

## The Unbearable Unawareness of our Ecological Existential Crisis

*Only a Revolution can stop our demise, but capitalism's behemoth keeps people deceitful and mostly unaware of being on the verge of a catastrophic end. We must arouse Now!*

Álvaro J. de Regil

In the last two years, the full report on Mitigation of Climate Change prepared by the IPCC scientists, as well as research from other centres, such as the Stockholm Resilience Centre, have consistently confirmed that we are following a trajectory of doom. Unless we veer fast in the opposite direction, the odds that we will be facing planetary catastrophes that will put at great risk the existence of life in our planet on the next twenty years are realistic and likely.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, we continue to see that such existential threat—the direct result of the dominant socioeconomic structures of capitalism—continue to fall on the indifferent ears of those in power, particularly in the Global North, the overwhelming precursor of the planetary rift we face. Instead, these elites persist on a narrative that makes most people think that all we need to do is to decrease our carbon dioxide emissions to address climate change (which is only one of the nine planetary boundaries that we are on the verge of or have already transgressed) without

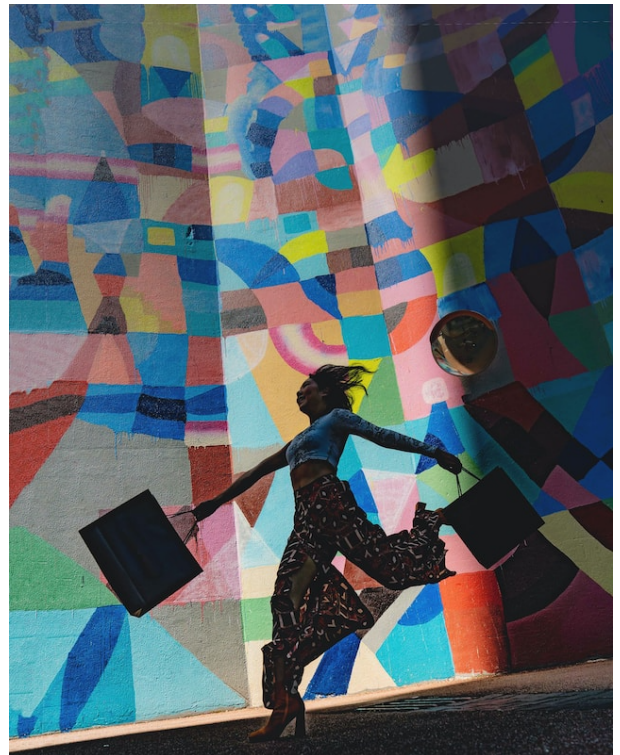


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<sup>1</sup> [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, \*Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change\*; Stockholm Resilience Centre: Research](#)

changing the consumeristic lifestyle systems required for capitalism to sustain itself. They push, explicitly and implicitly, the idea that Promethean technological prowess will solve our problems, such as the fact that we are well underway of the Sixth Mass Extinction, so that we can confidently continue to pursue our consumeristic impulses in our quest for happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the track record delivered by the centers of power, it is evident that humans and nonhumans will surely reach

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our demise in the next few decades unless the common people rid themselves of the delusional and Promethean narrative advanced by the centers of power that has captured public opinion. To accomplish this, we must debunk this narrative and set the record straight. There is no possibility of future generations enjoying a sustainable and dignified life unless we radically change our culture and lifestyle habits and learn to live in harmony with our

home, planet Earth. We must treat our planet with great care, as we would a friend we depend on for our lives. Hence, we must wake up, mobilise, and organise in order to force the replacement of the structures of unrelenting growth, endless consumption, and enormous inequality at the same time that we change our values and daily habits if we want to bequeath to future generations a life with dignity and joy.

The great challenge is to provoke awareness and critical thinking among the common people. The market reigns supreme, transforming people into consumer units, alienating and depriving them of their dignity and making them believe that success and happiness lie in having things, so that we can consume and feel happy through instant gratification. Consequently, replacing the deeply embedded culture of consumerism that is instrumental for capitalism to

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sustain itself is a colossal challenge. Yet, people must become conscientious and internalise that the only way to save humans and nonhumans, and the resources required from nature for both to survive and prosper, is by drastically radically cutting consumption in order to diminish our ecological footprint,

replacing our structures and steering our trajectory towards a transition of consumption degrowth until we reach a sustainable steady state of production and consumption.<sup>3</sup> We must embark on a sustainable transition that is safe and just for all living things and the planet.

Furthermore, because capitalism's nature requires endless growth, the only way to accomplish this is through an ecosocial Geocratic Paradigm, or "Government by the Earth".<sup>4</sup> In this paradigm, humankind lives to take good care of its home as its friend, the planet. In Geocratia, instead of vying to possess and consume to survive, people enjoy a dignified life without all of the excesses of consumerism. In Geocratia, many basic needs, such as health care, education, and water—currently rendered as mere merchandise—are universal rights with guaranteed access to all people to live comfortably but frugally. There is no choice if we want to avoid the catastrophic trajectory of doom that we are rapidly undergoing, unless we prefer to ensure reaching our final demise in the next few decades.

<sup>2</sup> ↪ Robert H. Cowie, Philippe Bouchet, Benoît Fontaine, "The Sixth Mass Extinction: fact, fiction or speculation?," *Biological Reviews* 97, no. 2 (April 2022): 640–63; Frédéric Saltré and Corey J. A. Bradshaw, "What is a 'mass extinction' and are we in one now?," *The Conversation*, November 12, 2019; Ann Gibbons, "Are We in the Middle of a Sixth Mass Extinction?," *Science*, March 2, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> ↪ Herman E. Daly, *A Steady-State Economy*, UK Sustainable Development Commission, July 23, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, "Transitioning to 'Geocratia': The People and Planet and not the Market Paradigm—First Steps" — The Jus Semper Global Alliance (May 2020).

## The Planetary Rift

The planetary rift essentially is, in stark contrast with how nonhumans live, the result of the alienation of humans from the rest of nature by not living in harmony with the natural metabolic processes of the earth. As the direct result of the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, human societies transitioned from small rural communities into urban areas. The production of goods turned from traditional power sources, such as water mills, to steam power using fossil fuel energy by burning coal. Such emergence produced the consumer societies instrumental to sustaining capitalism, gradually encroaching on the environment, polluting the air and rivers, depleting the nutrients needed for the soil for agricultural produce, cutting down the forests, and industrialising animal food production. Capitalism, imbued by the Cartesian dualism that separates human beings from nature, regarded the planet's natural resources as "God's gift" to be used inexorably for the reproduction and accumulation of wealth for the owners of the means of production, all in the pursuit of a never ending spiral of production, consumption, and profit growth.<sup>5</sup>

With the Second World War came the great acceleration of human impact on the planet that gradually consolidated the planetary rift already detected in the nineteenth century by Karl Marx and others. Indeed, following the work of

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agricultural chemist Justus Von Liebig on the loss of soil nutrients ("nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium") with the "second agricultural revolution" in the mid-nineteenth century, Marx developed the concept of the metabolic rift.<sup>6</sup> He detected that the social relations of capitalism produced the sociometabolic rift of humans in their relationship with nature's metabolism. This rift is, of course, far more complex and deep in our time.

Intensifying the mechanisation and industrialisation of consumer lifestyles, all anchored on the use of fossil fuels, namely oil, coal, and natural gas, capitalism also produces a myriad of absolutely unnecessary products and services aimed at satisfying artificially created needs that do nothing more than exacerbate the ecological rift between the human and planetary metabolism, all for the sake of the greater accumulation for the owners of the means of production. We hear all the time about global warming and climate change, but deceptively. Corporate media and governments focus on the effects of climate change on the sustainability of the structures that allow production and consumption to reproduce and accumulate for today's monopoly and transnational capitalism. They are concerned that climate change will impact its socioeconomic structures, yet never question its sustainability. Hence, they embark on their Promethean discourse to appease their "consumer units." We hear them talking about the deliberately censored reports from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN's Climate Change conferences (COP1 to COP27), deprived of the scientists' key recommendations, such as the pressing need to decrease production and consumption, for they are the primary drivers of carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>7</sup> They deliberately keep us unaware about the underlying cause of climate change.

<sup>5</sup> ↪ See Carles Soriano, "*Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Other '-Cenes'*" — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2023 (pp.10-16). See also John Bellamy Foster, *Capitalism in the Anthropocene* — Monthly Review Press, 2022. (pp. 49-50).

<sup>6</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 150–52.

<sup>7</sup> ↪ [Corporate media and governments censored the IPCC Mitigation of Climate Change report](#) and disseminated an adulcorated version, written by and for governments, titled the "Summary for Policymakers" (IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*). This "summary" removed the most important conclusions of the scientists in the original report. For more about the leaked reports, also see "The Editors of Monthly Review: [Leaked IPCC Reports](#)," — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, January 2022.



The above notwithstanding, climate change is just one of nine planetary boundaries that today's capitalism has transgressed or is on the verge of transgressing, with tipping points that are likely irreversible. This constitutes the ecologic metabolic rift produced by humanity through an economic system that requires unrelenting growth in

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producing and consuming products and services that impinge on our planet's natural metabolism. Scientists have determined that the nine boundaries (climate change, ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone depletion, biogeochemical flows of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, freshwater use, change in land use, loss of

biosphere integrity, atmospheric aerosol loading, and novel entities) are indispensable for maintaining Earth's stability to allow humans and nonhumans to live sustainably and in harmony with our home.<sup>8</sup> Five of the nine planetary boundaries have been crossed by human activity, as reported in the updated report of an international team of eighteen researchers in the journal *Science*. These boundaries are climate change, loss of biosphere integrity, land-system change, altered biogeochemical cycles (phosphorus and nitrogen), and novel entities.<sup>9,10</sup> Thus, unless we radically change our socioeconomic structures—how we live (including how we work, produce, move, reproduce, communicate, travel, play, entertain, and so on)—we are rapidly approaching a real existential risk. Scientists regard climate change and biosphere integrity as “core boundaries.”<sup>11</sup> Significantly altering either of them would “drive the Earth System into a new state”, which entails a much less liveable state. To this effect, geologist Will Steffen asserts that transgressing a boundary increases the risk that human activities could inadvertently drive the Earth System into a severely inhospitable state, damaging efforts to reduce poverty and leading to a deterioration of human well-being in many parts of the world, including wealthy countries.<sup>12</sup> John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York explain that the boundaries for climate

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change, ocean acidification, and stratospheric ozone depletion can be regarded as tipping points where, if we cross their thresholds, we will make the earth unable to sustain life, while the boundaries of nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, freshwater use, change in land use, and biodiversity loss are seen as the onset of irreversible environmental degradation.<sup>13</sup>

By humans choosing to live in alienation from the planet's metabolism— by demanding and consuming resources to fulfil our needs, many of which are completely superfluous—we become the direct drivers of climate change and the planetary rift, hence the capitalistic-driven Anthropocene. The current usage of the term came from Nobel Prize winner atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen when he declared, based on a direct understanding of the changing Earth System rooted principally in perceptions of anthropogenic climate change and the anthropogenic thinning of the ozone layer, that we have moved from the Holocene to the Anthropocene epoch.<sup>14</sup> A few years later, Steffen and environmental

<sup>8</sup> ↪ Linn Persson et al., “[Outside the Safe Operating Space of the Planetary Boundary for Novel Entities](#),” — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2023.

<sup>9</sup> ↪ Will Steffen, Katherine Richardson, Johan Rockström et al. 2015. [Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet](#), *Science*, Vol. 347 no. 6223 DOI: 10.1126/science.1259855.

<sup>10</sup> ↪ A study published in 2022 reports that “the safe operating space of the planetary boundary of novel entities is exceeded since annual production and releases are increasing at a pace that outstrips the global capacity for assessment and monitoring.” See: Linn Persson et al., “[Outside the Safe Operating Space of the Planetary Boundary for Novel Entities](#),” — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2023.

<sup>11</sup> ↪ Will Steffen, Katherine Richardson, Johan Rockström et al. 2015. [Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet](#), *Science*, (research article summary), Vol. 347 no. 6223 DOI: 10.1126/science.1259855, (p. 1).

<sup>12</sup> ↪ Will Steffen et al. 2015. [Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet - an update](#) *Science* Vol. 347 no. 6223 (press release)

<sup>13</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010). 15–16.

<sup>14</sup> ↪ Will Steffen et al., “Stratigraphic and Earth System Approaches to Defining the Anthropocene,” *Earth's Future* 4 (2016): 324–45, in John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark: [The Capitalinian – The First Geological Age of the Anthropocene](#) — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, October 2021.



historian John McNeill declared: “The term Anthropocene...suggests that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state called the Holocene.”<sup>15</sup>

There is some debate on what is the best descriptor of the geological epoch we are enduring. Andreas Malm argues that the Capitalocene epoch is a better term because “this is the geology not of mankind but of capital accumulation”.<sup>16</sup>

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Foster and Clark, following the nomenclature for the geological time scale, assert that the capitalist system dominates life on our planet in the twenty-first century and propose that “Capitalinian Age” as the best descriptor of the current planetary crisis and the first geological age of

the Anthropocene.<sup>17</sup>

The all-embracing issue in this reflection is that the anthropocentric, and more specifically capitalocentric-driven, Capitalinian Age embodies a realistic existential threat for humans and nonhumans. Hence, unless we replace the structures of capital with utmost urgency, we will face our demise in the next few decades, to the point that if there are any survivors, they will not recognise our planet the way we know it today.

## The Capture of Democracy by Marketocracy

The conventional wisdom pushed by the market, governments, and corporate media (ergo, capitalism) is that most

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nations enjoy a democratic ethos. This cannot be any farther from the truth, but most people believe we do indeed live in democratic societies. Yet the evidence debunks such a myth. It exhibits that what governments regard as democracy is a hoax, for true democracy is an entirely different ethos than what we endure under capitalism. We endure and do not

enjoy a marketocratic paradigm reigning supreme over the lives of our societies. Instead of a societal edifice designed to procure the welfare of every rank of society—with special emphasis on the dispossessed—we have a system of alienated individualistic consumers, disengaged from public matters. It is a system designed to maximise capital accumulation of the market’s overlords. This is the tiny elite of institutional investors of international financial markets and their corporations in this age of imperial monopoly capital. This is a system imposed by today’s oligarchies at the expense of most of the world’s population and our home, planet Earth.

The fundamental factor explaining the marketocratic ethos that has consolidated capitalism is that the “democratic institutions of society” have been captured through blatant corruption to impose capitalism on every sphere of public life. The democratic ethos is a blatant lie, a mockery of representative democracy to impose marketocracy, with increasing cost to the whole spectrum of human rights. Deconstructing the democratic imposture exposes the stark incongruence between the established political discourse and the reality endured by societies. The established dogma is that the inhabitants of many nations, both in the metropolises of the system and the periphery, already “enjoy” the result of societies’ struggles to gradually build an agreement, the social contract, determining the rules of harmonious coexistence that the *demos*, the citizenry, define how all things belonging to the public matter must be conducted.

<sup>15</sup> ↪ Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, “Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *AMBIO* 36, no. 8 (2007): 614; Ian Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016), 28–29, in John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, “The Capitalinian.”

<sup>16</sup> ↪ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (New York: Verso, 2016), 391–96.

<sup>17</sup> ↪ Foster and Clark, “The Capitalinian.”

However, true democracy can only materialise if the public agenda is freely determined and controlled by the demos. No special interest can interfere in the process through political parties or paid lobbyists. Instead, we have political systems that the holders of economic power have completely corrupted. They control the public matter by controlling the public agenda, the critical element in their design. This tiny oligarchy comprising less than 1 percent of the

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population controls the politicians in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches by financing their political campaigns and partnering with them in their private business endeavours. Politicians are turned into market agents that advance their so-called public agenda. Thus, representative democracy

is a nefarious euphemism for the marketocratic regime that we endure.

The tacit connivance between those in control of the public and private arenas guarantees that the legislative power remains in the hands of “legislators” representing the interests of the market elites. Using Jeffrey Winters’s terminology for oligarchies, civil oligarchies focus on lowering taxes and reducing regulations that protect workers and citizens from corporate malfeasance, precisely the neoliberal mantra that dominates economic policy today.<sup>18</sup> They build “democratic” institutions that legally shield them from judicial actions against their bad behaviour. And, as Winters explains, they sustain all of this by political campaign financing and a cadre of professional lobbyists that allow them to exert undue influence over policy. In this way, they decide which items of the public matter get to be addressed, and only in the direction that benefits their very private interests. The moral hazard is evident and captures the regulatory process and the essence of representative democracy. Hence, instead of living in democratic societies, we live in marketocratic societies under the dictatorship of market owners.

Furthermore, the capture of democracy has been taken to the extreme, where “marketocracy” embodies the casino-like

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economy controlled by sheer speculation in investment markets.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, almost every aspect of human life has been securitised for financial speculation. Alejandro Teitelbaum explains the financialisation of everyday life by the financialisation of capitalism, which occurred when the role of finance in the economy was relegated to the new role of finance capital: *to produce profits*

*without participating in the productive process.*<sup>20</sup>

Monopoly capital has also produced a great leap in inequality. This is best observed in the commoditisation of human labor, with millions joining the precariat, toiling in an ethos of modern slave work.<sup>21</sup> Foster, Jamil Jonna, and Clark argue that, to comprehend the inner workings of today’s financialised capitalism, it is essential to understand its corrupting and corrosive cash nexus spreading to every aspect of human existence.<sup>22</sup> Greed and power are subsumed at its core and constitute its driving force.

<sup>18</sup> ↪ According to Winters, the existential motive of all oligarchs is wealth defence. How they respond varies with the threats they confront, including how directly involved they are in supplying the coercion underlying all property claims and whether they act separately or collectively. These variations yield four types of oligarchy: warring, ruling, sultanistic, and civil. Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, *Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet*, The Jus Semper Global Alliance, July 2021.

<sup>20</sup> ↪ Alejandro Teitelbaum, “*The Dictatorship of Financial Capitalism*,” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2021, 5.

<sup>21</sup> ↪ *Precariat*: social group suffering multiple forms of insecurity formed by people suffering from precarity, which is a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. See: Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> ↪ John Bellamy Foster, R. Jamil Jonna and Brett Clark: *The Contagion of Capital – Financialised Capitalism, COVID-19, and the Great Divide* — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2021.

Democracy's end is to reconcile the public interest (the common good) with the individual interest (the private good) so that the individual's freedom does not seek his private interest to the detriment of the public interest. In stark contrast,

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departing from individual freedom, capitalism pursues the individual's private interest with no regard for its impact on the welfare of all other participants in the system. Fundamental tenets of true democracy, such as equality, social justice,

welfare, and regulation, are anathema to capitalism and marketocracy. The maximisation of its wealth is its only moral purpose. There are two impeccable and paradigmatic examples of the carefully calculated connivance between private interests and politicians to supplant the regulatory instruments of a democratic ethos to impose marketocracy.

One example is the elimination of the U.S. Glass-Steagall Act of 1933. The Glass-Steagall Act was instituted in direct reaction to the economic and banking practices that produced the 1929 market crash. The law deliberately separated commercial banking from investment banking to prohibit commercial loans and savings from being securitised in financial markets. Furthermore, the law virtually barred any lending intended to be used in speculative operations and eliminated the pervasive possibility of conflicts of interest. However, in 1999, the core of the Glass-Steagall Act was repealed by the U.S. Congress as a culmination of a \$300 million lobbying effort by the banking and financial-services industries. Its worst effect was a cultural change, replacing prudent traditional commercial banking practices with a speculative spree, with major players seeking to securitise commercial banking. Until today, no new law has reinstated the separation between commercial and financial banking, thus preserving the casino-like ethos of financialised capitalism. By the same token, in the European Union, there is much opposition to the calls to enact a European Glass-Steagall law.<sup>23</sup>

The other example is the case of *Citizens United versus the Federal Electoral Commission*, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010. The decision was tantamount to the equation of capital with human beings in the form of corporations. The idea permeating U.S. culture that companies ought to be regarded as legal persons with individual rights, as if they were natural persons, was finally endorsed by the Supreme Court. The ruling states that corporations have the right to the first amendment, which otherwise would be solely part of the Bill of Rights for the citizenry. The court equated the persona of corporations with that of citizens, allowing corporations to exercise their "right" to free speech in political campaigns.<sup>24</sup> With this decision, the court gave corporations unlimited influence over U.S. elections. Companies can spend as much as they want to support or oppose individual candidates.<sup>25</sup> Thus, corporations are free to financially support the political agendas of their choice and, frequently, their design. With some variation, the halls of government have been overtaken by corporate power worldwide. With this kind of political ethos, it would be a complete delusion to expect governments to fulfil their so-called democratic mandate by moving forward and developing a strict regulatory framework to control the owners of global monopoly capitalism. In stark contrast with a truly democratic ethos, the market has overtaken the public arena and dictates the lives of societies worldwide.

Marketocracy has two distinctive features: first, contrary to its claim of generating prosperity, it has developed tremendous and unsustainable inequalities and environmental destruction everywhere. It is inherently unjust and a self-serving paradigm for the economic and political power centers and their carefully guarded structures of manufactured

<sup>23</sup> ↪ Editorial board, "Restoring Trust after Diamond," *Financial Times*, July 3, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> ↪ *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

<sup>25</sup> ↪ Robert Barnes and Dan Eggen, "[Supreme Court Rejects Limits on Corporate Spending on Political Campaigns](#)," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2010.



consent through their dominant media apparatuses, aimed to keep the majority unaware of the marketocratic ethos.<sup>26</sup>

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Second, governments did not implement this process democratically. People have never been informed and asked to approve the current structures through a duly informed referendum after a process of proposals, debates, and resolutions. 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>27</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>28</sup> Unless the peoples of the world break the consensus imposed by the system, become conscientious, and organise to build a radically different and genuinely sustainable paradigm, we will see the complete consolidation of marketocracy.

## Debunking the Illusionary Narrative of Green Capitalism

The fact that we live under the dictatorship of the marketplace does not mean it does not work to lessen the increased awareness about its predatory nature. It does this by pressing us to support it and to believe it is always progressing to

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everyone’s benefit, finding solutions to all the obstacles that humans or nature throws at it. Its relentless propaganda tries to convince us that capitalism and the hedonistic lifestyle it instills are sustainable. Those who pull the strings of the marketocratic paradigm work hard to keep alive the Promethean fantasy that their technological prowess will tame Gaia, control climate change, and sustain the consumerist lifestyles of future

generations now that its effects and the breaching of other planetary boundaries begin to emerge in the consciousness of a growing majority. The implicit message is that people will live in bliss, enjoying high material living standards and consuming as much of the earth’s resources as they can afford, courtesy of twenty-first century techno hubris.

This narrative is anchored on the virtuosity of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and its technological prowess, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, autonomous and urban air mobility drones, surveillance systems, and robotics, among others.<sup>29</sup> The idea is to transition from the current digital revolution to the 4IR, which promises to fulfil many so-called Sustainable Development Goals. For example, a joint study between PricewaterhouseCoopers and the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, mapped 345 technological applications that will help achieve the UN’s goals.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> ↩ Edward S. Herman, “[The Propaganda Model Revisited](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, November 2020.

<sup>27</sup> ↩ Giorgos Kallis, “[The Degrowth Alternative](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, April 2019, 2.

<sup>28</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).

<sup>29</sup> ↩ de Regil, *Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet*, 39–44.

<sup>30</sup> ↩ World Economic Forum, In collaboration with PwC: [Unlocking Technology for the Global Goals](#), 2020.

The purported 4IR and its applications are being utilised to preserve the marketocratic ethos by launching “The Great Reset.”<sup>31</sup> Touted as the solution to humanity’s existential problems, the World Economic Forum positions this “reset” as the way societies should deal with our existential problems of sustainability. The pretence is to completely restructure society towards a new capitalist paradigm, anchored in the 4IR:

*As we enter a unique window of opportunity to shape the recovery, this initiative will offer insights to help inform all those determining the future state of global relations, the direction of national economies, the priorities of societies, the nature of business models and the management of a global commons. Drawing from the vision and vast expertise of the leaders engaged across the Forum’s communities, the Great Reset initiative has a set of dimensions to build a new social contract that honours the dignity of every human being... We will have an angrier world... but the 4IR will impact our lives completely, it will change actually us, our own identity, which of course it will give life to policies and developments like smart traffic, smart government, smart cities.<sup>32</sup>*

The argument is presented as an idea for the good of the people and the global commons. But on whose authority do

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they pretend to advance an initiative that will change our lives completely, as well as our own identities? In full congruence with marketocracy, on whose authority do they pretend to “build a new social contract”? Have they asked the demos if we want technologies that will deprive us of our identity and our dignity? This is a preposterous and cynical initiative to accelerate the implementation of the 4IR strictly from the perspective of the global elite to

maximise their wealth and power.

This narrative is consistent with the solution profusely advanced by governments, namely the United States’s and the European Union’s “Green New Deals.” The context is the greenwashing idea of solving ecological problems while keeping capitalism’s nature intact and in control. It promises to cut carbon dioxide emissions by sustaining unrelenting growth, endless consumption, and enormous inequality, which is a glaring oxymoron—a promise to solve the problem by keeping the direct source of the problem. The underlying context of the Green New Deal of the U.S. Congress is

*Humanity cannot drastically reduce CO2 emissions without drastically reducing production and consumption because these, along with population growth, are the main drivers not only of greenhouse gas emissions, but of the entire planetary rift caused by the capitalocentric transgression of our nine planetary boundaries.*

anchored on a capitalist economy.<sup>33</sup> Its goals include achieving greenhouse gas and toxic emissions reductions needed to stay under 1.5°C of warming (compared to pre-industrial levels) through a “fair and just transition of workers,” including the creation of millions of good, high-wage union jobs and the encouragement of collective bargaining agreements.<sup>34</sup> The other goals consist of investing in infrastructure and industry, securing clean air and water,

climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, a sustainable environment, and promoting justice and

<sup>31</sup> ↪ de Regil, *Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet*, 82–97.

<sup>32</sup> ↪ “The Great Reset,” World Economic Forum, accessed May 17, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> ↪ “Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal,” H.R. 332, 117th Congress (2021).

<sup>34</sup> ↪ Pre-industrial: The multicentury period prior to the onset of large-scale industrial activity around 1750. The reference period 1850–1900 is used to approximate pre-industrial global mean surface temperature (GMST).

equity, particularly for underprivileged communities.<sup>35</sup> The chasm between achieving a fair and just transition and remaining in an ethos of workers and the creation of millions of “high-wage” union jobs, which implies a capital-labor relationship, exchange value, global supply chains of exploitation through labor arbitrage, economic growth, and the unrelenting consumption of resources and of goods and services, is striking. Of course, the bill does not explain how it pretends to reduce greenhouse gas and toxic emissions while concurrently remaining in a capitalist ethos that requires unrelenting growth for capital accumulation. The word *degrowth*, referring to the reduction of production and consumption, does not exist in the document, whilst spurring massive growth in clean manufacturing is one of its goals.<sup>36</sup>

The fundamental truth that debunks such a narrative is based on simple common sense, properly supported by natural science or physics. Humanity cannot drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions without drastically reducing production and consumption because these, along with population growth, are the main drivers not only of greenhouse gas emissions, but of the entire planetary rift caused by the capitalocentric transgression of our nine planetary boundaries. If capitalism’s nature is the unrelenting production and consumption to fulfil wealth accumulation, its only *raison d’être*, then remaining within the safe space of our planetary boundaries under capitalism is inherently unsustainable. All living things have a metabolic interaction with nature to sustain themselves. They take nutrients from their ecosystems and, in this interaction, “help”—consciously or unconsciously—the planet replenish its resources so that a sustainable equilibrium is maintained. The actions of all species in this interaction and nature-imposed conditions transform the processes and the outcomes of their dynamic interchanges. This constitutes the metabolic interactions between all species and nature. Humans, as another species, also have a metabolic interaction that Marx described as

*For capitalism to thrive and fulfil all the dreams of the elite driving it requires the infinite consumption of resources and the transgression of these boundaries, disregarding the axiomatic fact that we live on a planet with finite resources, making the marketocratic system delusional and utterly unsustainable.*

our “social metabolism with nature.” As we depend on nature to sustain and reproduce ourselves, our activity interacts with the ecosystems in which we are active and, combined with the nature-imposed conditions, produces outcomes that influence and may transform the ecosystems.<sup>37</sup> As we become conscientious of our mutually dependent social relationship with nature, we

may attempt to sustain it by taking care of our planet, treating it as a friend and our home, or we may not, as with capitalism. For capitalism to thrive and fulfil all the dreams of the elite driving it requires the infinite consumption of resources and the transgression of these boundaries, disregarding the axiomatic fact that we live on a planet with finite resources, making the marketocratic system delusional and utterly unsustainable.<sup>38</sup>

Scientists have known this since the nineteenth century. Technological hubris cannot suspend the mathematics of capitalist accumulation and the laws of thermodynamics. Its second law states that energy transformation is not completely reversible due to entropy (the transformation of a quantity of energy into waste). Therefore, it is not possible to not have any consequences in economics, which is based on such transformations. “*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*

<sup>35</sup> ↪ [“Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal,”](#) 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> ↪ [“Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal,”](#) 8.

<sup>37</sup> ↪ Foster, Clark and York, *The Ecological Rift*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> ↪ Álvaro J. de Regil, [“The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism,”](#) The Jus Semper Global Alliance, March 2022, 3–4.



and better'pollution," wrote Georgescu Roegen.<sup>39</sup> If it were not for entropy, all living things on this planet would be able to consume the planet's resources eternally.<sup>40</sup> And although technology can increase energy efficiency to reduce the ecological footprint of economic activity, it exponentially increases the use of new technologies that increase the environmental impact. This is the Jevons Paradox, or rebound effect. Greater efficiency, paradoxically, turns into greater use of the resource.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the prevailing narrative that we do not have to worry because technology will allow us to continue our consumeristic lives because, for example, replacing our fossil fuel vehicles with lithium-charged ones will solve the problem, is a deliberate deception to protect the marketocratic regime and keep us unaware of the root cause. Erald Kolasi explains it clearly:

*Tesla Motors has a phenomenal operating efficiency, [but] the electricity needed to run them often comes from much more inefficient sources, such as coal-fired power plants. If you drive a Tesla, the dirty sources of energy powering it mean that your amazing technological product produces roughly the same carbon emissions as a Honda Accord... capitalist economies are interested in growing their profits and production levels, not in making significant improvements in efficiency.*<sup>42</sup>

Hence, capitalism and sustainability are an oxymoron. They are entirely incompatible, for the former requires unrelenting growth while the latter requires a drastic decrease of our ecological footprint until we reach a stationary state that can permanently be sustained in the long term, through many centuries.

## The Shackles of Consumeristic Addiction

Capitalism is so resilient that it has empowered a marketocratic ethos embellished with the mockery of representative democracy, which we endure. Yet, its power to bewitch appeals strongly to our most individualist and selfish instincts. It

*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.*

does it precisely through the allure of consumerism, an indispensable condition for capitalism to exist, thrive, and sustain itself. In this way, this ethos has deprived us of our identity and turned us into mere and instrumental "consumer units" who serve the system. Our value scale and overarching

moral character are anchored on consumption, which we ought to practice daily to exist as we are instilled with a culture of consumerism.

### What Is Consumerism?

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 it unconsciously, professing allegiance to the desires we believe will fill the vacuum created by the overwhelmingly materialistic world in which we live. In such a world, our humanistic instincts are suppressed in favor of a moral scale anchored in what we have rather than what we do—as in the dilemma posed by Erich Fromm's "To Have or to Be," between the culture of having and the culture of being—to feel that we exist.<sup>43</sup> We live and die by our ability to have and thus, to exist.

<sup>39</sup> ↩ Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>40</sup> ↩ de Regil, "[The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism](#)."

<sup>41</sup> ↩ The Jevons Paradox materialises when new technologies increase efficiency and—under a market logic—increase demand due to a rebound in consumption levels.

<sup>42</sup> ↩ Erald Kolasi, "[The Physics of Capitalism](#)," *The Jus Semper Global Alliance*, April 2021, 11–12.

<sup>43</sup> ↩ Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

Instead of democratic societies, we have become consumer societies for two main reasons, which provide a self-reinforcing process of production and consumption benefiting capital accumulation. First, consumer societies are essential for capitalism to exist and flourish. This is a *sine qua non* condition for the reproduction and relentless and growing accumulation process at the heart of today's global monopoly capital. The second reason is inherent in our

*People's existential needs and capitalism's need for accumulation reinforce each other, making marketocracy a very resilient paradigm.*

transformation from human beings into alienated consumer units, in which our ability to consume is the only way we can exist and feel that we have earned a place in this world. This materialises in the combination of the enjoyment of the

bourgeois life (for those who can afford it) and the struggle to survive and compete to become members of the bourgeoisie—the middle and upper consumer classes—for those who have not yet reached that pinnacle, those socially regarded as poor and dispossessed. Everyone needs to exist, so everyone competes to acquire the ability to consume to have. It is a behaviour akin to Stockholm Syndrome, where people with some degree of awareness about the vacuity of consumer values decide to bet on increasing their consumption and possessions, as much as they can afford, after deeming the system unbeatable. In this way, people's existential needs and capitalism's need for accumulation reinforce each other, making marketocracy a very resilient paradigm. As in many religions, where we are promised another life if

*We have been placed in an existential trap by the power of the marketocratic paradigm.*

we live our present lives as good people and according to the teachings of our professed creed, consumerism acts as a lure, a promise, offering us a materialistic existential identity and

happiness through an admired social status if we faithfully adhere to the religious practice of consumption.

### *The Shackles of Consumer Addiction*

We have been placed in an existential trap by the power of the marketocratic paradigm. This has deprived us of our identity and dignity, with growing inequality, imposing for billions of people a life of destitution and exploitation, and the emergence of billions of precariat and dispossessed, where most of us, to a greater or lesser degree, have pledged allegiance, like zombies, to a sort of consumeristic existential creed. If marketocracy is so blatantly unjust, inhumane, and predatory, and banking on our most perverse instincts of selfishness and hedonism, why do people not rebel from the shackles of consumerism, instead unconsciously remaining 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 character of the planetary crisis, the inconvenience posed by the idea that what we do by consuming Earth's resources will contribute to killing humans and nonhumans on other continents, particularly when there are enormous distances between victims and perpetrators, and the perception that we face a problem with no solution where we would run into a brick wall.<sup>44</sup> Malm asks why we resign ourselves to such a fate, and even consent to it explicitly. He advances that we do so because of the power of a system of ideas that is "so deeply ingrained in the very materiality of bourgeois society as to be invisible, inaudible, crushingly efficient because it is unstated and taken for granted."<sup>45</sup>

This disempowers us from acting against the forces that have taken control of our lives, of society, and of how the planet

*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.*

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

<sup>44</sup> ↩ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 361.

<sup>45</sup> ↩ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 362.

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>46</sup> We become complacent subjects of the system and oblivious to its corrosive damage.

Today, we are interpellated every second of the day by advertising. But it is so powerful that we are also interpellated by peer pressure and the “desire” instilled by the system to seek a more significant social status by having more possessions.

*We are what we are because of what we have, not because of our intrinsic character qualities and values.*

If we do not express our status symbols, we lose our sense of identity. “In current consumerist societies we are actively encouraged to express our sense of identity through our material possessions, and losing these can therefore mean losing our sense of identity.” Psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe

proposes this as a critical factor behind popular inaction on climate change.<sup>47</sup> We are what we are because of what we have, not because of our intrinsic character qualities and values. Therefore, as practicing believers of marketocracy, which demands a never-ending spiral of production/consumption/accumulation, we are drawn into ever increasing consumption. If we lose our consumption power, we cease to exist. We are just consumer units, zombified by the marketocratic religion that owns us as a demigod. We have been anointed as subjects and robbed of our being as part of nature. So we resign ourselves to our fate of doom.

Malm argues that this condition is even more pronounced among the wealthiest. If you are a member of the precariat,

*The efficacy of counter-interpellation stands in direct proportion to purchasing power.*

there may be a positive reaction to counter the interpellation, oppose marketocracy, to become a market heretic. “The efficacy of counter-interpellation stands in direct proportion to purchasing power,” writes Malm.<sup>48</sup> Thus, middle and upper classes in the Global North and South prefer to ignore

increasing warnings of climate change and the planetary rift, and resist even policies that seek to mitigate their root causes. In contrast, the dispossessed have little to lose if they react against the system, if they do not drive or travel, and if they only consume barely the necessities to survive in the system’s fringes. Consequently, the only real solution is to drastically reduce consumption by using the market’s logic. Only by organising a revolutionary movement of no cooperation, of frugality, of permanent boycott, concurrently building a sustainable commons anchored on the tenets of Geocratia, or government by the earth.<sup>49</sup>

### Only a Small Portion of Humanity Is Responsible

Affluent consumers are the precursors of the Anthropocene since they are responsible for the vast majority of dioxide emissions and thus, the crossing of other planetary boundaries. This is particularly true in the Global North, but also in

*The richest 10% was responsible for 52% of the cumulative carbon emissions, while the poorest 50% were responsible for just 7%.*

the upper classes of the Global South who aspire to emulate the North’s consumerist lifestyles and tenets. A recent study found that the richest 10 percent of the world’s population was responsible for 52 percent of the cumulative carbon emissions between 1990

<sup>46</sup> ↪ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 362–63.

<sup>47</sup> ↪ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 364. See also Sally Weintrobe, “The Difficult Problem of Anxiety in Thinking About Climate Change” in *Engaging with Climate Change*, ed. Sally Weintrobe (London: Routledge, 2012), 43.

<sup>48</sup> ↪ Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 365).

<sup>49</sup> ↪ de Regil, “[Transitioning to ‘Geocratia’](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, May 2020, 22–44.



and 2015, depleting the global carbon budget by nearly a third, while the poorest 50 percent were responsible for just 7 percent of cumulative emissions, and used just 4 percent of the available carbon budget.<sup>50</sup> Another study concludes that affluent people, the most reticent to end their faithfulness to the marketocratic creed, constitute the fundamental driving force responsible for the planetary rift. “Quantitative research shows that highly affluent consumers drive biophysical resource use (a) directly through high consumption, (b) as members of powerful factions of the capitalist class and (c) through driving consumption norms across the population.”<sup>51</sup>

Another assessment, which elaborates on the psychosocial obstacles to replacing the dominant culture of consumerism, looks at it from the perspective of secular theodicy, similar to my assertion that capitalism has instilled in us consumerism as a religion. According to Tim Jackson, the evocative power of consumerism allows us to find meaning in our place in the world by adopting a kind of secular theodicy.<sup>52</sup> According to the Oxford dictionary, theodicy is “the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil.” In Jackson’s dissertation, consumerism represents the replacement of a religious for a secular theodicy. Secular theodicy acts as a compensatory mechanism for the void created by the declining role of religion and the quest for meaning to our existence in view of good, evil, suffering, injustice, and anomie, the last being the absence of social and ethical standards in a society. Thus he argues that material

*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.*

goods have an evocative power whose main purpose 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 hangs on the evocative power of stuff.”<sup>53</sup> The underlying current is the existential anxiety that societies endure. “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>54</sup>

In this way, consumerism is the means to increase our self-esteem—deceptively, I argue—in view of an increasingly hostile world that makes us more aware of death. It is also a way to dream of higher things and escape from our reality, to find pleasure in a world we increasingly perceive as without hope. Moreover, consumerism has appropriated the

*Given that consumerism seems to be deeply implicated in world maintenance, any attempt to exhort people to abandon it is bound to fail. It is akin to asking people to risk a sort of social suicide.*

functional importance of theodicy in vindicating the divine in the face of evil. Consumerism’s instant gratification is perversely seductive—and addictive—for it has to be reinforced by requiring more consumption. Hence, Jackson argues that consumerism appears to be a continuous

exercise in denial of our mortality and widespread suffering in the world. However, he portends that given that consumerism seems to be deeply implicated in world maintenance—what he calls the sacred canopy of capitalist society—by disguising our existential anxieties, any attempt to exhort people to abandon it is bound to fail. It is akin to asking people to risk a sort of social suicide.<sup>55</sup> If we cease to possess and consume, we will no longer exist. These are the shackles that keep us in Jackson’s “iron cage of consumerism.” So we remain mostly unaware.

<sup>50</sup> ↪ Oxfam, “[Confronting Carbon Inequality: Putting Climate Justice at the Heart of the COVID-19 Recovery](#),” September 21, 2020, 2.

<sup>51</sup> ↪ Thomas Wiedmann, Manfred Lenzen, Lorenz T. Keyßer and Julia K. Steinberger, “[Scientists’ Warning on Affluence](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, December 2022, 6–8.

<sup>52</sup> ↪ Tim Jackson, “[Paradise Lost?: The Iron Cage of Consumerism](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, December 2022.

<sup>53</sup> ↪ Jackson, “Paradise Lost?,” 2.

<sup>54</sup> ↪ Jackson, “Paradise Lost?,” 12.

<sup>55</sup> ↪ Jackson, “Paradise Lost?,” 11.

## Awakening our Conscience to Mobilise

If exhorting people to abandon their devotion to consumerism is tantamount to asking them to commit suicide, to lose their fallacious identity, then it must be that the catastrophic situation of the world is hopeless precisely because consumerism is supposed to bring hope to our existence, where the ability to consume blurs any eschatological or dystopian vision. Nonetheless, since a majority of the world's population constitutes the destitute of the marketocratic paradigm and endures a life in which they consume only a fraction of what the wealthiest 10 percent consumes, there is certainly hope that we can awaken their conscience. We can make them realise that they and future generations can live a sustainable and dignified life if they replace their inoculated consumerism and organise to build a new radically different paradigm. To accomplish this, we must change the perception of the societies in which we live and the things in life that allow us to enjoy a dignified and happy existence in harmony with our planet. First, we need to debunk the idea that we live in a democratic ethos, and second, we need to disprove the tenets of the consumer societies that dominate the world.

To begin with, people must become aware that their perception that so-called democratic institutions of society govern most countries is a deception. Indeed, people assume that governments are responsible for addressing the challenges posed by climate change and other environmental problems, and despite hearing that governments are reacting reluctantly, the vast majority still trust that governments and multilateral institutions, working with private actors, will find the Promethean technological solutions to address these challenges effectively. Most remain unaware of the tacit connivance between governments and those in control of monopoly capitalism to protect the underlying cause of our

*For the vast majority, they have never, in the wildest of their imaginations, envisioned the need to change their lifestyles, the system, or their cultural tenets of possessing and consuming and what is supposed to constitute a successful existence. To be sure, they have never watched their governments question the principles of capitalism's consumer societies.*

planetary problems. Moreover, they regard these problems as a public matter, where individual citizens have a little role to play beyond their implicit demand that governments will come back with concrete solutions, such as the shift from fossil fuels to solar, wind, and battery power. They hear about climate change and "Green New Deals" and take it as evidence that governments are painstakingly working to address the issue. But, for the vast majority, they have never, in the wildest of their imaginations, envisioned the need to change their lifestyles, the

system, or their cultural tenets of possessing and consuming and what is supposed to constitute a successful existence. To be sure, they have never watched their governments question the principles of capitalism's consumer societies.

In this way, the first element in the narrative advanced by those actively working to awaken the people's consciousness to get involved in the public matter is to expose the democratic hoax. We need a narrative that provokes critical thinking

*We must convince people that there is no alternative to saving the home of future generations except for eliminating the root cause. This means radically reducing our consumption, which can only be done by changing our cultures and lifestyles to those of frugal but dignified, enjoyable, and truly sustainable living.*

explaining why we constitute consumer—and not democratic—societies and how that makes our lives utterly unsustainable. We must explain that the root cause of our planetary crisis is consumption, driven by a system that requires relentless consumption growth to sustain it. That carbon dioxide emissions, biodiversity loss, increasing scarcity of freshwater, loss of soil nutrients, pandemics, the emergence of new zoonotic diseases, and many other environmental problems

are driven by our overconsumption of the planet's resources and non-human species, transgressing our planetary

boundaries.<sup>56</sup> We must convince people that there is no alternative to saving the home of future generations except for eliminating the root cause. This means radically reducing our consumption, which can only be done by changing our cultures and lifestyles to those of frugal but dignified, enjoyable, and truly sustainable living. We need to decisively say that capitalism must be replaced, for the only way to replace our consumerism and save our home is to replace the system that imposes it because that is the only way it can sustain itself. Capitalism cannot exist without consumerism and vice versa. It follows, as made clearly evident by recent studies, that we must focus on true human needs, instead of induced desires.<sup>57</sup>

The other major challenge is to show that there is a very positive and enjoyable solution, that the solution to our problems lies in changing our consumer culture from one based on the maximisation of many induced and unnecessary desires driven by the market and the affluent classes to the satisfaction of true and universal needs that will enable us to cut drastically our energy use. Decoupling human well-being from energy use and the consumption of many other natural resources will put us on a sustainable trajectory for future generations. This transition represents a shift from the current *hedonic* well-being to *eudaemonic* well-being. While there is a debate about what well-being is, the growing evidence of our planetary rift, especially with the most obvious climate changes, exposes the unsustainability of hedonic well-being and the emergence of eudaemonic well-being as the culture to adopt.

Hedonic well-being is the canon of capitalist consumerism. It is materialised by the individualistic pursuit of purchasing power to maximise consumption to satisfy induced desires—transformed in needs by our consumeristic cultures—that go far beyond real and universal human needs. These desires are presented to provide satisfaction and pleasure in an isolated, individualistic and atomised position in time and space, detached from our community and regardless of the negative impacts on our communities, ecosystems, and the planet as a whole.<sup>58</sup> It “suggests that a good society is built upon individuals maximising their own happiness, a position most closely associated with Bentham’s utilitarianism.”<sup>59</sup> The key indicator of progress under the hedonic ethos is growth in gross domestic product (GDP) driven by consumption of everything that is consumable, along with monetary wealth.

Eudaemonic well-being, in contrast, is anchored on human flourishing and the capabilities approach, the universal

*Eudaemonic well-being is anchored on human flourishing and the capabilities approach, the universal human needs framework that enables humans to reach their highest potential in society... The key indicators of progress in the eudaemonic ethos are drastic degrowth in carbon dioxide emissions driven by dramatic reductions in energy consumption, along with numerous nonmonetary indicators of well-being centred on human flourishing and the satisfaction of universal needs.*

human needs framework that enables humans to reach their highest potential in society, and the underlying causes of multidimensional poverty, such as questions of power, conflict, and equity.<sup>60</sup> Human flourishing enables people to fully participate in our community in our chosen form of life in the broader context of our society. An eudaemonic ethos “allows for the inclusion in the analysis of a sense of social belonging to our community both in the past and future,” instead of the individualist and atomised hedonic ethos. Moreover, it

incorporates diverse intercultural views as to what constitutes a well-lived life to avoid any issues of cultural paternalism

<sup>56</sup> ↪ Rob Wallace, Alex Liebman, Luis Fernando Chaves, and Rodrick Wallace: “[COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, August 2020.

<sup>57</sup> ↪ Wiedmann, Lenzen, Keyßer and Steinberger, “[Scientists’ Warning on Affluence](#).”

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

<sup>59</sup> ↪ William F. Lamb and Julia K. Steinberger, “[Human Well-Being and Climate Change Mitigation](#),” The Jus Semper Global Alliance, January 2023, 3.

<sup>60</sup> ↪ Lamb and Steinberger, “[Human Well-Being and Climate Change Mitigation](#).”



and to honor cultural preferences.<sup>61</sup> It follows a multidimensional approach encompassing physical and social needs and their psychological elements. The key indicators of progress in the eudaemonic ethos are drastic degrowth in carbon dioxide emissions driven by dramatic reductions in energy consumption, along with numerous nonmonetary indicators of well-being centred on human flourishing and the satisfaction of universal needs. These are currently assessed by several organisations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union Commission, nongovernmental organisations and academia.<sup>62</sup>

There is a whole body of common eudaemonic themes developed by social scientists (Martha Nussbaum, Manfred Max-Neef, Len Doyal and Ian Gough and others) that approach human needs and capabilities.<sup>63</sup> Eudaemonic well-being

*"If societies' efforts would be focused towards the satisfaction of human needs [and not induced desires], it might well be possible to achieve universal well-being within planetary boundaries."*

gives primacy to consumption thresholds, at which our real needs have been satisfied and well-being is reached. Lina Brand-Correa and Julia Steinberger explain that eudaemonic well-being proposes a set of universal needs, where the central idea "of human need is that there are a

finite number of self-evident (i.e. universal, recognisable by anyone), incommensurable (satisfiable, irreducible and non-substitutable) needs." They argue that "If societies' efforts—and energy systems—would be focused towards the satisfaction of human needs [and not induced desires], it might well be possible to achieve universal well-being within planetary boundaries."<sup>64</sup>

Doyal and Gough propose a hierarchical approach to human needs, moving from universal goals, through basic needs to "intermediate: needs, or universal satisfier characteristics. These are structured in two basic non-substitutability

*Our task is to insist and persist that eudaemonic well-being is a very positive and enjoyable approach to secure a sustainable future.*

human needs categories organised as "Physical" and "Autonomy." The former includes nutritional food and clean water, protective housing, non-hazardous living and work environments, safe birth control and child-bearing, appropriate

health care, significant primary relationships, security in childhood, physical and economic security, and appropriate education. The latter pertains to mental health, cognitive understanding, and opportunities to participate. In their approach, basic needs are universal, while many intermediate satisfiers are cultural and temporally variable.<sup>65</sup> Our task is to insist and persist with the fellow members of our communities that eudaemonic well-being is a very positive and enjoyable approach to secure a sustainable future, far more rewarding than the current individualistic, atomised, alienated, materialistic, and unsustainable approach to well-being.

Lastly, the size of the world's population is also a key element to assess in the transition that we must embark on if we want a sustainable future. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change mitigation report repeatedly establishes in several chapters that the two drivers of carbon dioxide are economic and population growth.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, scientists' warnings point to population, economic growth, and affluence as drivers of planetary unsustainability.<sup>67</sup> It follows that

<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> ↪ Brand-Correa and Steinberger, "[A Framework for Decoupling Human Need Satisfaction From Energy Use](#)," 5.

<sup>64</sup> ↪ Brand-Correa and Steinberger, "[A Framework for Decoupling Human Need Satisfaction From Energy Use](#)," 2, 8.

<sup>65</sup> ↪ Ian Gough, "Climate Change and Sustainable Welfare."

<sup>66</sup> ↪ IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5.

<sup>67</sup> ↪ Wiedmann, Lenzen, Keyßer and Steinberger, "[Scientists' Warning on Affluence](#)."

population size is inextricably linked to the ideal of achieving a sustainable and dignified ethos for all living beings. Consequently, the very complex and ethical issue of population must be addressed by asking people to consider that for a successful trajectory of degrowth in energy consumption, decreasing the world's human population is paramount. Unquestionably, people will always have the right to decide if they want to contribute to our effort of saving our home by having fewer or no children, but they must become aware that reducing population size is a crucial element in our effort.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, to replace marketocracy we need to organise to build a new truly democratic paradigm where we forge a new social contract of direct democracy, where the people are always in the driver's seat, to control the public agenda. In this way, society can lay out the blueprint to carry out the plans to embark in a transition to replace the current paradigm with what I call the "Geocratic Paradigm," in pursuit of the welfare of people and planet and not the market. This, of course, must be carried out in every society. It is a daunting effort that will take decades to complete, assuming we still have time to accomplish this endeavour. Propitiously, there is a clear increase in awareness and activism carrying the

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necessary elements for the emergence of a global movement of aware and concerned citizens. But how do we build Geocratia?<sup>69</sup> This paper does not pretend to propose the entire process of building it. This is only possible through an ongoing working effort that will be defined by communities through democratic consensus and will produce

many different versions of truly sustainable geocratic structures. Nonetheless, to even aspire to materialise our dream, we need to organise and, by reaching consensus, coalesce into a global movement capable of transcending the status quo.

What is the first step? How do we break through alienation and consumerism and provoke critical thinking? We work to create a bottom-up grassroots movement, a network of people that starts locally and grows exponentially through positive cross-pollination within our sphere of influence and trust until we "planetise" the movement after reaching a critical mass. We need millions of small units of world citizens who gradually converge to form local, regional, and national assemblies. Once the movement is consolidated, we can organise a global movement through national assemblies. The World Social Forum could be transformed—or a new one to be created—if we coalesce enough to

*the people of the Global South must take a preeminent role, given their decades-long struggle to organise against the extreme exploitation and precarisation of their lives and depredation of ecosystems. In the same way, the youth must also take precedence in their involvement and contributions, because it is their future that is in extreme peril.*

redefine its mission to the concrete goal of saving our home by establishing a new Ecosocialist Contract proposed in Geocratia. The smallest unit of people can be best described as a "citizen cell." This is where we can start the entire process of de-alienation and catalytic conversion to produce critical thinking about the impending need to transition to a new eudaemonic paradigm that is truly sustainable for the well-being of

people and the planet. This must take place *globally*. Moreover, the people of the Global South must take a preeminent role, given their decades-long struggle to organise against the extreme exploitation and precarisation of their lives and depredation of ecosystems that have forced them to endure the ecosocial chasm imposed by the development of the global commodity supply chains and resource extraction processes for the benefit of global monopoly capital.<sup>70</sup> In the

<sup>68</sup> ↪ Álvaro J de Regil, "[Is Population Crucial for Degrowth?](#)," The Jus Semper Global Alliance, September 2022. See also Philip Cafaro, "[Population in the IPCC's New Mitigation Report](#)," The Jus Semper Global Alliance, December 2022.

<sup>69</sup> ↪ de Regil, "[Transitioning to 'Geocratia.'](#)"

<sup>70</sup> ↪ Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene*, 206.

same way, the youth must also take precedence in their involvement and contributions, because it is their future that is in extreme peril.

### Ecosocialism: degrowth with equity and eudaemonic well-being, the only way out

The only way to secure a sustainable trajectory for the future generations of all living things is by drastically and radically reducing our consumption of Earth's resources; an endeavour that many may still see as a utopian vision. However, they ignore, forget, or disregard that natural laws govern our planet and all its inhabitants—the laws of physics *vis-à-vis* the physics of capitalism—that transcend political, economic and philosophical thought.

*Capitalism is far more energy-intensive than any previous economic system, and it has wrought unprecedented ecological consequences that may threaten its very existence. It remains uncertain how long humanity can sustain capitalism's energy-intensive activities, but there is no doubt that the fantasy of endless growth and easy profits cannot continue. All dynamical systems must eventually come to an end.*<sup>71</sup>

Thus, the utopian vision of a new paradigm liberated from the shackles of marketocracy constitutes a very realistic and only solution to avoid the existential risk looming a just few decades ahead. If we refuse or fail to replace capitalism, the natural laws governing our home will send us to a rather dystopian end of our world as we know it.

Consequently, the only way out—if we still have time—is to steer our trajectory of doom towards an ethos where our

*The only way out is to steer our trajectory of doom towards an ethos where our consumption of Earth's resources flows in harmony with the planet's metabolic rhythm. Equally important, the degrowth of our consumption must take place with equity. Hence, the pursuit of the sustainable well-being must ecosocialist. No other social and ecological perspective can deliver a safe and just transition to new social structures.*

consumption of Earth's resources—our social metabolism—flows in harmony with the planet's metabolic rhythm. This means that we must embark on a trajectory of degrowth until we reach a sustainable stationary economic ethos. Equally important, the degrowth of our consumption must take place with equity. Hence, the pursuit of the sustainable well-being of people and planet must unequivocally be an ecosocialist approach. No

other social and ecological perspective can deliver a safe and just transition to new social structures.

The ecosocialist approach differs from other approaches proposing reforms in that they believe that transformations, such as decoupling GDP from environmental impacts, can be achieved in a capitalistic economy and so-called democratic centralized states. These approaches include the Promethean ecomodernism advanced by groups such as the WEF and the UN's sustainable development goals that disregards the inherent social and environmental injustices of continued economic growth. In great contrast, ecosocialism is anchored on true and direct democracy, with the aim to build geocratic paradigms where the earth governs us. A fascinating discussion is presented in a paper by Thomas Wiedmann, Manfred Lenzen, Lorenz Keyßer and Julia Steinberger, including a table assessing those different approaches banking on reformed but market-driven economic growth and the radical approaches of ecosocialism and eco-anarchism. The authors' concern is how any of these may help to overcome capitalist dynamics and their belief in the pivotal role of social movements, for "they can bring forward social tipping points through complex, unpredictable and reinforcing

<sup>71</sup> ↪ Kolasi, "[The Physics of Capitalism.](#)"

feedbacks and create windows of opportunity from crises.”<sup>72</sup> As discussed earlier, our proposal banks on grassroots social movements through the emergence of citizen cells until we build a critical mass with the power to force a new social contract to build the geocratic paradigm.

Because the fundamental premise of Geocratia is rescuing and preserving the planet at sustainable levels, we must place it at the center of our collective vision, around which we develop, organise and structure the fundamental pillars and

*We need a new social contract to take care exclusively of the people and the planet. This needs a complete break with capitalism. We need a new economy that cuts down its size by embarking on a strategy of degrowth until we achieve human and environmental sustainability in a steady-state economy of no growth, moving from the current hedonic to eudaemonic well-being.*

core components of new forms of human organisation. In this way, by detaching ourselves from seeing the planet as our war chest instead of our home, we can imagine how to care for it sustainably. To save ourselves by saving our planet, we need to create an ecological civilisation where we restrain our presence on the planet in keeping with the planetary boundaries necessary to allow nature to govern us,

instead of unrelentingly attempting to conquer natural laws. We must surrender to the planet, capitulate as conquerors, and let the earth take the lead and govern us.

Hence, we need a new social contract designed to build a radically different paradigm to take care exclusively of the people and the planet. In Geocratia, the market is only a vehicle for the trade of the goods and services deemed appropriate in the new design. This needs a complete break with the tenets of capitalism. Instead, we need a new economy in terms of its ecological footprint that cuts down its size by embarking on a strategy of degrowth in our consumption for decades until we achieve human and environmental sustainability and move into a stationary state or steady-state economy of no growth, as propounded by Herman Daly and others.<sup>73</sup> As earlier noted, the new social structures would move from the current hedonic well-being to unique eudaemonic well-being lifestyles. We would transition from societies of induced desires to societies of real needs, from being individualistic consumer units to collectivist societies that contribute and share the overall well-being of our communities and ecosystems.

Geocratia is structured in three pillars: true democracy, social justice, and environmental health.<sup>74</sup> All three pillars are interdependent. We cannot achieve one pillar without the others materialising. True democracy is direct democracy,

*To achieve environmental health, where we gradually but radically cut our consumption, we need to redistribute wealth in a balancing act that concurrently addresses both environmental health and social justice.*

which puts the citizenry in the driver’s seat of the public agenda. Decision-making flows in a bottom-up direction for all relevant matters affecting the sustainability of the new structures. And this all takes place in a fluid manner, constantly evolving and

adjusting as the agoras convene to propose, debate, and resolve the agreed-upon course of action on specific issues.<sup>75</sup>

Social justice empowers people to work under entirely different organisational and production arrangements from capitalism and earn a remuneration for their work as part of their contribution to the community’s well-being and its ecological systems. The remuneration is of a dignified nature, that enables people to fulfil all of their needs for food,

<sup>72</sup> ↪ Wiedmann, Lenzen, Keyßer and Steinberger, “[Scientists’ Warning on Affluence](#),” 12–15.

<sup>73</sup> ↪ Daly, *A Steady-State Economy*. See also François Schneidera, 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>74</sup> ↪ de Regil, “[Transitioning to ‘Geocratia’](#)” See also de Regil, “[The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism](#),” 20.

<sup>75</sup> ↪ de Regil, “The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism,” appendix A: “[Geocratia’s Key Components of Its Democratic Ethos](#).”



housing, clothing, energy, water, transportation, education, health care, and all the other inputs necessary to enjoy a dignified quality of life—but frugally and sustainably to achieve eudaemonic well-being.

To achieve environmental health, where we gradually but radically cut our consumption, we need to redistribute wealth in a balancing act that concurrently addresses both environmental health and social justice. This requires truly sustainable human development with radically different consumption levels. Thus, to meet the social demands of 3.6 billion people who endure dire or relative poverty, development policies affecting the entire population must be anchored on wealth redistribution and not on any growth as an end in itself. With the change from marketocracy to ecosocialist Geocratia, fundamental concepts in assessing activity in the different forms of social organisation (nation, province, municipality, town, community, etc.) are reconceptualise as we transcend from marketocratic consumer societies to sustainable and truly democratic societies. These concepts are development, progress and sustainability and are closely connected and interdependent.<sup>76</sup>

To elaborate on the imaginary of the new Geocratic Paradigm, I have assembled a nonexhaustive and fluid list of “Nineteen Core Components of a Planetary Sustainable Ecology,” previously developed for Geocratia in 2020. These are energy, economy, currency, commons contributions, degrowth and steady-state, enterprise, work and labor rights, markets, human rights and well-being and responsibilities, private property, high quality-of-life standards, a culture of frugality, poverty, population, food and land use, transportation, housing, locality, and technology.<sup>77</sup>

In congruence with a safe and just transition, what is the aim of our degrowth trajectory? Many assessments believe we must cut our ecological footprint by one-third by 2050 at the latest, if not much earlier.<sup>78</sup> New reviews stress that, at the very least, the final energy demand must be cut by 40 percent. A universal basic income, work remunerations, and

*In an ethos where the earth governs us as we increase consumption and, inevitably, the footprint of the dispossessed, the social strata with an unsustainable ecological footprint will have to reduce it drastically. Nonetheless, the result is a substantial decrease in the global human footprint on Earth.*

social security entitlements that secure dignified living standards for the dispossessed, if followed by drastically reduced consumption and waste by the affluent, would bend the curve of unsustainable consumption toward a sustainable consumption trajectory. Figure 1 illustrates how this trend might diminish our global footprint while achieving the equity outcome a living remuneration

represents by 2050.<sup>79</sup> Following a trajectory of degrowth until consolidating a steady-state economy, the affluent would need to cut their per capita hectare consumption by as much as three-fifths, while poor people would increase it by as much as threefold. In the “safe and just transition” to a Geocratic Paradigm, capital-labor remunerations must be gradually phased out as we successfully transition to an underlying planetary sustainable ecology. In an ethos where the earth governs us as we increase consumption and, inevitably, the footprint of the dispossessed, the social strata with an unsustainable ecological footprint will have to reduce it drastically. Nonetheless, the result is a substantial decrease in the global human footprint on Earth.

<sup>76</sup> ↩ de Regil, “The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism,” appendix C: “[Development, Progress, and Sustainability—Re-Conceptualising Their Meaning.](#)”

<sup>77</sup> ↩ de Regil, “The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism,” appendix D: “[Core Components of a Planetary Sustainable Ecology.](#)”

<sup>78</sup> ↩ Many environmental scientists consider that our footprint needs to be reduced substantially at a faster pace than by 2050. See David S. Wood and Margaret Pennoc, *Journey to Planet Earth. Plan B: Mobilizing to Save Civilization, Educators Guide*. (Washington, DC: Screenscope, 2010).

<sup>79</sup> ↩ Global Footprint Network: 08 A Time For change – [Global Footprint network annual report 2008](#) and [National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2019 Edition](#)

Figure 1: Hectare consumption per capita 2015 - < 2050

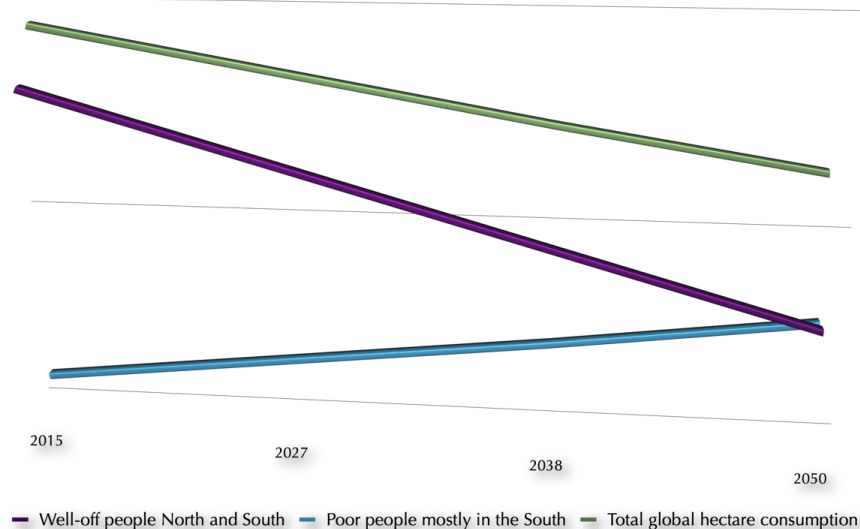


Figure 1: Chart elaborated by author paralleling the rapid reduction scenario of the Global Footprint Network that advocates the need to cut our energy consumption by about one-third by 2050. See: 08 A Time For change – [Global Footprint network annual report 2008](#) and [National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2019 Edition](#).

In closing, certainly there is hope that we can stop the planetary rift directly produced by capitalism, relentlessly imposed and instigated by the affluent classes in both the Global North and the Global South. However, to achieve this, we must break through the unbearable unawareness of our planetary crisis deliberately driven by the system's control of public opinion and its propaganda apparatus. It is essential to raise the world citizenry's consciousness and bring about a revolutionary movement towards an ecosocialist transition. In doing so, we must start by setting an example as much as possible by changing our lifestyles. Likewise, we must begin, each of us, by creating our citizen cell and asking all those who show concern for the state of our home to do the same. We must break the state of unawareness, complacency, and conformism, and organise to force governments into a new social contract in pursuit of the well-being of people and the planet. If we fail, we will be signing our complete demise in the not-too-distant future, well before the next century. Paraphrasing Joseph de Maistre's quote, "every nation has the government it deserves," we will get the future we deserve. If we do not break the shackles of capitalism and learn to take care of our home, we will reach the final cliff looming in the coming decades.

### Related links:

- The Jus Semper Global Alliance
- Monthly Review
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [Transitioning to “Geocratia” — the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#)
- Álvaro J. De Regil: [True Sustainability and Degrowth in the Citizens Imaginary](#)
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❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.

❖ **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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