**SIMPLER WAY TRANSITION THEORY**

**An outline.**

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23.11.2019

The full 30 page account of this case is at

<http://thesimplerway.info/TRANSITIONLong.html>

Consumer capitalist society involves levels of production and consumption that are [far beyond sustainable](http:thesimplerway.info/LIMITS.htm). They cannot be kept up for much longer and they could never be extended to all people. This is the basic cause of all the major problems now threatening our survival, including resource depletion, environmental destruction, the deprivation of billions in the Third World, resource wars and declining cohesion and quality of life. Yet the supreme goal of this society is economic growth, that is, ceaseless increase in living standards, production and consumption.

In addition this society is built around [an economic system that is grossly unjust.](http://thesimplerwayinfo/ECONOMICSYcrit.htm) Its market system inevitably determines that the rich get most of the wealth produced, simply because they can pay more for it. As a result Third World resources flow into rich world supermarkets while four billion live on under $7.50 a day, and half the world’s wealth is now owned by about twenty people.

For more than fifty years a now vast literature has been documenting the fact that we have gone through the limits to growth. There is a strong case that rich world per capita resource use rates would have to be reduced by more than 90% to have levels all could share sustainably. This means there has to be massive degrowth.

The dominant belief that degrowth is avoidable because technical advance can find ways that enable continued growth while resource and environmental impacts are reduced…is wrong. There is a large literature on many studies which have found that this “decoupling” is not being achieved and is not in the least likely to be achieved; if there is increase in production and consumption, that is in GDP there will be increase in resource demand and ecological impacts. (Parrique et al., 2019.)

Consumer-capitalist society is not capable of solving these problems. It is far from even recognizing their nature and fundamental cause, which is the obsession with economic growth when we have already gone through the limits to growth. Even if this was seen, we do not have the institutions that could handle the required colossal transitions and restructurings, involving enormously disruptive impacts, write offs, resistance and conflicts. The limits mean that most industrial, financial, tourism, advertising and agribusiness activity etc. has to be phased out.

It is highly likely that within two decades we will see the onset of the most serious economic “depression” ever to have occurred, from which there will be no possibility of full recovery as the resources for that will have been consumed. For a decade the economy has struggled as worsening inequality has undermined ”effective demand” and resource and ecological costs have risen but the two factors that will trigger the knock out blow are the peaking of fracking generating a huge oil crisis and the collapse of the already massive global debt bubble. The ensuing time of great troubles could result in the die-off of billions, but the hope has to be that it will be a slow Goldilocks depression which is not so severe that it eliminates the possibility of any recovery but is sufficient to eliminate industrial, globalized resource intensive systems and jolt people into realizing that a very different path must be taken.

There is only one viable alternative path, and that is some kind of [Simpler Way](http://thesimplerway.info/THEALTSOCLong.htm). This must involve mostly small, highly self-sufficient and self-governing cooperative communities, using local resources to provide frugal but sufficient lifestyles mostly from local resources, within overall economies that are small in scale and do not grow. Outside these the national economies would be much reduced and focused on serving the towns and regions, gearing larger elements such as steel works and railways to providing the town economies with basic inputs. There would be no need to reduce socially valuable high-tech research, universities, medical technology etc.

The crucial point here is that only in small scale integrated settlements can the per capita resource demands be dramatically reduced. A [recent study](http://thesimplerway.info/EGGS.htm) found that egg supply via village cooperatives etc. can cut dollar and energy costs by 98% or more. For example kitchen scraps can go directly to poultry and wastes to gardens, eliminating transport, agribusiness, packaging etc. costs. [Another study](http://thesimplerway.info/RemakingSettlements.htm) found that outer city suburbs could more or less feed themselves. In Dancing Rabbit eco-village in Missouri per capita resource use rates are around 5 – 10% of national averages. (Lockyer, 2017.) Studies of Eco-Villages report high quality of life experience, mainly due to strongly supportive community and rich cultural life. (Lockyer 2017, Grinde 2017.)

Obviously at present the chances of this path being taken are negligible. But it is the path we must try to take; there is no other viable option. This means that we should work hard to raise awareness that a) we have to shift from consumer capitalist society; its capacity to provide for us is deteriorating and it is not sustainable, b) there is a very satisfactory alternative, c) therefore it is important to join those within Eco-Village, Transition Towns, Voluntary Simplicity and similar movements working to raise awareness of these themes.

Grinde, B., et al., (2017), “The Quality of life in intentional communities”, Social Indictors Research, March.

Lockyer, J., (2017), “Community, commons, and De-growth at Dancing

Rabbit Ecovillage”, Political Ecology,24, 519-542.

Parrique, T., et al., (2019), Decoupling Debunked. European Environmental Bureau. July. eeb.org/library/decoupling-debunked