

Ideas on a Post Growth Policy Package¹

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Reviving democracy and pools of life. The goal is that each pool of life² achieves a relative autonomy for goods, food and infrastructure production while avoiding authoritarian drift thanks to a democratic control of local institutions. Such a strong democratic renewal is allowed by an extensive decentralisation in decision-making authority, enabling direct democracy through citizens assemblies. These assemblies will define local needs and production levels, in direct connection with neighbouring pools of life and interacting with all the other pools of life via a national assembly³.

Empowering ourself. To break hindrances of growth-based capitalism such as the debt burden, we need to set up a debt moratorium through a citizen audit to determine the legitimate debt and cancel the illegitimate one⁴. Empowerment will also come from a co-operative or national management of banks⁵. In addition, by redesigning taxation and allowance⁶, limits may be set to incomes, and inequalities will deeply decline⁷.

Deciding collectively of our limits... Common goods such as forests and rivers may be managed by local communities with respect to smooth running principles⁸, in a continuous dialogue with similar communities for sharing experiences. The right to a healthy and liveable environment could follow the same rational than commons with a similar governance using individual and non-transferable quotas for greenhouse gas emission and material footprint⁹. A complementary policy would be to planning goods production while avoiding imitating failure examples from the past century¹⁰.

... to regain liberty and life quality. Relocation of production will bring new autonomy and stronger resilience to global perturbations. Third places could be encourage, in which citizens can train themselves to craft goods conception, using low tech production machines¹¹. Local currencies can be set up, allowing local and reasonable trade without speculation in the remaining market activities¹². De-commodification with end of advertising will free space and minds whereas work sharing¹³ will free time for private life as well as community life and direct democracy. Even if the material living standard will be lower¹⁴, the quality of life will be far better.

Toward a sober and cleaner energy production. The need for material and energy will decrease to enable a clean production of the remaining needs through renewable sources. Renovation of housing will be combined to the development of district heating networks. Small methanation units, shared between farms, will be set up throughout the country and supply biogas into the distribution network and to co-generation plants providing heat and controllable power. Low-tech and locally produced wind turbines and solar panels will supply the remaining needed power¹⁵. Rail network will supplant plane and car for long distance travel and freight. Cities will be gradually reshaped to a more human size, with

multifunctional districts avoiding many useless travels and releasing public area from car tyranny by promoting active transportation and public transports¹⁶.

Developing farming that makes sense. Farming will be reterritorialised to supply to local needs, accounting for changing diets toward less meat and less processed food. Farming will revive the purpose to get maximal calorie production compare to calorie expenditure, generalising agroecology to drastically reduce mechanisation and inputs while maximising yields. Farming will be the core of the pool of life structure by providing jobs, rebalancing population and supplying raw material and energy sources¹⁷.

Living in harmony with our environment. Areas affected by human activities will suffer less from disastrous practices with the end of chemical inputs and from population density with the population rebalancing. Furthermore, substantial jointly-managed areas could be set as free from human activities¹⁸ to leave room to biodiversity.

Appendix

¹**Foreword:** all mandatory policies to pass from the current state of a Western society to a physically and socially sustainable society correspond to political choices that should result from a deeply democratic process. The following proposals form a coherent set of seven policies but may of course be completed and modified according to the socio-environmental context of each country.

²**Pool of life:** it corresponds to an ecoregion or area with a particular climate, geology, soil that is large enough to constitute an almost autonomous unit. A pool of life also has multiple levels of organisation from municipal to regional.

³**Beyond traditional elections:** as direct democracy may be unrealistic beyond a given number of citizens, national assemblies members may be partly drawn and partly elected using the best democratic modalities, for instance election by majority judgement.

⁴**A debt moratorium:** the legitimate debt should then be repurchase from the bond market by citizens and companies. This will avoid debt owners to prevent any structural change by asphyxiate the country's economy by using increasingly high interest rates.

⁵**Acting on banking:** the end of investment banking together with the nationalisation or local co-operative management of commercial banking will also deeply affect financialisation.

⁶**A brief note about natality:** all financial incentive to subsidize natality could be stopped for new births and family planning could be encourage, to act as soon as possible on the demographic component of the human footprint which has a heavy inertia. Of course in Western societies, population growth is either very low or even negative, yet a decrease in population density could be benefit, but here again it is a fundamental democratic choice.

⁷**Tax examples:** taxation of companies domiciled abroad could be based on their local turnover to avoid social dumping. Multinational corporations would also be disadvantaged by a taxation of goods according to the socio-environmental standards of production and to the environmental footprint of transportation. This should break the hypocrisy of price signal but note that all the proposed policies could encourage an substantial flight of capital. Therefore a control of capital should be implement at a national scale and transnational agreements could reinforce this national control and limit the influence of tax heavens.

⁸**Governance principles for commons:** they were proposed by Elinor Ostrom: a clear definition of the unit considered and of the community in charge, exploitation rules consistent with the unit characteristics, participation of the whole community to rule elaboration and modifications, members in charge of monitoring must be accountable to community, non-monitoring members should conform to the monitoring role of the others, gradual sanctions and an easy to refer entity to mediate conflicts. In addition to those principles, delimiting common areas could be conducted by the assembly of the given pool of life together with national democratic institutions to avoid both pitfalls of local appropriation of common goods and exclusion of local resident by national authorities.

⁹**Individual quotas:** if quotas could be a very effective tool, assuming their are non-marketable, particular caution is required to avoid any authoritarian drift using quotas as a way to control life of all citizens. This policy should therefore be implemented with enough democratic safeguards.

¹⁰**Democratic planning:** planning should indeed be the result of a democratic process involving mixed assemblies composed by drawn citizens, researchers and professionals from concerned sectors. The idea is that for a given production sector, citizens with scientific knowledge about environmental limits, coming from Research and environmental organisations could propose a ecologically and physically framework in which citizens, drawn by lot, could define the main need of the society. Professionals will bring information of the technical feasibility of the societal need given the environmental limits.

¹¹**Third places:** user-friendly machines, easy to repair with renewable material, grouped into third places could allow everyone to make its own goods, if those produced to answer the main needs of society are not enough to fill some specific needs.

¹²**Currency:** with nationalised and/or co-operative banks (in particular the central one), the national currency can be transformed into a common currency between pools of life. This could also work for countries sharing a given currency such as the Euro.

¹³**Work sharing:** work sharing and decrease in labour productivity allow to give a job to everyone even with a decrease in the total production. An additional way to share job is to decrease the number of work hours with the age, smoothing the transition with retirement and allowing more experienced worker to train new ones.

¹⁴**Poverty vs. misery:** material living standards in western society will drop for most of people from the middle class to the upper class but the richest will clearly be more affected as the inequalities will also deeply decline. Overall, this will reduce the poverty which is a relative qualification induced by the existence of an upper class. Misery, the absolute qualification expressing lacks in fundamental needs will also be reduce by a far better sharing of the existing richness and production.

¹⁵**Power demand:** the current paradigm is that power generation should fulfil power demand at any time. However such a paradigm can be questioned. In that case, demand could become adaptable to the power network capacity and no longer the other way around. Between these extremes many possibilities also exist.

¹⁶**Biogas:** If it is not industrially produced, biogas can be a good vector of the energetic transition. In particular biogas for the remaining heat engines of public transport and shared cars does not require batteries or high power production.

¹⁷**Farming productivity:** agroecology, low mechanisation, and end of chemical inputs will reduce the hourly productivity. If we want to keep enough production to meet the local needs, this implies that more farmers will be needed and thus population will probably be redistributed from megalopolis to villages and small to medium cities. Furthermore, farming will loop with the other life activities in the pool of life as organic and green waste from living areas and farming can be

used for fertilisation and energy production via collective digesters.

¹⁸**Area free from human activities:** they are not impassable strongholds, excluding humans, but areas where people can walk and pass through but without exploiting resources or disturbing activities.