

CALL FOR WORKS 2015: SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR ARTISTS

20th July 2015



ART TO INSPIRE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND BUILD A BETTER WORLD IN THE NEXT SYSTEM

In these pages we've put together an easy summary of some of the real world issues underlying our first brief and general call for works. In addition to the *Beyond Store* project, creative works received in response to this call may also be suitable to be curated or broadcast during our work on the UN Climate Change Conference this December (COP21). The specific creative briefs for Paris COP21 will be posted separately.

In these pages you will find a number of *key messages*, and *game changing ideas*, we invite you to translate in clear, inspiring or provocative ways, or explore in whatever creative form you choose. These have been boiled down from expert thinking about the root causes of related environmental and social crises – about system change. About the urgency and possibility of transitioning to a better, more meaningful and sustainable economy. An economy that serves human and natural flourishing, where progress is defined in more meaningful ways than GDP growth of a nation, or how many high status goods a person owns. These ideas raise *fascinating challenges for creatives* – what *value changes* and *mind shifts* need to occur? What will a day in a life be like? What *new aesthetics* emerge in response to the realisation *the old progress myths are broken*? How can art and/or agit-prop art persuade and provoke positive change?

If you are already concerned about issues of *climate change*, environmental collapse, *rising inequality*, break down of communities and social connectivity, *fatigue in the contemporary arts*, and the lack of a counter narrative to mantra of *hyper consumerism*, then you will already be familiar with some of the policy issues.

The Swarm is a new and growing network of artists and creatives, so it is neither our goal nor our place to try arrive at consensus or specify specific policy changes among the various veins of expert thinking. However, there is a general thrust of thinking about both the urgency of the problems and the inspiring possibilities to transition to better ways. We have tried to break it down into a breakdown of some key 'real life' aspects of the New System we need, the sustainable economy of well-being instead of endless consumption growth.

In this document, you will also find a list of accessible *web based resources*, short films and animations, and optional reading to deepen your research, inspire you, get your creative juices flowing, and deepen your research. Forever Swarm is



establishing a number of affiliations and partnerships with expert institutions in the fields of new economics, well-being, and climate change, so we can help you get up to speed even more if you get in touch.

KEY MESSAGES and ASPECTS OF REAL LIFE IN THE POST-GROWTH ECONOMY

Below is a short list of key messages and 10 aspects of life in the new economy we need. It represents our first greatly simplified attempt to boil down what is common among the various schools of academic and expert thought about alternatives to our economic system. These schools of thought include ‘de-growth’ ‘steady state economies’ and ‘beyond GDP’ ideas – which are about new ways for nations to define and measure economic progress in terms of human and environmental well-being, instead of the idiocy of a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) number. In this short list we’ve not focussed on the ‘how to get there’ parts of the literature, but rather on some of the key aspects of what everyday life would be like. We believe this is an important part of *engaging people’s hearts and minds*.

The following are a couple of *top line or overarching general messages* that we, and our partner organisations who campaign for change, need the arts to reflect to ordinary people on the street. That is followed by a more substantive list of *10 aspects of life in the new economy* that we hope you will explore, convey clearly, or bring to life.

Top line, overarching messages:

- *There **are** alternatives to the current economic system.*
- *Endless consumption growth is a cancer. In the rich world, continuing to prioritise economic growth at all costs is not delivering more happiness, but is stealing your time and well-being, and costing the Earth.*
- *We have to fix the climate change crisis and it is an opportunity to build a happier, fairer, and more sustainable world.*



Beautiful disruption. Game changing ideas. 10 aspects of a better life in the new economy of well-being:

- 1) *In the new economy, time is honey. More pleasure time and work sharing will be promoted to support the transition beyond economic consumption growth.*
- 2) *In the new economy, the successful people will be those who have uncluttered their lives from status goods, but enriched themselves and their communities.*
- 3) *In the new economy, fossil fuels will be left in the ground. In a warming world, the old generation of Oil Men will be cursed. The positive business and investments that will be supported and valued will be those that advance the new sustainable economy of well-being.*
- 4) *With improved equality, and the social link between consumption and status broken, the 'good jobs' may change to become those that are pleasurable or meaningful.*
- 5) *In the new economy, people will no longer be referred to as 'consumers' and will have a chance to become citizens once more. Citizens will be more involved in helping decide the purpose of an economy that serves everyone, and the positive, sustainable vision for the future.*
- 6) *Communities and sustainable cooperatives will grow stronger through community renewable energy projects, local food production and community currencies (time banks, skills sharing schemes, valuing unpaid work).*
- 7) *An explosion and rebirth in arts and popular culture will emerge in response to the realisation the old story is over. (Swarm Art.) In exchange for a new pleasure seeking and encouraging leisure time, people will be asked to reduce their impact on the environment and embrace new ways of travelling, eating and living.*
- 8) *In exchange for a new pleasure seeking and encouraging leisure time, people will be asked to reduce their impact on the environment and embrace new ways of travelling, eating and living.*
- 9) *Access to nature and green spaces is highly prized in the New Economy, understood as central to mental and physical health. Measures are taken*



to make access more equal. Care for nature and for each other takes on moral force.

10) New heroes and festivals will be recognised. They will be people or organisations that make great contributions to solving the climate crisis, or events that inspire values central to the New Story.



WEBLINKS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND INSPIRATION

The depth of the political capture by a subset of big corporate interests is revealed when we see to what extent they have succeeded in convincing people that there are no alternatives to new fossil fuel extraction, the model of economic consumption growth, or the austerity drive. To learn more about the refreshing expert thinking on alternatives, check out some of these web based resources:

New Economics Foundation

Relating to Swarm game changing idea 1, watch in particular their *21 hour working week proposal*, and summary video to watch here: <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/21-hours>

See other resources on their webpage to find out about the aspects of life in the new economy –such as universal child care, or universal basic income as part of the solutions towards more meaningful jobs, and avoiding unemployment.

The Story of Stuff

Great and easily explained project with animation. Watch it here: <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-solutions/>

The Great Transition

Find out what de-growth really means here:

<http://www.greattransition.org/publication/the-degrowth-alternative>

Donella Meadows Institute

Find out about the Limits to Growth – <http://www.donellameadows.org/>

Next System Project (US)

Impressive line-up building a counter narrative in the US: <http://thenextsystem.org/>

Carnegie Trust

Measuring what matters project. <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/enterprise-and-society/measuring-progress,-measuring-wellbeing>

The Minimalists



You may have seen these guys on youtube. Interesting project, relating to Swarm game changing idea 2 – uncluttering your life, unplug to think for yourself, and being richer with less stuff. <http://www.theminimalists.com/>

The En-Rich List

Relating to Swarm idea 10 – the need for new heroes, rituals and festivals, see this project –an honour role celebrating real heroes – people whose contribution cannot be measured in dollar wealth. <http://postgrowth.org/connect/enrich-list/>

Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity

Recently launched, but one to watch! Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity

<http://www.sustainableprosperity.org.uk/>

To find out about community actions and grass roots examples of communities or regions implementing aspects of the new system, visit:

Network of Well-Being

www.networkofwellbeing.org

Transition Towns

<http://www.transition-europe.org/> for Europe, or in the US:

<http://transitionus.org/>

Scottish Isle of Eigg

First 100% renewable energy grid in the world: <http://isleofeigg.net/>



POLICY EVIDENCE – WHY SYSTEM CHANGE IS URGENT, and WHY THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Many people recognise that humanity is not living within the limits of our planet. A much smaller pool of people have the courage to question whether our economic system, and the values it imparts, is even compatible with preserving a healthy planet. One of the leading experts on the case against further economic growth in the rich world is Professor Tim Jackson, University of Surrey and former head of the UK Sustainable Development Commission. In his book *Prosperity Without Growth*, (2010) he explodes the myth that endless economic growth is compatible with avoiding dangerous levels of climate change. Although governments talk about (but rarely deliver) ‘green growth’ and ‘decoupling’ growth from environmental harm, they are locked in to the dogma of growth, which has become the god of our time.

Jackson and many others find that, taking a global view, there is no equitable global scenario that lets us continue relentless growth and avoid dangerous climate change. These ideas and analyses are in many ways not really new - many of the messages of *Limits to Growth*¹ Report that first lobbed these issues into the political arena in the early 1970s, have been ringing true more acutely than ever in recent years. In June this year, Pope Francis made a powerful moral call for system change and rethink of the financial system, attacking the destructive gods and distracting stories of shareholder profit and economic growth.² Nevertheless, to question the logic of endless growth is still regarded as heretical in the political mainstream.

Jackson’s work find that the projected 9 billion people by 2050, and projecting economic growth rates that would allow everyone on the planet to aspire to an income level similar to the average EU citizens today by around 2050, the average carbon intensity of every dollar would need to be 55 times lower than it is today – in only 35 years time!³ If income growth continues in developed nations as well,

¹ Club of Rome, (1972). Free pdf available at <http://donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Limits-to-Growth-digital-scan-version.pdf>

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

³ Professor Tim Jackson, ‘Prosperity Without Growth,’ (2010), at 81



then the average carbon intensity of every global dollar in 2050 would need to be 130 times lower than it is today in order to control greenhouse gas concentrations to levels recommended by the world's leading scientific authority on climate change – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to preserve a fair chance of avoiding dangerous climate change. This is unlikely to be achievable.

Whereas the famous 'Stern Report'⁴ of 2007 found that stabilising GHG emissions could be possible while only reducing global GDP growth by 1% by 2050, that report was based on greenhouse gas reduction levels that were always (and particularly now) regarded as inadequate.⁵ He later revised his recommendations, as climate change was happening faster than previously anticipated, finding a cost of 2% of global GDP growth by 2050. While these numbers appear small, it is important to remember that numbers like 2 to 3% are already the difference between economies that grow and those that do not. Therefore, despite the fact it is known that failure to act on climate change will cost far more than acting now, both governments and financial markets remain locked into short term cycles, and the 'dilemma of growth' exists even in more optimistic scenarios like those of the Stern Report.⁶

Well-Being and Happiness – shouldn't that be the point?

Even if it did turn out to be achievable to fix climate change, avert other pressing issues of ecological collapse and overconsumption, while continuing growth based economies, there are many other reasons why we need to search for a more meaningful system. From the perspective of *human well-being and happiness*, economic growth in its current form, (measured primarily by GDP, which is just a measure of how 'busy' the economy is, and says nothing about whether it is busy in the right ways) is not making us happier or more well in many

⁴ HM Treasury, (2006), The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change. Free copy available at:

http://www.wwf.se/source.php/1169157/Stern%20Report_Exec%20Summary.pdf

⁵ The Stern Report was based on GHG reduction target of 550 parts per million (ppm) mitigation scenario. It is now increasingly recognized that even 450ppm is inadequate as a target.

⁶ As one leading example, see energy economist Deiter Helm



developed nations. Across the political divide, many people agree that we are experiencing a 'social recession' and the collapse of community in the Western world. Studies point to increasing levels of anxiety, decline in work morale and higher rates of depression and suicide.⁷ They also point to loss of trust across society and increasing political apathy.⁸ More and more people feel that consumerism and the image driven, competitive and individualistic values it promotes, are now detracting from the 'good life'. Even our sleep is at risk. Working hours are on the increase in many developed countries, and some studies suggest we get less hours of sleep than our grandparents generation. Mindless pursuit of growth at all costs comes at a big cost to society - "economic growth without social progress results in lack of inclusion, discontent, and social unrest."⁹

One way of thinking about what must change is that we need to separate the ends (what we want the economy to deliver, and what sustainable progress means) from the means (the system, how to organise that economy). The huge problem with our current situation is that the system (economic growth) has become the goal in itself.

So why is everyone afraid to challenge the god of growth?

It's not just because of vested interests of the rich and powerful, although that is clearly a big part of it. And it's not only because growth sounds like a positive word and is the dominant story about progress in our era. Unfortunately, it is also because the system we have built means that things become unstable if too many of us simply stop consuming as much (i.e. de-growth) without a managed transition plan, and/or without increasing the resilience of communities. In capitalist economies, if too many of us stop buying stuff, this can lead to

⁷Jonathan Rutherford, cited in Tim Jackson, above, Tim Jackson, above footnote number 3

⁸Jesse Norman, et al, (2007) *From here to fraternity: perspectives on social responsibility*
London: Centre Forum

⁹Michael E. Porter, Scott Stern, Michael Green (Social Progress Imperative) available at <http://www.networkofwellbeing.org/resources-database/entry/social-progress-index-2014>



recession, which can quickly lead to widespread unemployment (and a loss of investment in low carbon technologies we need.)

What are the solutions?

Some people talk about a more regulated economy where growth continues but is only allowed in certain sectors that do not significantly harm the planet (such as service sectors, and some cultural sectors), while sectors with high environmental impact are required to stabilise or get smaller. Other people talk about 'steady state economies', the transition towards a system that aims for balance, rather than perpetual growth. Others advocate something called 'degrowth' – a government managed shrinking of overall economic activity in developed countries, a managed plan towards prosperity that does not depend on economic growth.

For us in *Forever Swarm*, the important thing is to make space for wide debate about what our economy should really be for. It's not only about the emergency question of how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and live within ecological limits, it is also a question of how can our society be structured so that the economy serves sustainable, human happiness, meaningful lives and well-being now, for future generations, and for all life on Earth. A new progress story.

To touch on a few specifics - part of the solution is undoubtedly about values shift at grass roots level. We need artists and culture makers to help spark a profound mind shift from the man or woman on the street, and change the destructive logic about consumption = status. Lifestyle and values shifts advocated by the emerging *well-being* and *transition town* movements are also good for the environment and usually have the benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These include carpooling or taking time to walk, sharing energy intensive equipment between neighbours, growing community gardens for local food production, reduced waste and reduction in the purchasing or turn-over of high status products. Scaled up and thinking long term, collective uptake of certain well-being practices and values (such as work sharing/a shorter working week) could also help support future government led structural transitions to so called 'low growth' or 'steady state' economies without widespread unemployment.

But grass roots changes by citizens won't be enough on their own to break the cycle we are locked into. Part of the solution will therefore also have to involve managed transitions put in place by governments. These could include sharing work hours across the population, leading to a shorter working week and more



leisure time.¹⁰ Literature on this part of the ‘solution’ says that in some countries a shift towards more equal income earning across sectors may also be needed to allow transition to a ‘steady state economy¹¹’ without widespread unemployment, and without the sky falling in.¹²

In turn, governments are unlikely to address these systemic questions fast enough unless we see broad based campaigns and social movements pressuring them to do so. These ideas of *system change* need to politicise.

Some governments are already experimenting with alternative ways to define and measure economic progress. Revealing the meaninglessness inherent in the main way we measure economic progress in the developed world, (Gross Domestic Product growth,) you have probably already heard that the Kingdom of Bhutan uses ‘Gross National Happiness’ as its key index of economic progress.¹³ Other countries such as Finland have also experimented with a broader and more environmentally sustainable set of economic progress indicators.

*There are therefore many reasons why we need to plan for a great transition towards a system that promotes prosperity without growth.*¹⁴ Towards a more meaningful, sustainable, notion of prosperity.

Talk to us – get in touch to discuss and test your ideas, chat about the environmental or policy issues, or what artistic responses you are thinking about and how we might feature and promote them: david@foreverswarm.org

¹⁰ Tim Jackson, Prosperity Without Growth, above, footnote number 3

¹¹ See also, Centre for the advancement of Steady State Economies, www.steadystate.org

¹² Victor, Peter (2008) ‘Managing Without Growth’. Available online at http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/Peter_Victor_thinkpiece.pdf

¹³ See youtube interview Director of Gross National Happiness Centre, Bhutan. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtDCq9WBhyQ>

¹⁴ See generally, New Economics Foundation, *Towards A New Social Settlement* available at <http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/towards-a-new-social-settlement>