

## An angry and painful warning

*Prologue to 'El final de las estaciones? (The end of Seasons?)', by Juan Bordera, Antonio Turiel and Fernando Valladares*

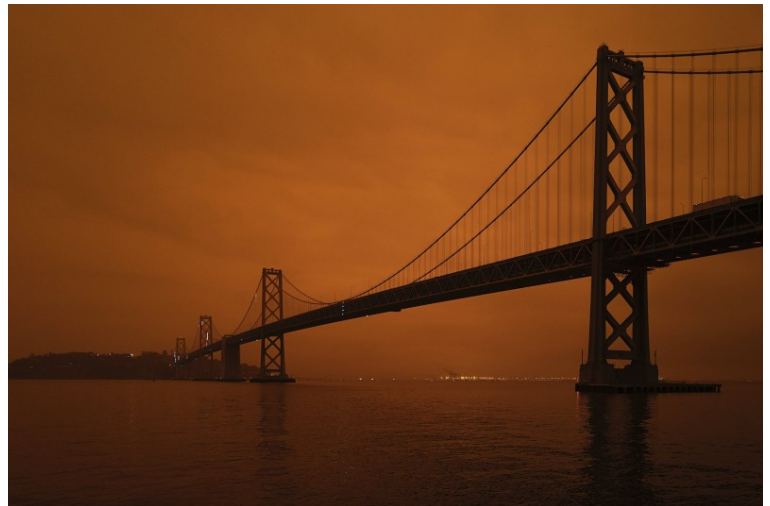
Yayo Herrero

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**W**e inhabit a strange world where the convictions and beliefs on which politics, economies and everyday lives have been built for centuries are in tatters.

In a culture such as the West, supposedly emancipated from the Earth and the rest of the living world, the treatment of "ecological problems" has been approached as an ethical and even aesthetic issue that did not concern the social order. In recent years, a large part of society has begun to realise, with incredulity, that what we call nature is an economic and political agent that cannot be negotiated with, and that what is at stake is how to survive with dignity in threatened territories. A new eco-social order is beginning to organise all political and social affiliations. Even those who deny climate mutation or limits reject the concepts but cannot stop talking about water, heat, epizootic haemorrhagic fever, fires, crop failures, rising prices of fertilisers, building materials or minerals, and supply instabilities.

We are part of a web of life in which everything is interconnected and, in so doing, generates the very conditions of life for all. It is not magic or mysticism. It is chemistry, thermal signals, interdependent relationships, and symbiosis, the result of a process of trial and error that began almost 4 billion years ago and whose main purpose is the maintenance of life.



La ciudad de San Francisco cubierta de humo debido a los incendios de California (EE.UU.) en septiembre de 2020. — Christopher Michel / Flickr

*The ecosocial issue is not a collateral aspect of politics or economics. The physical context defines and surrounds the entire social order*

There is no economy, technology, food and energy outside the web of life. There is no human life outside the web of life. However, the holy trinity formed by the combination of fossil energy, technology, and capitalism temporarily made

it possible to materialise the dream of disconnection at the cost of mutating territories into sacrifice zones and converting many human lives into mere resources or waste. Capitalism and technoscience allied to create the promise that everyone could live under the bounties of a way of life that was only physically viable for some.

The extractive and wasteful excess is causing uncontrolled mutations in human terms and the functioning of the biosphere. What we call the ecological crisis affects the whole of humanity. The ecosocial issue is not a collateral aspect of politics or economics. The physical context defines and surrounds the entire social and economic order and brutally strains an economic order with only one priority: growth and the expansive accumulation of capital. This book, which I have the good fortune to preface, is part of the complex mosaic needed to understand the moment we are living in and think about how to act in it.

The texts correspond mostly to reflections by Juan Bordera, Antonio Turiel and Fernando Valladares, accompanied by the voices of other authors such as Agnès Delage, Alejandro Pedregal, Alberto Coronel, Irene Calvé Saborit, Alfons Pérez, Marta García Pallarés, Javier de la Casa, Fernando Prieto, Ferrán Puig Vilar and Dennis Meadows himself. All these people, and, of course, the three main authors, are references when it comes to analysing the complexities and edges of the ecosocial crisis and the collapse, mutation, crumbling or long decline -perhaps not so long- of the dominant civilisational order. I call civilisation a complex society defined by its form of organisation, institutions and social structure, technology, the way it relates to available resources, and the utopias, longings and dreams it projects.

The texts that make up this book serve several purposes. Some are pedagogical, bringing people closer to the more complex dimensions of climate chaos, the limits of technologies such as green hydrogen or the generation of energy from fusion. Others try to relate phenomena such as war, migration or the genocide in Gaza. Not to establish a determination or causality between them but to show relationships and complex analyses that are often disconnected and simplifying.

*The dominant political order is being reorganised to manage the explosive contradictions of a global capitalism in crisis*

This foreword only mentions some aspects I have found most relevant and present in all the articles, although there are many more issues of interest and debate.

First, these texts warn of the global disaster that capitalist management of the ecosocial crisis could entail. The situation is serious in itself, but what is lethal is that the priority is to maintain growth and profits no matter what.

The dominant political order is being reorganised to manage the explosive contradictions of a global capitalism in crisis. It is moving towards forms of coercive social control. Authoritarian projects, some explicit and some more or less hidden, are emerging in response to the global crisis. Ruling elites try to keep those who feel fear, anger and unease under control.

Capitalism responds to the ecosocial crisis by creating a global police and surveillance state to control possible protests, popular revolts or insubordination with the status quo. The truth is that inequalities are becoming more acute, and the concentration of wealth and power is increasing. Humanity considers surplus to requirements to be growing by leaps and bounds. As a result, social control, surveillance and repression are becoming ever more urgent for the elites.

In the context of translimitation, globalised capitalism has "perfected" the mechanisms of appropriation of land, water, energy, animals, and minerals, as well as massive urbanisation, privatisation, and exploitation of human labour. Financial instruments, debt, insurance companies, and the web of international laws and treaties pave the way for dispossessing peoples, destroying territories, dismantling whatever public and community safety nets may exist, and criminalising and repressing resistance.

David Harvey's enunciation of accumulation by dispossession is joined by what William Robinson has called

*Gaza is an example of what elites do to control the humanity they consider surplus*

"accumulation by repression" in *Mano dura*: the global police state, the new fascisms, and 21st-century capitalism. Low-intensity and high-intensity wars, repression, militarised borders, wars on drugs, migrants, terrorism, racial and religious minorities? Social conflict becomes an opportunity to accumulate capital. The global police state becomes the source of profit.

Gaza is an example of what elites do to control the humanity they consider surplus. Britain colonised Palestine and ceded it to Israel, which militarily occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Until recently, the Palestinians were the cheap labour Israel used. The new strategy is the exploitation of just-in-time labour, who can be deported at any time and who have no economic or political rights. So Israel, with the support of the United States and the permissiveness of European governments - not their populations - exterminates and massacres civil society in a televised genocide.

A second relevant issue is disobedience and the repression of activism. The articles in this book make a strong case for civil disobedience as a strategy of struggle. In fact, some of its authors participate in movements such as Scientific Rebellion or Extinction Rebellion, which, together with Futuro Vegetal, are suffering judicial harassment and attempts to intimidate them, for the moment, through complaints and arrests.

One of them expresses:

*"We need waves of non-violent civil disobedience all over the planet to stop the heat waves that threaten nothing less than life in general. If anyone knows of a better and more effective method, it is wasting time to put it into practice. We will help."*

I would say that civil disobedience is critical, but so is the organisation of movements from below that, in addition to protest, are connected to reconstruction and self-management and that, at the same time, manage to function as an element of pressure on the institutions. Disobedience without a political arm or organisation can be co-opted by the far right. There are promising movements, but they are still far from what we need.

Thirdly, the commitment to degrowth is the proposal that runs through all the articles. In order to speak of degrowth, it is fundamental to determine what is to be degrowth. It is the biophysical dimension of social metabolism. It is not only that it must shrink because of a certain ethical and political will, but it will shrink

anyway because of the overcoming of biophysical limits. This question is forcefully and rigorously developed in this book.

However, in the context of material degrowth, for lives to be sustained, parts of the social metabolism need to grow and become more complex. Societies and communities maintained on relationships of reciprocity and mutual support, on co-responsible and shared sharing and care, with capacities for self-management and self-governance and densely connected to ecosystems and non-human living

*There will be material degrowth anyway. It may be a capitalist degrowth or a fair one*

beings are extremely complex. These complex relations have to be built and are antagonistic to the relations established in capitalist societies.

For me, degrowth is the material context in which complex political proposals that focus on guaranteeing dignified conditions of existence have to be developed. There will be material degrowth anyway. It can be a capitalist degrowth - which they are already beginning to name - and a monstrous one, which maintains elites that continue to accumulate and massively expel human and non-human life. Or it can be a just one, of free, just and democratic societies that organise material contraction under the principle of sufficiency (understood as the right to enough and the obligation not to have more than what is necessary), a strong redistribution of wealth and the objective of sustaining concrete lives with dignity and rights. It is to this just degrowth that the authors of the book aspire.

It obliges us to guarantee people's living conditions and the responsibility for covering basic necessities at the forefront, with the same importance and detail that we give to material contraction and the reduction of the collective ecological footprint. It is not just about aiming for a process of generalised individual frugality - the imposition of capitalism - but about claiming and building fundamental rights for many people who do not have them.

Without understanding the magnitude and complexity of the ecosocial crisis, we run the risk that the political way of dealing with the contraction of the material sphere of the economy will focus on indicators of greenhouse gas emissions or energy rates of return and forget that what we want to sustain, in addition to life as a whole, are concrete lives. If not, the ecological transition will be pure capitalism couched as green. Ecofeminist analyses and proposals, which are less present in these texts, have worked a lot on these questions and provide a conceptual scaffolding, which is essential to follow this path.

The text argues that "we need a proper plan of contraction, a slow and leisurely transition plan, with a lot of work in the field, a lot of trial and error, until we can make things work on the ground, in all areas, from the primary sector to the industrial and service sectors".

History is not yet written, but it is a crucial moment marked by the threats of far-right neoliberal totalitarianism, war and genocide. Rethinking life together in these strange times is possible, but it requires looking at where we are and forcing us to redefine the oldest questions of social justice and politics.

This book does not make an ominous prediction. It is an angry and painful warning, tinged with the pain and anger of those who love life and people, of those who care about all lives and are not resigned to discarding them.



### Related links:

- The Jus Semper Global Alliance
- Juan Bordera: [A handbook against climate denialism in the axial decade](#)
- Juan Bordera/Antonio Turiel: [Rational and Irrational Rationing in the Age of Energy Descent](#)
- J. Bordera, et al: [On How 'Lobbies' Water Down the World's Most Important Climate Report](#)
- Juan Bordera, Agnès Delage and Fernando Valladares: [The Time for Civil Disobedience is Here](#)
- Juan Bordera / Antonio Turiel: [The End of Abundance](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [The Unbearable Unawareness of our Ecological Existential Crisis](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [Transitioning to “Geocratia”: the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [Is Population Crucial for Degrowth?](#)
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- Jason Hickel: [On Technology and Degrowth](#)
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- Mariko Frame: [Strategies for Degrowth](#)
- Giorgos Kallis: [The Degrowth Alternative](#)
- David Roca Basadre: [The pressing priority of saving the Amazonia](#)

❖ **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: Yayo Herrero** is an activist and ecofeminist. Anthropologist, agricultural engineer and graduate in Social Education.

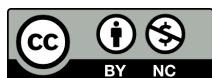


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❖ **Tags:** capitalism, democracy, fossil energy, green capitalism, degrowth, Global South.

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