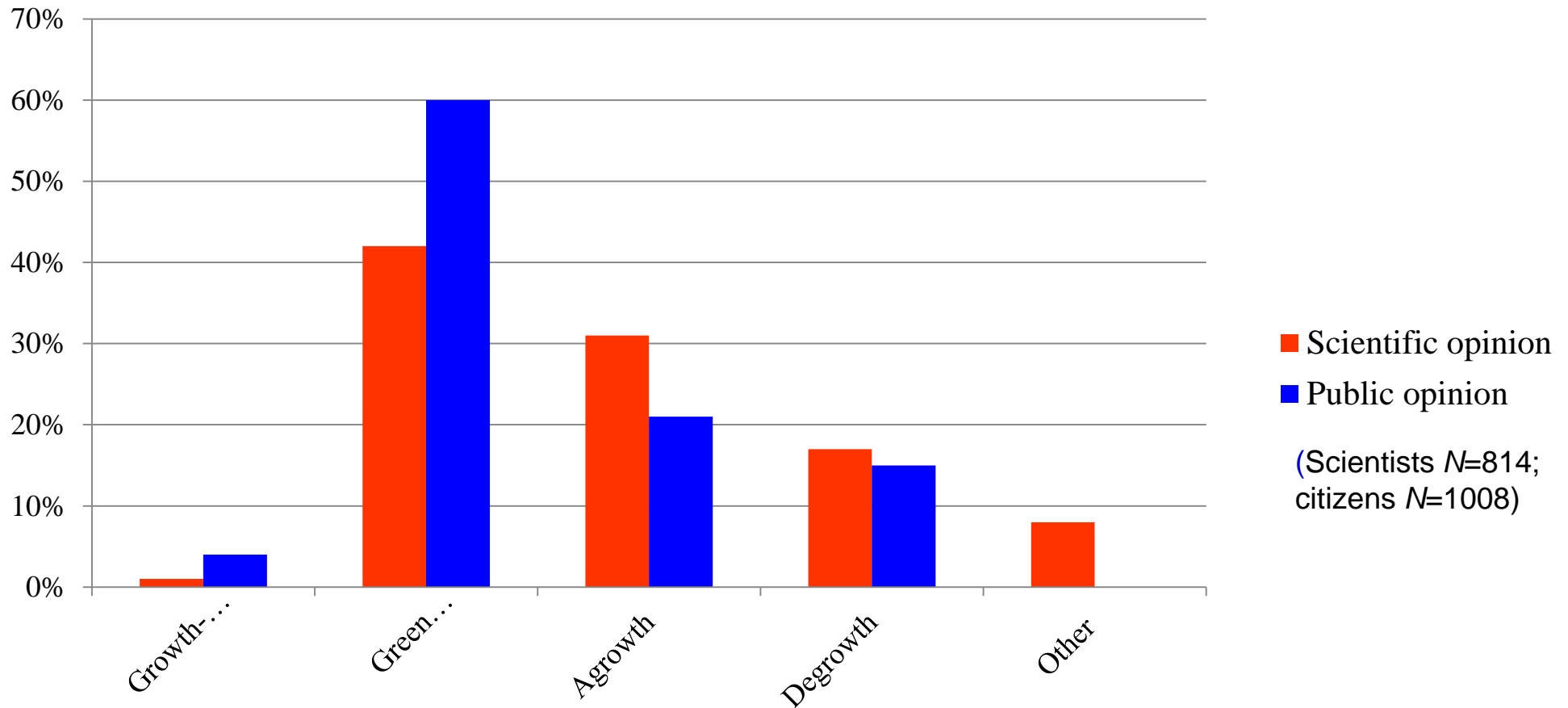
Search for welfare progress in a wider space



(Precautionary) post-growth

- Term “post-growth” popular in the German language area.
- Distinct interpretations in the literature. Like “beyond growth” & “beyond GDP” a bit cryptic & multiple meanings.
- IOEW report presents *post-growth* as 3rd position (while 4th if ≠ agrowth). But if identical to agrowth merely a *synonym*?
- Report stresses “precautionary”. Publications on agrowth (general or applied to climate policy) also use this term.
- Details on policy areas in report: no unique link to post-growth.
- Writings on agrowth perhaps more clearly focused on ‘de-ideologizing’ and depolarizing the “growth debate”.

Depolarizing the “growth debate”



Sources:

Drews, S., and J. van den Bergh (2016). Public views on economic growth, the environment and prosperity: Results of a questionnaire survey. *Global Environmental Change* 39: 1-14.

Drews, S., and J. van den Bergh (2017). Scientists' views on economic growth versus the environment: A questionnaire survey among economists and non-economists. *Global Environmental Change* 46: 88-103.

Important challenges for a/post-growth

- Moving voters, media and politicians away from focus on GDP growth. As a start, let's report only median and not average GDP. Or require media & public reports to always complement GDP info with inequality and environmental/climate indicators.
- Overcoming positive correlation between growth and employment: national work-time reduction as main strategy?
- **Transition to agrowth/post-growth** will be hard – needs further thought. Should recognize *GDP paradox*. See proposed *transition strategies* in van den Bergh (2017).

Hoekstra, R. (2019). *Replacing GDP by 2030*. Cambridge University Press.

van den Bergh, J. (2009). The GDP Paradox. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 30: 117-135.

van den Bergh, J. (2017). A third option for climate policy within potential limits to growth. *Nature Climate Change* 7:107-112.