

## The idea of degrowth in the imaginary of the citizenry

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The idea of degrowth is the only truly sustainable imaginary of social coexistence for it revolves around the sustainability of the planet and not of its antithesis, the market, as it is today. If we consume more than the capacity of replenishment of our planet, as it occurs in the market, then we have an unsustainable system. Hence true sustainability must be assessed solely in terms of the planet's capacity to sustain the replacement of natural resources vital for life and energy in the same proportion as our species consumes them and not in terms of increments in the production of goods and services.

In this sense, it is imperative to build a new model of life that exclusively goes in pursuit of the welfare of People and Planet ... and not the market. This paradigm embodies a vision of what should be the essence of sustainability, the new conception of what is progress and what must be the sustainable environmental footprint of such progress. Not surprisingly, this view is completely incompatible with the current concepts of sustainability, progress, development, wealth... because these concepts are anchored on the market paradigm and are therefore the antithesis of sustainability. If there could be any doubt, their unsustainable nature can be confirmed every single day in the avalanche of compelling social and physical evidence. To be sure, the paradigm of People and Planet can only exist in the context of true democracy, which, by its very nature, is also situated on the opposite pole of the current "marketocracy" or dictatorship of the market. That is, true democracy and marketocracy are absolutely incompatible.

However, beyond ideological preferences on democracy and economy, and interpretations of what is meant by development and progress, there is an axiomatic truth that must be clear and from which we cannot detach ourselves. This is that there cannot be an infinite consumption, as demanded by the market, on a planet with finite resources. Succinctly, this is Mother Nature's anthropological reason, who also is making sure of conclusively proving it to us, and it is not going to ask us if we wish to change our system of coexistence. It is forcing us to change it.

Indeed, many environmental scientists consider that our footprint needs to be reduced substantially at a faster pace than by 2050. One qualified opinion shared by some is that advanced by Lester Brown –a U.S. environmentalist, founder of the Worldwatch Institute, and founder and president of the Earth Policy Institute. The argument is that when world leaders met in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December, 2009, they failed to come up with a legally-binding treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but agreed that global climate change was a serious menace that needs to be addressed, and they agreed (rhetorically) that we need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions 80 percent by the year 2050. Yet, Brown is convinced we need to meet this goal by 2020, which means we have no time to waste.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, we continue to see the same stupid and double talk of the "leaders" of the vast majority of countries, which show a great reluctance that in the COP21 of Paris, of December 2015, a binding strict regulatory framework is established and it is implemented immediately.

For all these reasons Jus Semper deems essential to [open a space](#) devoted to the promotion and development of the [Degrowth](#) imaginary, specifically to strive to prompt, through its dissemination, awareness about the plight of Mother Earth as a direct

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<sup>1</sup> David S. Wood and Margaret Pennoc, Journey to Planet Earth – Plan B: Mobilising to Save Civilisation, Educators Guide. © 2010 Screenscope, Inc.

consequence of the human activity, which takes place in a structural and systemic way in the marketocracy paradigm. This is an endeavour through which we hope that increasingly more people will come to see the enormous need for everyone to start taking responsibility for our own ecological footprint and strive to modify it to live in harmony with nature. In this sense, the idea of Degrowth proposes the best vision to move from the current market paradigm of infinite consumption to the paradigm in pursuit of the sustainable Welfare of People and the Planet, of the responsibly restrained consumption, and NOT of market welfare.

From this it must be inferred that TLWNSI (The Living Wages North and South Initiative), is firmly anchored in the vision of this paradigm shift, as it is expressed in its Working Draft.<sup>2</sup> More recently, I addressed in an essay the right to a living wage from the perspective of this paradigmatic shift.<sup>3</sup> This is the fundamental reason why we opened this space to offer a wide and growing collection of studies and sources that address, explain and propose the idea of Degrowth as the path to follow so that we all understand the plight of the sustainability of the planet and of all its inhabitants and, concurrently, its sole true solution: to drastically cut our environmental footprint. Consequently, we must become aware of the vital and urgent need to begin immediately to change our values, lifestyles, consumer habits and of how we conceive of our role and responsibilities in the preservation of our own species and the of the planet as a whole.

In short, we are forced to imagine a new way of life truly sustainable, to immediately move forward to radically change our cultural standards. Furthermore, we must bear very much in mind that we may have already crossed a threshold of no return and with no possibility of repentance, and that Mother Nature may be reacting in such a way, because of our own actions, that we no longer have a future in it. Therefore, we, the common citizenry, better take the initiative immediately and change our norms of coexistence if we want to bequeath to future generations a sustainable planet where they can live in it in total harmony. We have put at stake the survival of our own species and of all the species that have not been extinguished already by our irresponsible way of life, and we have run out of time to waste. We must act now if we do not want to stay in the current suicidal passivity, which if it remains will secure our own extinction.

- ❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Living Wages North and South Initiative ([TLWNSI](#)) constitutes the sole program of The Jus Semper Global Alliance (TJSGA). TLWNSI is a long-term program developed to contribute to social justice in the world by achieving fair labour endowments for the workers of all the countries immersed in the global market system. It is applied through its program of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and it focuses on gradual wage equalisation, for real democracy, the rule of law and living wages are the three fundamental elements in a community's quest for social justice.
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- ❖ The responsibility for opinions expressed in this work rests only with the author(s), and its publication does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by The Jus Semper Global Alliance.

#### Related links:

- <http://jussemper.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/degrowthimaginary.html>
- <http://www.jussemper.org>

<sup>2</sup> The Jus Semper Global Alliance: The Living Wages North and South Initiative (TLWNSI). A Strategic Program to Socially Commit Multinational and Other Business Enterprises (Working draft 2006): <http://www.jussemper.org/TLWNSI/Resources/TLWNSING0303.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Álvaro J. de Regil, Living Wages in the Paradigm Transition. The Jus Semper Global Alliance, a TLWNSI Issue Essay, May 2014, [http://jussemper.org/Resources/Corporate%20Activity/Resources/Living\\_Wages\\_in\\_the\\_Paradigm\\_Transition.pdf](http://jussemper.org/Resources/Corporate%20Activity/Resources/Living_Wages_in_the_Paradigm_Transition.pdf)