

## Degrowth and flourishing, or stay the same and perish along the way

*If we truly desire a dignified and thriving future for generations to come, we have no choice but to degrow by decisively eliminating our consumerist culture*

Álvaro J. de Regil

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### Prologue

**S**o far this century, in a sector already fully aware of the planetary crisis, ordinary citizens have been called upon with increasing frequency to reduce their consumption urgently. We call for cutting fossil fuel consumption, abandoning them and replacing them with renewable energies, eliminating our consumerist habits, caring for nature, our entire planet, Gaia. However, we have not managed to transcend the citizen's imaginary to become aware that either we cut our consumption or we will face an enormous existential risk. This is because capital has systematically prevented this, alienating us from our essence. This not only alienates us in our work and social relationships, from our sense of identity with the community to which we belong and with nature, of which our species is a part, but also prevents us from talking about the impact of the capitalist system on our planet, our home. Indeed, capitalism alienates us from our essence, harassing societies daily with its Promethean discourse that everything can be achieved through technology, that happiness lies in having—not in being—and that we must therefore strive to possess and consume.

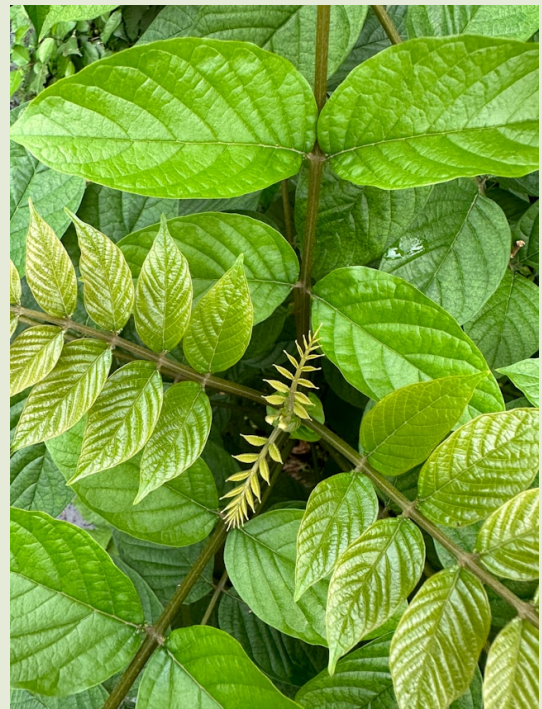


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This essay is based on the geocratic paradigm I have been developing since 2020, which proposes reorganising ourselves to take care of our planet. To take care of us, it is necessary to put the planet's needs before our own. The latest version of Geocratia can be found here.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that the vast majority of studies published by the scientific community have consistently sounded the alarm throughout this century, warning that unless we urgently change the unsustainable course we are currently on under capitalism, we will face planetary catastrophes not only from climate change, the most visible of these, but from eight other essential planetary processes that provide the conditions necessary for life to flourish and be sustained. If we fail to do so, as early as 2040, we will face multiple catastrophes that will cause perhaps millions, if not billions, of human deaths in the decades that follow. Likewise, we are well on the way to bringing about the sixth mass extinction of species and the probable extinction of life on the planet, as known to those who survive. This constitutes the collapse of civilisation and an enormous existential risk. A collapse which, ironically, is being brought about directly by the very civilisation that is so often touted—preeminently Western civilisation—because of its capitalist, warmongering, colonialist, and racist nature, the emblem of which is undoubtedly the United States.

This essay focuses on demonstrating that it is perfectly possible to reverse the dystopian trajectory we are on, and that this is done by applying market logic through the exercise of our power of consumption. First, it is argued that it is clearly possible to greatly reduce our planet's response to the crisis the capitalocene has brought it into, after having enjoyed the equilibrium it maintained throughout the Holocene. This is achieved by changing our way of life, through a cultural shift, by decreasing our consumption of resources to styles that allow us to fully enjoy life while taking care of the planet, staying within the planetary boundaries necessary for its stability, and living much better by consuming less of everything. In Geocratia, degrowth is a consequence of cultural change and not a model or an end in itself. The end is to save ourselves by saving our planet by replacing capitalism. Second, there is a clear way to convince the majority needed to materialise such a change, by replacing the dystopian trajectory we are unconsciously following through the subterfuge of the culture of consumerism. This happens by following market logic, adopting a new culture of sustainable consumption aimed at satisfying our real and universal needs, and discarding everything the market instils in us about what we must consume, even if it is absolutely unnecessary and harmful to people and the planet. Indeed, market logic is the only one that significantly influences government decision-making, because by adopting the new geocratic consumer culture, the blow to the system is direct, forcing governments to change the bulk of their economic, social and environmental policies for the benefit of people and planet and to the detriment of capital. Moreover, regardless of the pace at which governments replace their policies, people and the planet will benefit from the fall in consumption. Finally, applying market logic, it also opens the door to organising ourselves in rural and urban geocratic communities under different forms of social organisation (nation, province, municipality, city, community, village...), beyond the increasingly obsolete concept of the nation-state.

<sup>1</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – [Geocratia, the Paradigm that Pursues the Well-being of People and the Planet, Not the Market](#) – Jus Semper, (E0252) February 2026.

## Introduction

Since the seventies of the last century, we have been warned, as in 'The Limits to Growth', that infinite growth is not possible on a finite planet.<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of this century, scientific research has made a special effort to frame knowledge of the interactions among all forms of life in the biosphere of our planet, particularly since the Holocene. On the geological time scale, the Holocene is the epoch in which we lived until the middle of the 20th century, to give way to the Anthropocene era, supported by a considerable number of scientists, but not by the International Union of Geological Sciences and the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which formalised the International Chronostratigraphic Table.<sup>3</sup> The Anthropocene was intended to geologically replace the Holocene because of our species' great impact on our planet. This impact is what Marx termed *our social metabolism*, referring to *the metabolic rift* in human interaction with nature. The capitalist system, as Marx also noted, has generated a metabolic rift in the human relationship with nature.<sup>4</sup> This fracture developed during the Industrial Revolution at the dawn of the 19th century. And it has had much greater emphasis since the detonation and development of nuclear weapons since the mid-20th century and the acceleration in the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG), mainly carbon dioxide, resulting from industrial production systems and the consumption of fossil fuels, particularly in capitalist societies since 1950. In any case, outside these institutions, the Anthropocene is being replaced by the growing view that the term is entirely inadequate. It is deemed unfair to attribute responsibility for the damage to the planet to the whole of humanity when it is, in fact, the responsibility of the most industrialised societies for their production and consumption of all kinds of goods and services, many of them absolutely unnecessary.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the most appropriate unscientific term to refer to the breakdown of our metabolism with the planet is the 'capitalocene'.<sup>6</sup>

In light of scientific research based on the physical laws of nature, humanity and all forms of life on our planet face an imminent and considerable risk of not surviving - and of bequeathing a dignified and rewarding future to generations to come. Because all human activity is based on the capitalist dogma of infinite growth, which demands endless expansion in production and consumption, we have inflicted enormous, potentially irreparable damage on the planet's metabolism. We must therefore conclude that it is indispensable for this metabolism to remain healthy in order to provide the essential conditions for the life of all species, flora and fauna, and for the other resources, such as minerals, that our species requires in meeting its real needs. According to scientific knowledge, the greatest damage to the planet is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, a byproduct of the very high consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels. However, geopolitically, it is projected that the demand for these fuels will continue to grow until at least 2030, even though the amount of oil extracted each year is decreasing, that in a few more years the same will happen with gas and coal, and that it is increasingly expensive to find more fossil fuels to satisfy the growing demand according to the recent analysis of Antonio Turiel.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, it is established with high confidence that, globally, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and population growth remain

<sup>2</sup> ↪ Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jtsergen Randers, William W. Behrens III – *The Limits to Growth, A REPORT FOR THE CLUB OF ROME'S PROJECT ON THE PREDICAMENT OF MANKIND*, Universe Books, New York, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> ↪ International Union of Geological Sciences – *The Anthropocene*, 20 March 2024.

<sup>4</sup> ↪ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, 949–50, quoted by John Bellamy Foster en *Marx's Ecology*, Monthly Review Press, 2000, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> ↪ [Notes from the Editors of Monthly Review on "The Capitalinian: The First Geological Age of the Anthropocene"](#) Jus Semper, (C032), March 2023.

<sup>6</sup> ↪ Carles Soriano – [Antropoceno, Capitaloceno y otros «-cenos»](#), Jus Semper, (E0138), March 2023.

<sup>7</sup> ↪ Antonio Turiel: [Blog "The Oil Crash" del 17 de septiembre de 2025](#).

the most potent drivers of carbon dioxide emissions because of fossil fuel consumption over the last decade.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the main drivers of climate change are production, consumption - the essence of GDP - and population growth.

This whole planetary disaster is undoubtedly the direct product of the economic system of capital accumulation, imposed by the oligarchic classes for over two centuries. These, exercising their economic power, dictate the public agendas of the world's governments, imposing, since the second post-war period, a marketocratic ethos in which the market rules as a system of government under the euphemism of representative democracy. So it is capitalism that is directly responsible, the root cause of the fracture between humanity and our planet, with today's transnationals as the major drivers of the market ethos. However, we need to realise that we also bear a fair amount of responsibility. By alienating ourselves from our identity as a species on the planet - with capacities superior to those of other species to care for or change the conditions for sustaining life in our world - we have contributed to a large extent, through our consumption and our submission to the rules of the market, to the breakdown of the metabolic rift. In other words, if humanity were to live differently and sustainably, which in practical terms means consuming very differently from today, according to our real needs and not those created by capitalism, we would still be in the Holocene. We would have a stable planet without planetary catastrophes, which, with climate change, are even more evident.<sup>9</sup>

For this reason, we are very close to a tipping point, which in planetary terms is usually a point of no return, and we would face a new reality, most probably dystopian. It is therefore necessary to become clearly aware that it is up to us to save ourselves, saving humanity and all other forms of life on which we also depend for our sustenance, and rescuing our planet from the capitalocentric rift to which we have subjected it by action or omission. So the crossroads we are at between business as usual or acting to change the dystopian trajectory we are on is obvious, and is based on the majority scientific consensus, as we shall see below. Even if not out of conviction, but out of mere survival instinct, we must mobilise to organise a peaceful revolutionary movement for a dignified and rewarding future for future generations. Of course, we can also ignore the growing calls for attention and resign ourselves to our existential end, reaching the final precipice before the end of the century.

## Our existential crisis in terms of the planetary fracture

The very high existential risk, a direct product of capitalism, stems from the alteration of the planet's metabolic processes by human activity within the capitalist economic system of production with pretensions to infinite growth. Scientific knowledge has identified nine processes, known as planetary boundaries, that the planet requires for its good metabolism or health. The planet is in good health when it can maintain stable conditions for its metabolism, enabling it to recover from disruptions, particularly those caused by the human species. Good functioning is referred to as the 'safe operating space' for humanity and other species to live and flourish in a stable manner, always in the conditions provided by the Holocene over the last 12,000 years, rather than the totally unsustainable conditions for life in the current Capitalocene.

It is utterly important for the common citizen to understand that human activity, anchored in production and consumption for lifestyles centred on the satisfaction of a wide variety of artificially created needs, is the cause of the

<sup>8</sup> ↪ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – [Climate Change 2022. Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group III Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#). Technical Summary, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> ↪ Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research: [Planetary Health Check 2025 A Scientific Assessment of the State of the Planet - Executive Summary](#). Scientific knowledge has identified nine Planetary Boundaries, which are processes that regulate the stability, resilience (capacity to absorb disturbances such as those caused by human activity) and life-support functions of our planet. According to the latest scientific report, these seven boundaries show increasing pressure trends, indicating further deterioration and destabilisation of planetary health in the near future.

planetary fracture. It is the root cause of the problem. Such activities far exceed the satisfaction of fundamental human needs for a good and enjoyable life, such as shelter, food, clothing, health, education, transport, leisure, and recreation. Hence, at present, we have already transgressed seven of the nine planetary boundaries, five of which are already well beyond the high-risk thresholds.

For the average citizen, the most visible transgression is undoubtedly climate change, as evidenced by rising temperatures and increasing droughts across several regions, such as South America.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, there are huge storms and floods, such as the Dana in Spain<sup>11</sup> and in many parts of the world. But others are much less visible, which causes irreparable damage. One important example is that we are well on our way to the sixth mass extinction of species, with the consequent loss of genetic diversity. This could have dire consequences for global ecosystems, as we are evidently crossing a tipping point and cannot recover from it,<sup>12</sup> which is why we have clearly damaged the stability of the biosphere boundary. A recent study recalibrated the 2005 World3 model, originally used in *The Limits to Growth*. The results of the study on the model indicate the imminent end of the growth curve because excessive industrial consumption of resources to feed the world's population is depleting reserves to the point of making the current system unsustainable. As a result, the study concludes that industrial collapse will occur between 2024 and 2030 due to scarcity, noting that pollution will lag and reach its peak by the end of the century.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that, despite the current situation, scientists say that stabilising the conditions necessary for sustaining life within each planetary boundary is still scientifically possible. This depends largely on close collaboration between the scientific community and decision-makers. If policymakers and scientists seize this moment, they can transform the international landscape at the turning point that history demands.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that, along with the responsibility inherent in the decisions to be made by those empowered to make them, we, as ordinary citizens, have a great burden of responsibility. We must therefore become involved in organising movements to force governments to change their paradigm. The goal is to redirect production and consumption toward a long-term, sustainable trajectory within the nine planetary boundaries, while developing alternatives for autonomous citizen organisations to live well with less.

Below is a detailed description of each of the boundaries, their current status, and the human activities that are the main drivers of each, according to the most recent report from the international scientific community, prepared by the Potsdam Institute.<sup>15</sup>

❖ **Climate change.** Climate change refers to the process of altering Earth's radiative balance, such as through the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which affects global temperatures and weather patterns. This limit has been severely exceeded, well beyond the high-risk line, and the climate is in grave danger: greenhouse gas concentrations have reached record levels, global warming appears to be accelerating, and conditions continue to

<sup>10</sup> ↪ Redacción Clarín, [Sudamérica enfrenta una de las sequías más complejas de su historia](#), Clarín, 27/10/2024.

<sup>11</sup> ↪ Juan Bordera, Antonio Turiel, Fernando Valladares, [Texto de urgencia para una DANA \(y para las que vendrán\)](#), CTXT, 2/11/2024.

<sup>12</sup> ↪ Robert H. Cowie, Philippe Bouchet, Benoît Fontaine – [The Sixth Mass Extinction: fact, fiction or speculation?](#) – Jus Semper, (E0152) July 2023.

<sup>13</sup> ↪ Nebel, A., Kling, A., Willamowski, R., & Schell, T. (2024). [Recalibration of limits to growth: An update of the World3 model](#). *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 28, 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jiec.13442>

<sup>14</sup> ↪ Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research – [Commentary: rising planetary risks after missed decade of action](#), Accessed on 22.11.2025

<sup>15</sup> ↪ Planetary Boundaries Science (PBScience). 2025. [Planetary Health Check 2025](#). Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Potsdam, Germany, pp. 13-25

worsen. The main drivers are the burning of fossil fuels, processes that lead to non-CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gas emissions, land-use change, changes in the integrity of the biosphere, and increased atmospheric aerosol loading.

- ❖ **Change in biosphere integrity.** It assesses the decline in the diversity, extent, and health of living organisms and ecosystems, which affects the biosphere's ability to co-regulate the state of the planet by influencing Earth's energy balance and chemical cycles. This limit has also been extremely exceeded, well above the high-risk line: Nature's safety net is unravelling: extinctions and loss of natural productivity are well above safe levels, and there is no sign of improvement. The main drivers are agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the introduction of invasive species, land-use system change, climate change, freshwater change, modification of biogeochemical flows, the introduction of new entities and ocean acidification.
- ❖ **Change in land use system.** This threshold values the transformation of natural landscapes, such as deforestation and urbanisation, and the decline of ecological functions such as carbon sequestration, moisture recycling and wildlife habitats, all of which are crucial to the health of the earth system. This boundary is also over the high-risk line: Earth's forests are declining, and most are already below safe levels, with an overall trend that remains negative, though the rate of forest loss has slowed. The main drivers are cropland, livestock grazing, logging, settlement expansion, new infrastructure, climate change, freshwater change, and biosphere integrity.
- ❖ **Freshwater change.** Assesses the alteration of freshwater cycles, including rivers and soil moisture; impacts on natural functions such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity, and possible changes in precipitation levels in the future. Limit exceeded: Human impacts on rivers and soil moisture are increasing, pushing water systems toward instability and raising the risk of droughts and floods. The main drivers are irrigation and agriculture, industrial water use, domestic water use, climate change, increased atmospheric aerosol loading, and land-use system change.
- ❖ **Modification of biogeochemical flows.** Measures the disruption of natural nutrient cycles, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, and how it affects soil health and water quality, which can lead to dead zones in marine and freshwater systems. This limit is also exceeded above the high-risk line: Excessive fertiliser use continues to overload land and water with nitrogen and phosphorus, causing pollution and dead zones, with no prospect of improvement. The main drivers are the application of mined mineral phosphorus to fields as fertiliser, the application of industrially fixed nitrogen to fields as fertiliser, and the cultivation of nitrogen-fixing plants.
- ❖ **Ocean acidification.** Assesses changes in ocean conditions, such as acidification, affecting marine biodiversity and the ocean's ability to regulate climate. The limit has been slightly exceeded: The ocean is becoming more acidic, threatening marine life as we enter unsafe conditions with a worsening trend. The main driver is the burning of fossil fuels.
- ❖ **Increased atmospheric aerosol loading.** Increased particulate matter from human activities or natural sources influences climate by altering temperature and precipitation patterns. This limit has not been exceeded: air pollution differences between the hemispheres are decreasing. This is a positive sign, as global air quality is slowly improving. The main drivers are the burning of fossil and biomass fuels, and industrial activities.
- ❖ **Depletion of stratospheric ozone.** Thinning of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere, mainly due to man-made chemicals, increases the amount of harmful ultraviolet radiation that reaches Earth's surface. This limit has not been exceeded: The ozone layer remains stable and shows signs of slow recovery, retaining its protective function against

harmful UV radiation. The main drivers are the production/emissions of ozone-depleting substances such as synthetic chlorofluorocarbons and nitrous oxides.

- ❖ Introduction of new entities. This is the introduction and accumulation of man-made substances, such as plastics and synthetic chemicals, together with the disruption of the biogeochemical cycling of natural elements; it may disrupt other important earth system processes and pose a risk of permanent damage to life in the biosphere. The boundary has clearly been transgressed, quite possibly above the high-risk line: Man-made chemicals, plastics, and other novel entities continue to increase without sufficient testing or controls, causing environmental risks to grow. The main drivers are the industrial production of man-made chemical compounds for industry, agriculture and consumer goods.

## The underlying cause of the planetary crisis

Beyond moral or political questions, capitalism is unsustainable strictly from the perspective of the laws of nature. This means that there is no way to deny its unsustainability, since all life on this planet depends on natural laws, on the laws of physical science. In scientific terms, physics defines the properties of matter and energy and establishes the laws that explain natural phenomena. Thus, the capitalist economic system is unsustainable because its nature demands infinite growth, despite humanity being part of a finite planet with finite resources. Humanity, in stark contrast to the duality promoted by René Descartes, which sought to place human beings on one side and nature on the other, is subordinate to nature; we are part of it, like another species, and absolutely dependent on its laws. In contrast, Cartesian duality, the context from which capitalism operates, views the planet as a gift from God for our exploitation and enjoyment.<sup>16</sup> However, we are just another species, which, in our case, is distinguished from others by possessing a greater power of reasoning and reflection, allowing us to use the planet's energy to generate mechanical work that has profoundly modified the biosphere. However, our amazing capacities do not allow us to alter the natural laws that determine the planet's finiteness and its resources. No matter how hard capitalism tries, technological developments will always be subject to the laws of nature.

With this, we enter the practical question of capitalist unsustainability in light of planetary finiteness. Fulfilling capitalism's *raison d'être* of maximising capital accumulation through infinite growth of production and consumption requires infinite energy consumption, which clashes head-on with the laws of nature. Apologists for capitalism resort to Prometheanism, with which they pretend to convince themselves that technology can overcome the laws of nature and solve the problem of finite resources, particularly energy, which is indispensable to all mechanical processes. Moreover, they have long resorted to Cartesian dualism, treating the impact of the economic system on the biosphere as an externality, as something that has nothing to do with the economy. This is technological hubris, a denialism, which crumbles in the face of the conditions imposed by the finiteness of our planet.

Technological hubris cannot prevent the subjection of capitalist accumulation to the laws of Thermodynamics, in particular, its second law or law of entropy. This has been known since the 19th century, with the second law first formulated by Sadi Carnot. It establishes that an energy transformation cannot occur without energy losses. Such losses occur when energy is dissipated or wasted, because a large part of it cannot be fully converted into mechanical work. Physicist and economist Erald Kolasi explains that *dissipative interactions ensure that physical systems always lose some*

<sup>16</sup> ↩ See [Antropoceno, Capitaloceno y otros «-cenos»](#), Jus Semper, (E0138), March 2023. (pp.10-16).

energy in the form of heat in any natural thermodynamic process involving friction and similar effects.<sup>17</sup> Friction in the pistons of a vehicle engine or in the rolling of tyres on a surface are clear examples of energy loss in the form of heat. When interacting with the external environment, physical systems often lose mechanical energy over time due to friction, diffusion, turbulence, vibrations, collisions and similar dissipative effects, all of which prevent any energy source from being fully converted into mechanical work.<sup>18</sup> A fundamental aspect is that in thermodynamics, these phenomena are always irreversible. Dissipated energy cannot be recovered, no matter how much technological lubrication is attempted. So the constant production of energy in the form of heat cannot be assumed to be infinite; on the contrary, it gradually depletes the energy available for mechanical work.

Consequently, if the various forms of energy transformation (heat, movement...) are not reversible, it is not possible not to have consequences on the economy, which is based on such transformations. Capitalist economists usually ignored this. It was only in the 1970s that ecology was included in economics with the work of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen: *The economy excludes the irreversibility of time. So it ignores entropy, the irreversibility of the transformations of energy and matter.*<sup>19</sup> Consequently, residue and pollution are not factored-in in economic activity. This is why Georgescu-Roegen explains *Had economics recognised the entropic nature of the economic process, it might have been able to warn its co-workers for the betterment of mankind—the technological sciences—that “bigger and better” washing machines, automobiles, and superjets must lead to ‘bigger and better’ pollution.*<sup>20</sup> Moreover, while technology can increase energy efficiency to reduce the ecological footprint of economic activity, it also exponentially increases the use of new technologies that, combined, increase ecological impact, a phenomenon known as the Jevons Paradox, or rebound effect.<sup>21</sup> Increased efficiency paradoxically becomes greater use of the resource.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, were it not for the fact of entropy (the transformation of a quantity of energy into waste), all living things on this planet would never encounter shortages and could consume the resources of our household forever:

*the Most important for the student of economics is the point that the Entropy Law is the taproot of economic scarcity. Were it not for this law, we could use the energy of a piece of coal over and over again, by transforming it into heat, the heat into work, and the work back into heat. Also, engines, homes, and even living organisms (if they could exist at all) would never wear out. There would be no economic difference between material goods and Ricardian land. In such an imaginary, purely mechanical world, there would be no true scarcity of energy and materials. A population as large as the space of our globe would allow could live indeed forever.*<sup>23</sup>

The production and consumption of goods and services require energy, regardless of the economic system, and much of it is entropic, unusable, irreversible, and heat-generating, emitting pollution and warming as GHGs. However, such production and consumption to meet all real human needs can happen within a state of equilibrium in its social metabolism with the planet, thus keeping us within planetary limits and ensuring a stable and sustainable future. With capitalism, this is not possible, as it pursues the maximisation of capital accumulation, which inexorably requires the

<sup>17</sup> ↪ Erald Kolasi – The Physics of Capitalism, Monthly Review Press, 2025, p.23

<sup>18</sup> ↪ Ibid, p.21

<sup>19</sup> ↪ Serge Latouche: La apuesta por el decrecimiento, Icaria – Antrazyt 2006, p.21-22.

<sup>20</sup> ↪ Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, The Entropy Law and the Economic Process (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), (p. 19).

<sup>21</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York: The Ecological Rift - Capitalism’s War on the Earth - Monthly Review Press, 2010. (pp. 177-178).

<sup>22</sup> ↪ Jevons’ paradox materialises when new technologies increase efficiency and-under a market logic-increase demand due to an upturn in consumption levels. See also: Álvaro J. de Regil: [Transitioning to “Geocratia” the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#) —, Jus Semper, (E0030) May 2020, pp. 11, 31 y 39.

<sup>23</sup> ↪ Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. "Energy and Economic Myths." Southern Economic Journal 41, no. 3 (1975): 347-81. Accessed April 27, 2020. doi:10.2307/1056148. P 353.

production and consumption of goods, which in turn requires the extraction and exploitation of all the earth's resources to achieve it. Of all known economic systems, capitalism is undoubtedly the most unsustainable. From the most elementary common sense, pursuing infinite growth and maintaining a sustainable economy on a finite planet are oxymoronic. Kolasi argues that not only is the planet finite because its resources are finite, but the same is true of any planet in the universe where humanity might contemplate living.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, leading energy scholar Vaclav Smil wrote that the planet has a finite amount of resources and receives and processes finite amounts of energy, which means it can only meet a finite amount of anthropogenic demands.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the main feature of the metabolic relationship between humans and our planet is that everything is finite. There is no such thing as infinity, however much the capitalists pretend not to see it.

Thus, because of its obsessive pursuit of infinite economic growth, capitalism is the greatest consumer of energy in the history of humanity. Kolasi clearly describes the main features of capitalism and its consequences on the planet:

*“From a scientific perspective, the fundamental feature of all capitalist economies is a high rate of energy use focused on boosting productivity and economic growth. The collective deployment of machines, vehicles, and electronic devices requires the production of vast amounts of useful energy, which in turn allows people to make more stuff, travel farther distances, and lift heavier objects, among other tasks. Capitalism is far more energy-intensive than any previous economic system, and it has wrought unprecedented ecological consequences that may threaten its very existence. We can think of capitalism, from a biophysical perspective, as a supercharged entropex, a mega-dissipative system dumping massive amounts of gases, liquids, and solid waste into our natural environments. The biggest effect of this spasmodic energetic release has been the degradation of the planetary ecosphere to a more entropic and chaotic state, with profound implications for the future of humanity. In 2004, a group of research scientists with the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme summarised these enormous changes and the great acceleration that started in the middle of the twentieth century:<sup>26</sup>*

*“A profound transformation of Earth's environment is now apparent, owing not to the great forces of nature or to extraterrestrial sources but to the numbers and activities of people—the phenomenon of global change. Begun centuries ago, this transformation has undergone a profound acceleration during the second half of the 20th century. During the last 100 years human population soared from little more than one to six billion and economic activity increased nearly 10-fold between 1950 and 2000. The world's population is more tightly connected than ever before via globalisation of economies and information flows. Half of Earth's land surface has been domesticated for direct human use. Most of the world's fisheries are fully or overexploited. The composition of the atmosphere—greenhouse gases, reactive gases, aerosol particles—is now significantly different than it was a century ago. The Earth is now in the midst of its sixth great extinction event. The evidence that these changes are affecting the basic functioning of the Earth System, particularly the climate, grows stronger every year. The magnitude and rates of human-driven changes to the global environment are in many cases unprecedented for at least the last half-million years.<sup>27</sup>*

<sup>24</sup> ↪ Erald Kolasi – The Physics of Capitalism, Monthly Review Press, 2025, p.68

<sup>25</sup> ↪ Vaclav Smil – Growth: From Microorganisms to Megacities (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019), 509.” (citado por Erald Kolasi en “La Física del Capitalismo”, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> ↪ Erald Kolasi – The Physics of Capitalism, Monthly Review Press, 2025, p.26

<sup>27</sup> ↪ Will Steffen et al., “Global Change and the Earth System: A Planet Under Pressure,” International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (Stockholm: Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2004), 2. (Quoted by Kolasi in The Physics of Capitalism, p. 26.)

Those conclusions were written almost a quarter of a century ago. Today, there are about 8 billion of us, and we suffer, among the most visible, increasing climate change and biospheric catastrophes, which only confirms the unsustainable trajectory we are on. Kolasi concludes that, paradoxically, the trajectory on which capitalism has embarked us, with huge entropic energy losses pouring into the planet, is causing other physical systems to form. These, in turn, are forming a new ecological order that is incompatible with the conditions necessary for the life and sustainable development of humanity on the planet.<sup>28</sup> As I have presented in the previous section,<sup>28</sup> we have already exceeded seven of the nine planetary boundaries, and, instead of retreating, the pressure on them is accelerating because of the refusal of those in power to change trajectory. The consequences of this are increasingly apparent to simple human observation, beyond expert analysis. We are witnessing more and more climate change disasters, from storms, wildfires, pandemics, plastic islands, rising sea levels and impending changes in ocean currents, among others. A new study reveals that a 2°C warming could expose nearly 3.8 billion people to extreme heat by mid-century, more than double current levels. This will drive up energy demand at a time when it is becoming increasingly expensive to meet that demand, posing a real challenge for electricity grids. So if we reach, as all indications suggest, 2°C warming, living conditions will change dramatically, according to the broad consensus of the scientific community. This is why there is an insistence on decarbonising energy sources and sounding the alarm.<sup>29</sup> But, as the greed inherent in capitalism's nature is overwhelming, the oligarchs refuse to change course, thus fulfilling what seems to be the real vocation of capitalism: to destroy itself by destroying its own source of life, our planet and all its inhabitants. From which we can infer that, unless we remove the root cause, capitalism, with the utmost urgency and speed, we are destined for a dystopian and most likely terminal existential future that we will bequeath, through our irresponsibility, to future generations.

## Our responsibility

While capitalism is undeniably the underlying cause of the suicidal trajectory we are on, it prevails because of the lack of a response from the world's societies strong enough to stop and replace it. As a matter of principle, a majority cannot be aware of the existential damage caused by the capitalist system, as it has dragged them into such a precarious situation, both in the North and in the Global South, that they only have time to think about whether they will be able to satisfy the most indispensable needs for their families, such as food, housing and clothing. This is the result of the immense power of capital, concentrated in a hyper-elite.

Indeed, the strings of world power are pulled by a few thousand mega-billionaires who represent a fraction of 1%. In today's colonialist, imperialist and racist world system, governments around the world are coerced or totally hijacked by big capital. The emblematic case is the United States. This country cynically projects itself as the world's beacon of freedom and democracy, when an oligarchy has always ruled it. It has operated a two-party system since 1853, with so little genuine democracy that its voting system does not determine the winner by popular vote but by an archaic system of indirect presidential voting ultimately defined by an 'electoral college'.<sup>30</sup> In addition, several subterfuges are used in redistricting to redraw districts according to partisan interests, often with racially segregated intentions. This is currently the case in Texas, where the Republicans are trying to win five congressional seats under this clumsy trick.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the most paradigmatic example of capital's power is in the United States. Since the beginning of the 21st century, it has been legal to equate capital with people in the form of corporations, with the right to finance the political campaigns of their

<sup>28</sup> ↪ Erald Kolasi – The Physics of Capitalism, Monthly Review Press, 2025, p.26

<sup>29</sup> ↪ Felicity Bradstock – What Happens If the Planet Warms by 2 Degrees Celsius, , 31 de enero de 2026

<sup>30</sup> ↪ José Alberto España – ¿Por qué solo hay dos grandes partidos políticos en Estados Unidos?, The Conversation, 23 septiembre de 2024.

<sup>31</sup> ↪ David G. Savage – In Texas case, it's politics vs. race at the Supreme Court, with control of Congress at stake, Los Angeles Times, 25 de noviembre de 2025.

preferred candidates, who, in return, have an agenda that satisfies the interests of big capital imposed on them.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in the current MAGA movement, capital reigns even more blatantly,<sup>33</sup> dismantling the few welfare programmes that were in place, in order to treat everything as a commodity. There is a clear attempt to return to the so-called 'Gilded Age' of the 'robber barons' of the late 19th century, the era of the historically most savage capitalism of the oil, steel and railway monopoly tycoons, among others, who kept their workforces under conditions of near human servitude and professed concepts of social Darwinism.<sup>34</sup> In the rest of the world, with nuances specific to each culture, the oligarchies have always had control of governments, ceding only limited spaces of democratic practice, without allowing the questioning that capital is in reality, through marketocracy, who dictates the rules of coexistence.<sup>35</sup> The most important fact to bear in mind is that we do not live in a democratic ethos because we suffer from marketocracy, as I explain in detail in my more extensive study on the subject.<sup>36</sup>

This enormous power has always permeated culture. From the time we grow up, in the home, in the classroom, in the media, and in all our cultural and educational relationships, in the arts and sports, culture inculcates in us a way of seeing life presented as absolute normality, defining the unquestioned established order. Thus, capitalists are presented as the owners of the means of production and workers as those who sell their labour power. But it is not questioned whether the social relations in the sphere of economic activity, where capital unjustly appropriates the surplus-value of labour that belongs to the workers, are legitimate, despite the assumption that one lives in a democracy. If one lived in a democracy, whose sole purpose is to procure the welfare of every rank of society, with special emphasis on the dispossessed, the relations between capital and labour would be unacceptable because there is a huge inherent contradiction between the true democratic ethos and the marketocratic ethos. If we lived in the former, rulers would work hard for the welfare of each and every rank of society, especially the dispossessed. As we live in the second, governments strive to impose and protect the structures of capital where the market dictates the public agenda. Giorgos Kallis sums it up succinctly: *The 'free market' is not a natural process; it has been constructed through deliberate governmental intervention. Re-politicisation of the economy will require a hard-fought institutional change to return it to democratic control.*<sup>37</sup> Dale Jamieson argues we are under the control of a monstrous system, writing, *It feels as though we are living through some weird perversion of the Enlightenment dream. Instead of humanity rationally governing the world and itself, we are at the mercy of monsters that we have created.*<sup>38</sup> Instead of humanity rationally governing the world and itself, we are at the mercy of monsters we have created. Thus, we grow up subject to the conditions imposed by the system, where our role is always subordinated to capitalist structures. On the one hand, we are forced to sell our labour power. On the other hand, we become units of consumption. In both cases, we are alienated from our identity and dignity, reduced to objects of the market, as labour and as consumers.

Proof of this is the continued existence of close collaboration between those who act from governmental powers and those who act from the spheres of marketocratic power, often exchanging their roles through revolving doors. Thus, the tacit collusion between those who control the public and private arenas ensures that legislative power remains in the

<sup>32</sup> ↪ [Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission](#), 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

<sup>33</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster – [The U.S. Ruling Class and the Trump Regime](#), Jus Semper, (E0225), June 2025

<sup>34</sup> ↪ Álvaro de Regil Castilla – [The Neo-Capitalist Assault – The Birth of a New Paradigm](#), Jus Semper, abril de 2003, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> ↪ For a detailed discussion of the market ethos, see my study on the subject in Álvaro J. de Regil – [The Capture of Democracy to Impose Marketocracy —Why Democracy is a Hoax](#) — (E0075) Jus Semper, October 2021.

<sup>36</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – [Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet](#), (TS010) Jus Semper, July 2021.

<sup>37</sup> ↪ Giorgos Kallis, [The Degrowth Alternative](#) — Jus Semper, (B0024) April 2019, 2.

<sup>38</sup> ↪ Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle to Stop Climate Change Failed—and What It Means For Our Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

hands of 'legislators' who represent the interests of the market elites, the financial and technological oligarchies of the 21st century. To use Jeffrey Winters' terminology for civil oligarchies, these are focused on lowering taxes and reducing regulations that protect workers and citizens from corporate misdeeds,<sup>39</sup> precisely the neoliberal mantra that dominates today's economic policy and is seen today blatantly and ominously in the second Trump administration, If it can be called that, it is bursting into the world public arena with an extreme oligarchic character, clearly fascist, mafia-like and imperial, threatening even its traditional allies of the so-called West, namely the European Union, Canada, and often Australasia, with the sole aim of seizing territories and their wealth for their own personal benefit.

Nevertheless, capital does not have absolute power. If we follow market logic, our consumption becomes a great power that, if well organised, can change the established order and put an end to the high existential risk trajectory capitalism has imposed on us. The market depends entirely on consumption to achieve its sole objective: maximising capital accumulation. For this reason, every time we buy a good from the market, we tacitly legitimise the system and sustain it, thereby satisfying its end of capital accumulation. Thus, by being responsible for our consumption, we are also responsible for legitimising the capitalist system, with all the social and environmental consequences it entails. It is therefore of utmost importance to realise that it is not only capital that is directly responsible for the planetary crisis, but we, the common citizens, turned into vile units of labour and consumption, are also to a large extent responsible for sustaining the system with our consumption. All species have inherent needs for our existence and survival. All species know how to live in harmony with our planet, but the human species does not. We do not know how to do so, nor will we be able to do so as long as we continue to endure capitalism. Because of this system, we humans consume an infinite number of things that are absolutely unnecessary to enjoy a dignified and pleasurable life, which, on the other hand, directly contribute to sustaining capital, dangerously damaging our planet and endangering the existence of all its beings. By being turned into consumer units alienated from our identity as part of nature, we are participating in the destruction of nature and the future of future generations. Thus, it is paramount to recognise our responsibility and, more importantly, realise that, in our power as consumers, lies the solution to replace the current economic system and build a new paradigm for the well-being of people and the planet, not the market.

## Decline and flourish, or stay the same and perish along the way

The solution to the high risk of reaching the end of the human species, at least of life as we know it on our planet, is more than evident. To re-establish the conditions for the planet to continue providing the resources for life to flourish, we have to reduce our consumption of them drastically. We do not know whether we have already crossed irreversible tipping points. However, we have to assume that we have not and that we have no alternative except to change our current trajectory toward decreasing our consumption. This must happen, particularly by reducing the consumption of fossil fuels directly and indirectly, through the processes of millions of consumer products that require fossil fuels for their manufacture, thereby generating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The solution, then, is to embark on a trajectory of drastically decreasing our consumption. It then becomes evident that the fundamental factor in the equation is our consumption of the resources we use daily to live, and this is why utilising our power as consumers is the quintessence of changing the paradigm, thereby replacing capitalism. In this section, I will briefly outline the main actions we need to take to achieve a dignified and flourishing future for future generations, from economic, cultural, and political perspectives.

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<sup>39</sup> ↪ According to Winters, the existential motive of all oligarchs is the defence of wealth. How they respond varies depending on the threats they face, including their degree of direct involvement in providing the coercion underlying all property claims, and whether they act separately or collectively. These variations give rise to four types of oligarchy: warrior, ruling, sultanic, and civil. Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

*Economic perspective:* Decreasing the size of our economies is a sine qua non condition to bring us back within the seven planetary boundaries we have crossed and not to cross the other two. As I have explained, this is impossible within capitalism simply because it clashes with natural laws. So, achieving degrowth requires building a new paradigm. This has to have as its sole purpose, in absolute congruence with the construction of an ethos of true democracy, to procure the welfare of the people and the planet and not the market. I call this paradigm Geocratia because it requires humanity to reorganise itself to care for and sustain our existence on our planet by building a structure designed to care for it. In other words, to take care of us, we must take care of our planet, putting its needs before our own. That is, we have to build a paradigm where the planet governs us and not the other way around. Hence the term 'Geocratia', from the Greek geo: earth and kratos: power; it is the power or government of the planet over us and all other species.<sup>40</sup> All other species have always known how to live in harmony with the planet. Our species, if it wants a promising future, has to learn to do so, transcending the current marketocratic cultural framework, learning to live to take care of the planet, to take care of ourselves. The structure of Geocratia is built around its *raison d'être*: the sustainability of the biosphere, or Gaia. Thus, the geocratic edifice stands on three pillars to achieve a safe and just transition: real democracy, social justice, and environmental health, which are intimately intertwined and none can be realised without the others also being fulfilled.<sup>41</sup>

In a real democracy, by its nature, capitalism cannot exist because they are incompatible. Marketocracy is the antithesis of democracy. Therefore, whatever the form of organisation geographically, the structures must be ecosocialist - sustained in an ethos of real democracy - and not capitalist. The socialist ideal of achieving social justice is intimately linked to real democracy and care for our ecosystems, so it is necessary to build a geocratic edifice where every rank of society, with special emphasis on the dispossessed, has access to a dignified, materially and affectively ecologically sustainable life. As Foster argues, *socialism itself is ecological. Ecosocialism properly is viewed not as something that is distinct from or beyond socialism, but as a particular tradition that more fully brings out the ecological aspects that properly belong to socialism itself. There can be no substantive equality without ecological sustainability, and no ecological sustainability without substantive equality.*<sup>42</sup> Indeed, ecosocialism is the only approach that pursues the equitable well-being of people and the planet to effectively address the ecological crisis we face and successfully transition to Geocratia.

But how can we achieve social justice, which requires ending the enormous inequality that billions of human beings suffer today, while drastically decreasing our consumption to achieve planetary sustainability? How can we reconcile the inherent *raison d'être* of democracy, which is social justice, and build its edifice in such a way that we produce much smaller and permanently sustainable ecological footprints? As a matter of principle, if we are to build a new ethos of social justice, we need to reduce inequality drastically. This, in turn, requires greater resource consumption by billions of dispossessed people around the world so they can enjoy a decent material standard of living. However, this runs counter to our urgent need to drastically reduce the currently unsustainable ecological footprint of the human species. It follows that we must achieve both premises: social justice and ecological sustainability in a democratic context. Its essence is to make Geocratia meet both premises, striking the right balance.

Let us imagine, then, how this balance can be achieved. In Geocratia, capitalism has ceased to exist, but we function as societies that work and consume a plethora of natural resources for our functioning. However, we no longer have the

<sup>40</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – [Geocratia, the Paradigm that Pursues the Well-being of People and the Planet, Not the Market](#) – Jus Semper, (E0252) February 2026.

<sup>41</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – [Provoking Awareness and Action for Geocratia](#), Jus Semper, (E0199) November 2024. See also: Álvaro J. de Regil - Álvaro J. de Regil: [Transitioning to "Geocratia" the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#) —, Jus Semper, (E0030) May 2020

<sup>42</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster and Batuhan Sarican, ['Monthly Review' and the Environment](#), Jus Semper, (E0180) May 2024.

capital-labour relationship with the inherent surplus-value and the usual and systematic labour exploitation that favours the shareholder value of capitalism, nor do we generate unsustainable levels of consumption. In Geocratia, GDP loses its value as a criterion of progress and is replaced by indicators that measure the degree of well-being of the planet and its people. Communal goods are produced by people, working under totally different organisational and productive conditions, and they receive remuneration for their work as part of their contribution to the well-being of the community and its ecosystems. These remunerations allow people to satisfy all their real needs; that is, their basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, energy, water, transport, leisure and all other inputs necessary to enjoy a dignified, pleasurable, frugal and sustainable standard of living. In this way, the consumption of the billions of people who today are unable to satisfy all their real needs increases. At the same time, we drastically reduce the superfluous consumption of millions of people who consume far in excess of their real needs, including countless unnecessary products that far exceed our sustainable ecological impact. This necessarily requires that the affluent sectors drastically reduce their global consumption levels and thus their ecological footprints, because only the rich, North and South, are responsible for our planetary crisis. This will bring about an effective decrease in global consumption and thus substantially reduce our ecological footprint. This is possible because in 2015, the rich countries of the Global North were responsible for 92% of excess emissions.<sup>43</sup> This way, while consumption among billions of people under capitalism who are unable to meet their needs increases, the drastic reduction in consumption among the affluent classes, who are responsible for most consumption and GHG emissions, generates a trajectory of decreasing total human consumption. Measured in terms of per capita hectare consumption, according to the approach proposed by the Global Footprint Network,<sup>44</sup> the rich would need to reduce their consumption per hectare by about three-fifths. In contrast, the poor would need to increase it by about three times, as illustrated in the [graph](#).<sup>45</sup> Thus, on a global scale, we would reduce our environmental footprint with equity by at least one third.

It is of utmost importance to point out that **degrowth is not an end in itself, nor a social movement**. However, the first stage of the process is to achieve a sustainable social metabolism as part of the movement towards the construction of the new geocratic paradigm. The social movement has to be the movement to transcend capitalism and build a new geocratic paradigm, structured to secure our future while caring for our planet. Once we have reduced our consumption to sustainable levels, we must interact metabolically with nature in a way that keeps our economy in a steady state, constituting the second stage, which must be permanent, as proposed by Herman Daly and other proponents of the no-growth steady-state economy.<sup>46</sup> As we move to Geocratia, fundamental concepts are redefined to assess activity in the different forms of social organisation (nation, province, municipality, city, community, village...). These concepts are development, progress and sustainability. Like the pillars of the Geocratic paradigm, of true democracy, social justice and environmental health, these concepts are also interdependent and intimately linked, for there can be no true progress or development without being sustainable. [Appendix C](#) explains in detail how Geocratia redefines the concepts of development, progress and sustainability in accordance with the goal of achieving planetary justice by reconceptualising the meaning of social and planetary justice.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, [Appendix D](#) of Geocratia presents a non-

<sup>43</sup> ↪ Jason Hickel, [Degrowth Is About Global Justice](#), Jus Semper, (B054) August 2022. See also Thomas Wiedmann et al., [Scientists' Warning on Affluence](#), Jus Semper, (E0131) December 2022.

<sup>44</sup> ↪ [Global Footprint Network 2008 Annual Report](#)

<sup>45</sup> ↪ For more detail on the trajectory resulting from the combination of increasing consumption among the dispossessed and reducing it among the affluent classes see Álvaro J. de Regil – [Transitioning to “Geocratia” the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#), Jus Semper, mayo 2020, pp. 32-38. See also the [graph illustrating the logic of the downward trajectory to be followed here](#).

<sup>46</sup> ↪ Herman Daly, *A Steady-State Economy*. Véase también François Schneider, Giorgos Kallis, and Joan Martinez-Alier, [“Crisis or Opportunity?: Economic Degrowth for Social Equity and Ecological Sustainability.”](#) *Journal of Cleaner Production* 18, no. 6 (April 2010): 511–18.

<sup>47</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, [Iniciativa Geocracia - Appendix C](#) (2024)

exhaustive, open-to-enrichment list of 20 core components of a sustainable planetary ecology to elaborate the imaginary of the new paradigm.<sup>48</sup>

*Cultural perspective:* I am certain that this approach can be perceived as attractive, logically articulated, but a complete utopia. First, let us not forget that many realities, good and terrible, were once utopias: who could imagine in the 19th century the landing on the moon, on the one hand, or nuclear weapons, on the other? On a more everyday level, who could imagine in the 19th century the full right of women in the world to vote on an equal footing with men, on the one hand, or the undeniable attempt to exterminate the Palestinian people, on the other? Today, the incontrovertible fact is that we face a true dystopia, a planetary existential challenge of cataclysmic proportions, the product of humanity's most perverse instincts. However, we must warn that assuming that we accept that we live on a planet with finite resources and that the logical thing to do is to decrease our consumption does not mean that we are truly aware of what it represents. To really understand it, we have to internalise the problem and the solution and commit ourselves to change our life systems, consumption habits and recognise that it is the oligarchic structures that are the generators of this existential planetary crisis.

The challenge is daunting because we are confronted by a diabolical machinery that, every day and at every moment, invites us to consume in order to have and to exist; it ensures that we remain unaware of our anaesthesia and of our loss of capacity for reflection and critical thinking. This diabolical machinery deliberately generates an unbearable and dangerous lack of awareness of our ongoing existential ecological crisis.<sup>49</sup> So the challenge is to organise a revolutionary movement whose first action is to re-educate everyone we can approach and make them willing to hear and internalise the message of the urgent need for a paradigm shift. Discarding our consumerist culture, in which we have no identity beyond being mere units of consumption determined by our purchasing power, is the indispensable condition for achieving the paradigm shift. Our power as consumers is the agent with the necessary power to change the trajectory.

Confronting this diabolical machinery effectively requires the will to re-educate ourselves. In this process of re-education, the first thing is to become aware that we have been zombified and turned into beings addicted to consumerism. In other words, the bewitching power of capitalism strongly appeals to our most individualistic and selfish instincts. It does so through the allure of consumerism, an indispensable condition for capitalism to exist, thrive and sustain itself. Capitalism without consumption crumbles like a sand castle. Consumption is pure oxygen for capital. This ethos has thus stripped us of our identity and reduced us to mere instrumental 'consumer units' at the service of the system. Like a powerful shackle, consumption subdues our scale of values and our general moral character, pushing us to profess consumerism daily to exist, as in a religion. If we do not, we cease to exist. This makes consumerism the most powerful weapon of capitalism we have to face. Consumerism is an act of devotion to the religion of the marketocratic regime, a kind of demigod who blesses us every day with the instant gratification we get from consuming what we buy. We do so unconsciously, professing allegiance to the desires we believe will fill the void created by the overwhelmingly materialistic world we live in. In such a world, our humanistic instincts are suppressed in favour of a moral scale anchored more in what we have than in what we do to feel we exist. We live and die by our ability to have and therefore to exist. If we do not possess, we cease to exist.

The power of the market paradigm has placed us in an existential trap. It has deprived us of our identity and dignity, with growing inequality, imposing on billions of people a life of destitution and exploitation, and the emergence of billions of

<sup>48</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, *Iniciativa Geocracia - Appendix D.* (2024)

<sup>49</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – *The Unbearable Unawareness of our Ecological Existential Crisis*, *Jus Semper*, (E0145), May 2023.

the precarious and dispossessed, where most of us, to a greater or lesser degree, have sworn allegiance, zombie-like, to a kind of consumerist existential creed. If the marketocracy is so blatantly unjust, inhumane and predatory, and panders to our most perverse instincts of selfishness and hedonism, why do people not rebel against the shackles of consumerism, but remain unconsciously faithful to the current system's trajectory of doom? Malm proposes, as some of the reasons, a state of organised and collective denial, the complexity of the abstract nature of the planetary crisis, the inconvenience posed by the idea that what we do by consuming the earth's resources will contribute to killing humans and non-humans on other continents, especially when there are huge distances between victims and perpetrators, and the perception that we face an unsolvable problem where we would run into a brick wall.<sup>50</sup> Malm asks why we resign ourselves to this fate, and even explicitly consent to it. He proposes that we do so because of the power of a system of ideas that is so deeply embedded in the very materiality of bourgeois society that it is invisible, inaudible, overwhelmingly effective because it is unspoken and taken for granted.<sup>51</sup> This disempowers us from acting against the forces that have taken control of our lives, of society, and of how the planet is treated and cared for. Malm proposes Louis Althusser's "Ideological State Apparatus" to approach the problem. The Apparatus recruits its subjects by interpellation, or calling, "hey, you there." If you turn around, you have been recruited. Thus, if you are taught to cherish the use value of a product or service, such as central heating or individual transportation or the latest fashion garment, it is the material commodity performing the magnetic interpellation. We become parties to marketocracy, complacent recipients of its benefits and blessings, and subjects of the act of consumption. Such material ritual fosters an allegiance so deep that it becomes unconscious, so inextricable that if we are stripped of it, we lose our being, to consume, to have, to exist.<sup>52</sup> We become complacent subjects of the system and oblivious to its corrosive damage.

Tim Jackson points to the psychosocial obstacles to replacing the dominant consumerist culture from the perspective of secular theodicy, a view similar to my assertion that capitalism has instilled consumerism in us as a religion. According to Jackson, the evocative power of consumerism allows us to find meaning in our place in the world by adopting a kind of secular theodicy. Theodicy is *the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil*.<sup>53</sup> For Jackson, consumerism replaces religious theodicy with secular theodicy. It acts as a compensatory mechanism for the void created by the declining role of religion and the search for meaning in our existence in view of good, evil, suffering, injustice, and anomie, the loss of social and ethical norms. Thus, according to Jackson, material goods have an evocative power whose main objective is to help create a social world and find a credible place in it through their possession, consumption, and use. *The 'shopping generation' is instinctively aware that social position depends on the evocative power of things*.<sup>54</sup> The underlying current is the existential anxiety that societies suffer from. *Our systematic failure to address existential anxiety," he argues, "robs society of meaning and blinds us to the suffering of others; to persistent poverty; to the extinction of species; to the health of global ecosystems*.<sup>55</sup>

Jiang Xueqin, who specialises in predictive history, claims that *consumerism is the perfection of slavery*. In a lecture, he instils in his students that we have been brainwashed to think that the only way to behave is to compete, to be individualistic, to atomise ourselves from acting in groups and from solidarity, and to see the world only through the lens of capital. This is how the world works today.<sup>56</sup> Xueqin argues that something fundamental changed from the second

<sup>50</sup> ↪ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 361.

<sup>51</sup> ↪ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 361.

<sup>52</sup> Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 362—63.

<sup>53</sup> ↪ Tim Jackson, [Paradise Lost? — The iron cage of consumerism](#)— Jus Semper (E0133) December 2022.

<sup>54</sup> ↪ Jackson, "¿Paraiso perdido?," 2.

<sup>55</sup> ↪ Jackson, "¿Paraiso perdido?," 12.

<sup>56</sup> [Consumerism is the Perfection of Slavery](#) - Prof Jiang Xueqin - Youtube clip, 2 July 2025

post-war period. With the death of religion and the supremacy of capitalism in the West, the rejection of hedonism vanished, and with it consumerism emerged, causing high levels of depression, suicide and loneliness across the Western world. His analysis leads Xuequin to what he calls the 'division between warriors and consumers', which is not about armaments, but about the sacrifices a population is willing to make. So young people are no longer as interested in economic opportunities as in opportunities for status; hence the extreme obsession with becoming 'influencers' at any cost, Xuequin says.<sup>57</sup>

All this leads us to conclude that consumerism is capitalism's instrument to enslave, alienate and strip us of our identity and dignity as human beings, transforming us into units of labour and consumption by its diabolical machinery. This is why more and more thinkers emphasise that human societies worldwide are, in reality, consumer societies, hedonistic and totally alien to the ethos of democratic societies. We are trapped by the capitalist apparatus, which exists solely to maximise capital accumulation. So it is impossible to aspire to build democratic societies that live together harmoniously, enjoying a dignified and rewarding life, where equality prevails and where our talents flourish for the benefit of ourselves and all its members, because the market ethos is the antithesis of the true democratic ethos.

Paradoxically, consumption is the unsuspected solution, as in a kind of *Deus ex machina*, because our consumption can be precisely and surprisingly the *consumptio ex machina* that puts an end to capitalism. Consequently, our re-education must instil in us the urgent need to change our lifestyles, anchored in consumerist, unsustainable alienation, by replacing them with responsible, sustainable consumption. The great challenge is to contribute to a cultural change by demonstrating that there is a very positive and rewarding solution, that the solution to our problems lies in changing our culture of consumption from a market-driven and affluent class-driven culture of maximising many induced and unnecessary wants to the geocratic culture of satisfying true and universal needs that will enable us to reduce our energy consumption drastically. Decoupling human well-being from energy use and the consumption of many other natural resources that are turned into useless products will put us on a sustainable trajectory for future generations. This transition represents a cultural shift from today's hedonistic well-being to eudemonic well-being.

Hedonistic welfare is the canon of capitalist consumerism. It materialises in the individualistic pursuit of purchasing power to maximise consumption and satisfy induced desires - surreptitiously transformed into absolutely artificial needs characteristic of our consumerist cultures - that go far beyond real and universal human needs. These desires are presented to provide satisfaction and pleasure, with a sense of instant gratification, in an isolated, individualistic and atomised position in time and space, detached from our community and without regard for the negative impacts on our communities, ecosystems and the planet as a whole.<sup>58</sup> In the hedonistic canon, that sense of having and possessing should make us happy. This false welfare state, Lamb and Steinberger argue, *suggests that a good society is built on individuals maximising their own happiness, a stance most closely associated with Bentham's utilitarianism.*<sup>59</sup> The key indicator of progress under the hedonist ethos is GDP growth. It could not be otherwise.

In stark contrast, Eudemonic Well-being is anchored in human flourishing and a capabilities approach, within the framework of universal human needs. This allows us to realise our full potential in society and address the underlying causes of multidimensional poverty, including power, conflict, and equity issues.<sup>60</sup> Human flourishing allows us to

<sup>57</sup> Tatsu Ikeda: [Jiang Xueqin's Prophecies of Global Collapse and Civil War](#) – Tatsu's Newsletter, 9 July 2025.

<sup>58</sup> ↪ Lina I. Brand-Correa and Julia K. Steinberger, "[A Framework for Decoupling Human Need Satisfaction From Energy Use.](#)" *Jus Semper*, (E0124) October 2022, 4–5.

<sup>59</sup> ↪ William F. Lamb and Julia K. Steinberger, "[Human well-being and climate change mitigation.](#)" *Jus Semper* (E0135) January 2023, 3.

<sup>60</sup> ↪ Lamb y Steinberger, "[Human well-being and climate change mitigation.](#)"

participate fully in our community in the way of life we choose within the broader context of our society. A eudemonic ethos, Brand-Correa and Steinberger rightly argue, *allows us to include in our analysis a sense of social belonging to our community both in the past and in the future*, rather than a hedonistic, individualistic, and atomised ethos.<sup>61</sup> This is a multidimensional approach that encompasses physical and social needs and their psychological elements. In this way, key indicators of progress are the dramatic decline in carbon dioxide emissions driven by drastic reductions in energy consumption, along with numerous non-monetary indicators of well-being focused on human flourishing and the satisfaction of universal needs, with an emphasis on basing them on nature. At the same time, this should allow us to return to and remain within planetary boundaries, thus caring for the well-being of our planet.<sup>62</sup>

Of course, this cultural change is confronted by the power of capital, in advertising and other structures that coerce us into accepting the cultural values of what is well regarded, and that every moment of the day harasses us with the call to consume in order to feel that we exist and that we will be happy. It is the lure that anaesthetises and immobilises us. Therefore, cultural change will take decades, if we still have time, and it will happen only if we become aware of it to the extent that we internalise it and take ownership of it, as a change in everything we do in our daily lives. As a change that we fervently desire for the love of life and for the love of a promising and rewarding future for our future generations.

*Political perspective:* This perspective parts from the certainty that we do not live in a democracy, so governments, far from fulfilling their responsibility to pursue the general welfare, act as agents of capital to impose and preserve the ideal conditions for the maximisation of its accumulation. Changing these rules of the game will require forcing governments into a new social pact with new constitutions that replace capitalism with Geocratia to establish a social contract with Gaia. For this reason, it would be a futile, frustrating and discouraging endeavour to base our goal of building the new geocratic paradigm on pressuring governments to adopt the policies necessary to do so. Throughout the world, even in those with supposedly left-wing governments, structures remain distinctly capitalist and systematically put the interests of capital before those of people and planet. It is naïve to think that a paradigm shift is possible within today's quintessentially capitalist nation-states.<sup>63</sup> So it is much more feasible to imagine the construction of the new geocratic paradigm within individual communities than within current nation-states. This is not to say that we should not politically and peacefully confront the established order of the states. However, it should not go through the normal channels, which are electoral and through lobbying in parliaments.

It is much more realistic to imagine the construction of a new paradigm in which, for example, nation-states cease to exist and are replaced by many smaller, autonomous communities, ranging from small municipal communities or even smaller ones, such as villages, to city-states, federations of cities, or autonomous regions. In these, the demos, the communal citizens are the government, because they are permanently involved in the form of government, in the driver's seat of public affairs, defining the public agenda that determines all the issues to be addressed and agreed upon. The purpose, in congruence with the geocratic paradigm, is to define and agree on the rules of coexistence necessary to disassociate ourselves from the life systems of hedonic communities and transform ourselves into eudemonic communities.

<sup>61</sup> ↪ Brand-Correa and Steinberger, "[A Framework for Decoupling Human Need Satisfaction From Energy Use](#)," 4.

<sup>62</sup> ↪ Ian Gough, "Climate change and Sustainable Welfare: The Centrality of Human Needs," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 39, no. 5 (2015): 1191–214.

<sup>63</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil – [The Capture of Democracy to Impose Marketocracy —Why Democracy is a Hoax](#) — (E0075) Jus Semper, October 2021, pp. 12-15.

It must be noted that, in an ethos of true democracy, it is not possible to posit a uniform geocratic paradigm for all communities, as they live in different ecosystems, cultures, and levels of development and fulfilment of their universal needs, and each has different natural resources. Some may have an abundance of water, wildlife and fertile land, while others may lack much or some of it, but have an abundance of essential minerals. Some may suffer from significant inequality, and others from little. Each community must therefore determine its particular way of practising the geocratic paradigm according to its socio-cultural and natural resource contexts. What unifies them is the cultural shift from current hedonic, consumerist and unsustainable lifestyles to eudemonic lifestyles committed to caring for the sustainable biodiversity of their environment. Put another way, what unifies them is the adoption of lifestyles that lead to a trajectory of sharply decreasing consumption.

Certainly, in accordance with the geocratic paradigm, this has to be done in an authentically democratic way, increasing or decreasing inputs and consumption at the pace determined by the pact each community establishes with itself. With the demos directly guiding its own transformative social change toward social justice and environmental health, all communities embark on this journey and share in the responsibility for the success of societal transformation. However, the common thread all communities must share is to design their new livelihood systems so that, while greatly reducing inequality, they do not overstep planetary boundaries. Criteria that can be adopted to measure the biophysical impact of each community include per capita GHG generation or ecological footprint (measured in hectares), as well as consumption of other resources, such as water. It is essential to develop metrics to assess the community's anthropogenic impact on its ecosystem, ensuring sustainability within the Earth System Boundaries. GDP becomes an anachronism in some economic history books.

Decision-making in the community powers, equivalent to executive and legislative powers, is permanently shared with the demos. That is, all significant governmental decisions are reached by direct consensus, including plebiscites when citizens introduce legislation and referendums when parliamentarians do so. So decisions on what to decrease and what to increase must result from an ongoing, genuinely democratic process of proposal, debate and resolution. [Appendix A<sup>64</sup>](#) of the Geocratia initiative contains a detailed description of what the components of the pillar of true democracy might look like. Its content is not intended to serve as a template to be applied, as that would contradict the essence of real democracy. They are core components to be considered and will undoubtedly vary and be enriched by the historical, ecosystemic, economic, and cultural components of each community. Each community must exercise its right to self-determination by outlining and agreeing on its own way of structuring its geocratic government.

Finally, the size of the world's population is a key element for communities to consider in the transition to a eudemonic ethos, which will have a major direct effect on the process of decreasing our ecological footprint. Let us not forget that, according to the IPCC, the main drivers of the planetary crisis are GDP and population growth, so ideally, in the new paradigm, the total population should not only stop growing but decrease. This is undoubtedly a very complex ethical issue, but it must be addressed and reconciled within each community. In the context of achieving planetary sustainability, it is indispensable to address the issue of sustainable human population to reimagine a new society and drastically decrease our ecological footprint on the planet.<sup>65</sup> The IPCC scientists' report repeatedly states, across several

<sup>64</sup> ↩ Álvaro J. de Regil, Geocratia - [Appendix A](#). (2024).

<sup>65</sup> ↩ Álvaro J. de Regil, [Is Population Crucial for Degrowth?](#) – Jus Semper, (E0115) September 2022; see also Philip Cafaro, [Population in the IPCC's new mitigation report](#) – Jus Semper, (B064) December 2022; see also Jane N. O'Sullivan, [Demographic Delusions: World Population Growth Is Exceeding Most Projections and Jeopardising Scenarios for Sustainable Futures](#), – Jus Semper, (E0201) November 2024; see also Philip Cafaro, [Just population policies for an overpopulated world](#) – (B094) October 2024.

chapters, that the two drivers of carbon dioxide emissions are economic and demographic growth.<sup>66</sup> The population issue must therefore be addressed by asking people to consider that, if the trajectory of decreasing energy consumption that we urgently need to adopt is to succeed, a decrease in the world's human population is paramount. In a genuinely democratic ethos, people will always have the inalienable right to decide whether they want to contribute to saving our home by having fewer or no children. Even so, they must realise that reducing population size is crucial to our efforts.<sup>67</sup> The Geocratia initiative in [Appendix B](#) addresses this issue.<sup>68</sup>

Lastly, the issue of the political strategy to be adopted in the current context of the dictatorship of the market has to be one of non-cooperation, peacefully and legally, which implies adopting tactics and strategies designed to reduce our participation in the market as much as possible, precisely following the logic under which it operates. This is addressed in the next section.

## Realising the new paradigm - Embracing the new culture of responsible consumption

Realising the new paradigm is inevitably a long and arduous task that requires enormous perseverance. The essential factor to achieve it is to generate a cultural change, a new geo-democratic culture that is willing to remove from our lives the root cause of the existential planetary crisis: capitalism and the shackles of consumerism with which it has trapped and subdued us. To generate a new culture with sufficient critical mass to bring about change, it is now imperative that those of us who have awakened commit ourselves to developing individual and group efforts to 'evangelise' anyone who is willing to listen and who is in the dark or uninformed about the planetary crisis. The aim is to proselytise, to spread the word, to proclaim, to make clear all the intricacies of the planetary crisis we are experiencing and its underlying cause. The aim is to awaken those fellow citizens within our sphere of social influence who are not only willing to listen, but to join the new paradigm movement, realising that the only solution lies in adopting the new geocratic culture and in joining in to gain as many followers as possible to achieve the necessary critical mass. If we do not abandon our consumerist culture, there is nothing to be done.

Clearly, we will not be able to mount advertising campaigns and hire time and space in the mass media, not only because we do not have the resources, but also because they would refuse to sell them to us to denounce the planetary crisis and the responsibility of their capitalocentric system. Conventional media, electronic or printed, are capitalist; they are enthusiastic co-participants and contributors to the preservation of the system and would never accept campaigns that go straight to their waterline, which, furthermore, preach the elimination of consumerism in favour of responsible consumption, when the media live off consumerist advertising. What we must do, nonetheless, is to start at the grassroots level and dedicate ourselves to finding people in our sphere of influence who are restless and willing to listen. This process of education and acculturation, in which we all have much to learn in practice, will take decades, but there is no alternative.

This is the first step and is a sine qua non condition for the next steps. These consist essentially of taking actions of non-cooperation with the system, following market logic by permanently using our power of consumption. In our new culture, we stop consuming an enormous amount of products and services that are useless and harm people and the

<sup>66</sup> ↪ IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5. Véase también Philip Cafaro, [Population in the IPCC's new mitigation report](#) – Jus Semper, (B064) December 2022

<sup>67</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, [No sustainable paradigm is attainable without gradual population reduction](#), Jus Semper, (C0068), July 2024; see also J. Joseph Speidel and Jane N. O'Sullivan, [Advancing the Welfare of People and the Planet with a Common Agenda for Reproductive Justice, Population, and the Environment](#) – Jus Semper, (E0198), October 2024.

<sup>68</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, Geocratia - [Appendix B](#). (2024)

planet. The essential market logic is consumption, so confronting it by following its own logic strikes directly at its waterline.

It can be argued that, by not cooperating, we are organising a boycott of the system. The big difference is that a boycott is always for a term. It can be a one-day, one-month or one-year campaign, but it is always for a limited period. For example, a national work stoppage, such as not going to school, can only last a few weeks, because we do not have the power to stop receiving our wages or to interrupt our studies. While such actions can and should be incorporated into our strategy, we can only implement them for very short periods. They will be no more than temporary actions. In stark contrast, an action of non-cooperation focused on giving up a huge number of superfluous goods and services can and must be permanent. This is because if we limit ourselves to acquiring only those inputs that are indispensable to meet our real needs—only those that our community cannot provide—we will, at the same time, be able to inflict a meaningful strike on the market permanently.

This is what it means to follow market logic and influence it permanently; it is the only logic that has an immediate effect on the processes of reproduction and accumulation of capital. Broadly speaking, it is a matter of developing, at the same time as we start proselytising efforts, small groups we can call "citizen cells" (CCs), eco-social cells, or whatever one prefers. These gradually change their consumer culture and develop small nuclei that seek to produce the goods and services that the group's talents and resources can provide, in order to reduce our dependence on the capitalist market as much as possible.

This is only a brief outline of what needs to be done to initiate the transition, with the first step being to launch proselytising efforts to build critical mass. A detailed schematic description of the work leading to the successful formation and cohesion of CCs in the context of building a sustainable eco-social commons is given in [Appendix E](#).<sup>69</sup> The key is to practice what we preach, abandoning consumerist culture and adopting a new ecosocial lifestyle that is dedicated to caring for our community by caring for our planet by caring for our ecosystem. The most recent update on the [Geocratia paradigm can be accessed here](#).

By way of a corollary, I wish to highlight two points. These reflections are only a small contribution that attempts to provoke ideas to enrich the imaginary of a new geocratic paradigm that can only be ecosocialist. They do not pretend to define every aspect, because that is impossible for anyone. That must be the product of the reflections and exercises of discussion, proposals, debates and resolutions adopted by each community according to its economic, cultural, political and ecosystemic realities. The second point is that all this will have no value, beyond sterile speculation, if the first step is not taken. We have to start the hard work of proselytising, of materialising our convictions immediately, by creating our own group of comrades who are aware of the high existential risk we face and who will form their own group to create critical mass and profess what we preach. In the same way, we have to change our own consumption habits, decreasing them to be socially and ecologically responsible and stripping them of all consumerist habits of unnecessary products and services. If we cannot take that first step, there is nothing to do, and we will contribute to increasing the high existential risk. This is to take real action or at once sign our epitaph, because the probability of it happening is enormous.



<sup>69</sup> ↩ Álvaro J. de Regil, Geocratia - [Appendix E](#) (2024)

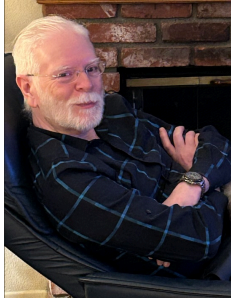
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❖ **About the author:** Álvaro J. de Regil is the Project initiator and Executive Director of The Jus Semper Global Alliance since 2003. At a broader level, his work is currently centred on advancing a "people and planet" paradigm. As part of this transformative concept, he is active in the areas of labour rights, business and human rights, no-growth / degrowth / steady-state economics, basic income and the drastic reduction of humanity's environmental footprint on our planet as the only way to achieve real sustainability of life on our home: planet earth.



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