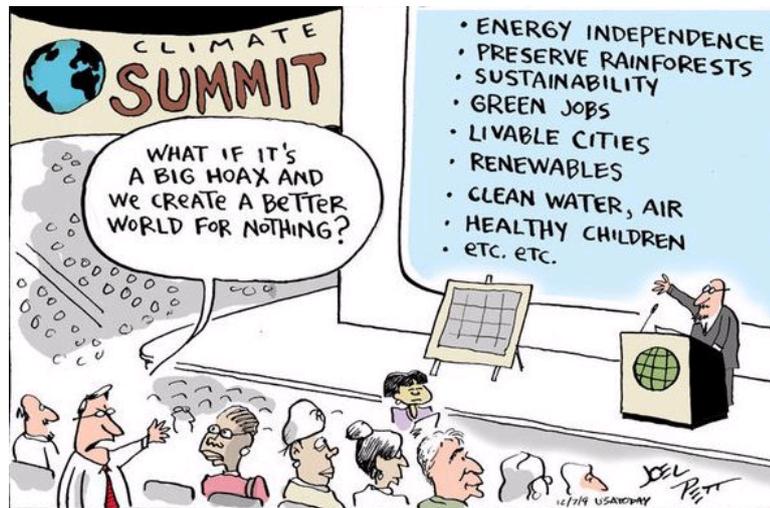


Why we need a Green New Deal



I. Change as necessity and opportunity

1.1. Taking up the challenge

Just imagine every human being would live and consume today the same way as an average European citizen does: our planet would need to be three times as large as it is¹. At the same time, two billion people live on less than 2 dollars a day, half of them suffering from hunger. In a nutshell, this outlines the two major challenges facing humanity in the 21st century: living within the confines of the physical limits of our planet and ensuring each human being enjoys decent living standards.

Our model of development is producing huge paradoxes. In developed countries, we have never been so rich in terms of material wealth. Yet, our societies are sapped by the destruction of natural resources, growing structural inequalities and are made increasingly vulnerable to major disruptive events, such as recurring natural disasters or man-made crises, as epitomized by the near-collapse of our financial system in 2008. Dozens of millions of people are unemployed while others work too much, both situations provoking massive rise of depression and stress. Obesity is the new illness here whilst at the same time, one billion people are starving in the South. Europe has enjoyed economic growth for most of the time since World War II, mainly thanks to technological progress and a rising labour productivity, yet this growth has decreasingly been correlated with job creation or with the reduction of inequalities: the benefits have been more and more unequally redistributed between rich and poor², between capital and labour, and between regions.

¹ The ratio would be five times according to US living standards, and that does not take into account the fact that the Earth's population will grow to 9 billion by 2050!

² According to the United Nations, "as economies expanded, global employment rose by 30 per cent between the early 1990s and 2007 alongside a redistribution of income away from labour, with the

Our model of development is also clearly unsustainable from an environmental perspective. With a population of 9 billion by 2050, all aspiring to the same level of affluence achieved in the OECD nations, the economy would need to be 15 times its current size of this one by 2050 and 40 times by the end of the century. The social and environmental impacts of such a scenario are hardly imaginable, inside and outside Europe. People and nature are more interdependent than ever. Besides, it has been proven that the poor wherever they are, are suffering first and the hit the hardest by ecological degradation³. These facts show that in order to let every human being flourish, we have to find a better balance in the relation we have with natural environment and with each other

Finally, our model of development is increasingly vulnerable and unstable. The recent financial crisis, which started by the burst of the American housing market bubble spilled over to the whole world. Despite (or sometimes because of) technological advances, our society remains very vulnerable to natural events such as droughts, storms, floods and the like. The recent eruption of the Icelandic volcano, which paralysed most of the air traffic in Europe for several days, reminds us that our economic system cannot pretend to have freed itself from the conditions of nature. This lack of resilience is also noticeable for example in the repetitive spread of viruses within our globalised food supply chain (avian flu, mad cow, etc), or more recently by the gigantic oil spill by the BP rig in the Gulf of Mexico. These flaws are not a fatality but rather the result of a model increasingly relying on technology which enhances speed and interconnectedness, and trusting the so-called "invisible hand" of the markets to ensure self-regulation. This exacerbates the impact of events that would otherwise remain limited in scope and time.

On top of that, we are facing the worst economic and social crisis since World War II, together with the food, energy and climate crises. The scope and simultaneity of these crises is not accidental. They are just the multiple manifestations of the limits of our model of development and the mechanisms that support it.

To face these challenges, pursuing business as usual, even "greening" it, will not be sufficient. Technology will not magically save us from the inexorable depletion of natural resources. Inequalities, unemployment and poverty are not going to disappear if we blindly continue to strive for short-term economic profit. The change we need is structural. We need no less than a paradigm shift, setting the development of human societies on a different course, based on different values. We need to take up the challenges, and this radical transformation has to start now if we want to avoid the collapse of human societies on this planet. The good news is: this change is also an opportunity!

Engaging in a global Green New Deal is our response to the global challenges of the 21st century, by taking this historic opportunity to tackle the root causes of the major systemic crises we are undergoing. The shift we propose aims at kick-starting the urgently needed transformation to a post-carbon, resource-efficient economy, allowing the creation of millions of new green jobs. A GND is however not just a

share of wages in total national income (GDP) declining significantly".
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28590&Cr=INCOME&Cr1=ILO>

³ <http://www.ifad.org/events/past/hunger/envir.html>

wide-ranging program for green investments, technologies and industries; it is a process that aims at fundamentally transforming the way we consume and we produce, at changing the way we relate to people and the planet. The problem is not that our growth is not green enough, but that the direction our development model has taken since the first industrial revolution is neither just nor sustainable. We need to change the engine of prosperity and to redefine where we are going. We don't want a perpetual and unstable *fuite en avant*, which is fed by the persistence of inequalities, the quest for short-term profit, the destruction of natural resources and the worship of material stuff. We want an economy that serves the needs of all the people, across the planet, today and tomorrow. Engaging in a Green New Deal is allowing ourselves to find and put again meaning in our life, and to follow a collective and individual direction that allows prosperity for everyone.

1.2. Choosing a life worth living

Where do we start from? Let's first ask ourselves which kind of life we want to live while, taking into account the common good, being affordable for mankind. On the one hand, the purpose of the GND project is to allow everyone to be able to live a life worth living, to provide the conditions and opportunities for personal and collective flourishing. However, this doesn't mean that there is only one single "good way of life". Autonomy and self-determination are at the heart of the green philosophy. Plurality in our lifestyle should be preserved as they reflect the diversity of the society. On the other hand, this autonomy has to be balanced with responsibility towards the planet and future generations, but also towards our fellow human beings. Neither social justice nor the preservation of our planet are negotiable. A good life can only be conceived within a framework where natural limits are accepted and with social justice as a central condition.

Summing up, the key question we face is how can we adapt our behaviours and lifestyles so to reduce our footprint on the planet while simultaneously promoting equity and improving our quality of life?

One thing at least is clear: we cannot genuinely answer this question within our current system, and the ideology that supports it. The current economic and social systems that shape our lives are not neutral. We live in a world where an overextended financial sector imposes its values of short-term profit making to the entire economic sphere, which in turn puts pressure on human beings and atrophies long-term, social and cultural projects and values; the whole thing depending on a careless exploitation of natural resources and placing climate and biodiversity in danger. Inequalities haven't stopped rising and exploitation, especially between the northern and southern parts of the world is sadly still going on. Such logic inevitably leads our societies to collapse. We therefore need to reverse the hierarchy between the different spheres of our lives and follow new guiding principles. A basic tenet of this logical turn-around is that we need a system where finance supports the economy which is itself geared toward the well-being of human societies and their environment.

1.3. From a narrow vision of economic growth to a broader understanding of prosperity

Conventional wisdom tells us that higher incomes should mean richer lives, and an improved quality of life for all of us. Everyday discourses of politicians and media are focused on the evolution of one single indicator: GDP. When GDP grows, we are all supposed to get happier, and if goes down, it's a catastrophe. But is this compass genuinely reflecting on the progress and well-being of our society? We believe that it is not the case.

First, GDP accounts as a progress several negative developments of society. GDP does not indeed differentiate between production and expenses that contribute to genuine improvements in human, social and environmental well-being, and those that are destroying it. Whether money is spent on building houses or weapons, on developing a green or a highly polluting technology, on going on holidays or curing a depression, it is always translated as “+” in GDP. The sole pursuit of GDP growth can therefore not be the main objective that will bring about a sustainable society. Over the last quarter of a century, this has become abundantly clear as GDP growth has failed to deliver in terms of reducing inequalities, on creating quality and meaningful jobs, and most certainly on preserving our natural resources.

Second, well-being, development and progress cannot be reduced to the single dimension of economic wealth. Of course, a certain level of material wealth is a crucial condition of our prosperity, and this is obviously true in those parts of the world (and of our societies) that haven't yet reached decent standards of living. However, we believe that human beings are far more complex than that. Happiness, well-being and fulfilment do not depend on endless economic growth and material wealth, but rather on contented families, strong communities, meaningful work, and personal freedom. A good life also entails that every one should be able to choose to learn, to play, to develop innovative spirit, to be active in its local community, to keep strong family and friends' ties, to have time to work, and time to think. Happiness implies the exploitation of every dimension of our personal development. General well being is when everyone is able to do so, in his or her own way.

It is therefore only if we pursue a broader and multidimensional objective – prosperity – than the sole pursuit of GDP growth that we will make our development sustainable and drive towards well-being. This perspective allows the reconciliation of human flourishing through autonomy and self-determination with the preservation of our environment.

Accepting to take into account existing physical limits, recognizing the complexity and diversity of our prosperity – specifically that it cannot be reduced to a solely material dimension – is also a condition for allowing others to flourish. At global level, prosperity also means that our model of development needs to stop relying on the exploitation of the poor and the planet. If a small privileged part of the world has been able to overconsume the planet it is because the vast majority does not enjoy its fair share of its resources. This situation is neither ethically acceptable nor politically sustainable. We need to free up space and resources to allow everyone to flourish.

1.4. Bringing about change

The Green New Deal is a transformational endeavour that will create space for everyone to live, work, consume, relate, move in the respect of the limits of the planet. This will only be possible if we combine structural and policy change with a personal and collective transformation of the way we produce, consume, move, etc.. To meet those challenges, there is no one single and simple solution, rather a multitude of initiatives and policies which are complementary to each other.

Change cannot be thought in a centralized way and then be executed top-down. It happens thanks to citizens, associations, companies, local communities, etc. undertaking small steps individually and collectively.. However, we can not satisfy ourselves with simple small changes. Changing light bulbs or biking more often are important first steps but will not be sufficient. They are calling for more and deeper steps.

Individual change and private initiatives are not an alternative to government action. Both are necessary and complementary. We, as Greens, are strongly committed to policy change. We want to provide "enabling policy frameworks" which will help and support people, groups of people and enterprises engaging in change and will make these transformations systemic. We also want to provide incentives, which will foster and accelerate change. This includes major changes in our taxation system as well as in the direction and objectives of public spending and investments. Enabling frameworks make local initiatives easier, while grassroots initiatives make general principles and laws come alive. They may also, pushing from the bottom to the top, generate new legislation in a virtuous circle. Governments at all level, from local to European, should be involved in it.

Change starts here and now but a ready-to-use master plan which could be applied straight away is neither feasible nor desirable. While we have ideas as to the general direction our world should be taking, the form and the means of the transformation have to be invented all along the way. Therefore, we will need to mobilise all our material and intellectual resources, our imagination and creativity, our altruism but also our entrepreneurship to bring about a change which is genuinely tackling the foundations of our society. "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them" said Einstein. Innovation will be central, but this is not restricted to material and technical innovation. Social innovation is also crucial as we have to rethink and re-invent our way of living together.

II. Four dimensions for a model change

Our system is shaped by the way we relate to the others and to things, and by the way we comprehend time and space. Values, norms and habits in these relations are the drivers of our society and determine our model of development. If we are serious about changing radically the direction and the purpose of our society, we need to go back to the foundations of these relations and put them into question. From there, change can be applied to many sectors and areas of our lives and declined in policy changes that cover various dimensions.

This model change shall rely on two crucial principles: the recognition and promotion of common goods and strong income redistribution. To reach a shared and sustainable prosperity, solidarity among human beings is paramount. First of all, the existence of common goods needs to be acknowledged and enhanced. Lots of our resources are and should stay public and free. It is not normal that nowadays private companies are able to patent a living organism such as a plant and then make profit out of it. Biodiversity, water, etc should remain common goods. Second, no deep paradigm shift can happen if it is not backed by strong income redistribution. This is all the more true as climate change consequences deepen inequalities that are already created by our social and economic system. These two premises run through four dimensions we identified as central for change: our relation to people, things, time and space.

2.1. Our relation to people

Human beings are equal, wherever they live, today or in the future. As social justice is at the heart of a prosperous society, we need to make sure the challenges and benefits of the transformation towards a sustainable society are fairly distributed. Fighting inequalities at all levels is central to our project. It is a prerequisite to establish new structures that provide equal opportunities and chances for people to flourish, and to participate meaningfully and creatively in the life of society,

North-South inequalities are the most obvious ones. We need to change the relations that link people from Northern and Southern hemispheres, pursuing at the same time solidarity and autonomy. Reducing consumerism is a first way to do that, as goods consumed in the North are often the result of exploitation of workers in the South. This has to be coupled with the empowerment of workers and civil society in the South.

We also need to avoid an imposition of cultural models that would degrade living conditions in the South. Among our societies, we should favour a fruitful coexistence between people with different cultural and ethnical backgrounds. Multiculturalism, understood as the right of people to choose their way of life, must be endorsed.

Moreover, rich countries have an ecological debt to poorer countries that needs to be acknowledged and paid back. Rich countries have built their wealth upon the exploitation and destruction of natural resources outside their countries, most of the time also exploiting people that are now the ones being the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Ecological debt also exists towards the future generation. Besides, as the Stern report underlined, acting now will cost less than delaying the fight. Everyone will be affected by climate change, the poorest being hit the soonest and the hardest. We must, as rich countries take our responsibilities towards the poor and the future generation.

Fighting inequalities is also central to dismantle the perverse incentives for destructive status competition in our rich societies. According to studies, people would be more inclined to live in a poor society where they would be better well-off than others, rather than in a rich society where they would be less well-off. To a great extent, once they have provided for the necessities of life, it is relative rather than

absolute income that matters. Consumerism is driven by emulation and status competition, social appearance and position. Similarly, people are striving towards equality through an endless quest for more consumption. It follows that if we pursue policies to reduce inequality, we will also have a positive effect on consumption and therefore, on the balance which binds us with the environment.

Finally, the Green New Deal offers an opportunity to combine the ecological transformation of European societies with better work-life balance in which men and women equally share responsibilities in public and private domains, in economic, political and family life. Gender balance is indeed a must for any society. 'The female half of the world's human capital is still undervalued and under-utilised the world over. As a group, women – and their potential contributions to economic advances, social progress and environmental protection – have been marginalised. Achieving gender equality would benefit economic development, reduce poverty, enhance societal well-being, and help ensure sustainable development in all countries, mainly through a better mobilisation of the human potential of societies.

2.2. Our relation to things

Resources on planet Earth are only available in limited quantities. And yet, human beings are consuming so much of them that our entire planet is not sufficient to sustain such a level of consumption. The image is well-known: if everyone were to consume like a European, we would need 3 planets. We urgently have to lead the way in Europe, by consuming both better and less, carefully taking into consideration the specificities of each area of consumption.

First of all, we must steer away from consumerism. This doesn't mean that we want to stop any kind of consumption. Even in a society with a sustainable ecological footprint, we will continue to consume. Yet, we have to get away from the unhealthy paradigm which makes consumption the main pillar of social existence. Consumption should not be the only way to express ourselves, to exist and be recognised in society. There are many ways to consume better: giving prominence to products that are sustainable, social and environmental standards, local, organic, second-hand, etc. Far from being an ascetic choice, responsible consuming provides us with a wider offer. Moreover, consumerism has been worsened by the obnoxious effect of the "programmed obsolescence" doctrine within the industry. This doctrine encourages industries to provide consumers with short-cycle, cheap and unsustainable products. Creative ways of consuming can counteract this aberration like second-hand, repairing, renting, sharing, etc.

However, consuming better does not automatically imply that the overall consumption – and hence that of natural resources - will decline. A reduced level should also be pursued as a goal in itself, in order not to fall in the trap of the "rebound effect". There is a proven risk that, for example, when replacing incandescent light bulbs by energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs, consumers who reduce their energy costs will be less concerned by their energy consumption. Similarly, buying an eco-efficient car increases the number of kilometres driven, and savings made by using an eco-labelled dishwasher is spent in a city-trip by plane. To sum up,

reduction of consumption must be comprehensively measured, and one must be attentive to the overall, and not per-product, impacts of his/her consumption pattern.

Hidden consumption and erroneous conventional wisdom must also be tackled. The growing importance of ICT's raises a paradoxical and often ignored phenomenon. Counter-intuitively, ICT are not per se a solution to environmental problems. Working on the web rather than working with papers on a desk, and thus avoiding printings, does not automatically reduce one's ecological footprint. There are servers behind the Web, computers behind any digital document⁴. Both consume energy and generate carbon emissions. ICT's are also increasingly a concern because of the amount of waste they are producing, especially as product cycles are shortened from years to months.

A partial “decoupling” of economic growth from material throughput might get us greater efficiency, though it will not be enough. The question of sustainability will not be solved by technology alone. One, because a realistic assessment of progresses made so far sheds serious doubts on the possibility to reach solutions on time. Two, because the problem is not only a technical one, it is a broader societal one. Changes in consumption patterns have to be supported and complemented by radical changes in our mode of production, distribution and trade, and a serious rethinking of our relation to the things.

Obviously better consumption should not be a luxury for rich people. Ethical and sustainable alternatives must be promoted and encouraged so that they are affordable for everyone. Short supply chains for food consumption are a good example of how it is possible to consume better and affordably, whilst at the same time giving a decent income to producers. Furthermore consuming less is a message that is not aimed at those who already struggle to eat every day. It is because we want everyone on Earth to be able to consume enough, that we, in developed countries, have to consume less.

Finally, we need to rethink the way we handle ownership and property rights. Alternative models of sharing, renting etc are ways to enhance solidarity; enhance resource efficiency and tackle climate change at the same time. Besides, universal access to culture and knowledge, notably through the web, is essential and does legitimate a change of the property and copyright laws.

2.3. Our relation to space

Our world is not only obsessed by speed, it is also by gigantism. More and bigger is better, seems to be the motto of our societies. Under the pretext of economies of scale, companies have become multinationals; banks have turned into massive conglomerates, and small farms into big industries in a worldwide food-supply chain. Yet, the downside effects of this gigantism on social and environmental aspects and the obvious increase of vulnerability and instability it generates in the system clearly offset the gains in economic efficiency. Besides, the common wisdom that the size of corporations generates economies of scale *per se* is becoming dubious; mega-

⁴ Article of the Sunday Times online on the carbon emissions generated by internet searches : http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article5489134.ece

corporations, employing several hundred thousands workers are bound to build massive command and control bureaucracies to enable their global functioning. This explains why we favour the strengthening of the fabric of SMEs which provide a more stable source of jobs and a promising potential for innovation.

If the global one-size-fits-all is not a solution, it doesn't automatically imply that we need to go for small everywhere. The key question is to identify what is the best scale possible on which to develop a given activity, taking into consideration all its potential costs and benefits, i.e. including environmental and social ones. Defining the appropriate scale is only possible if the basic purpose of an activity is clearly identified. For example, in our current system, agriculture is considered as a classical economic sector which can be managed according to classical rules. However, if we consider that the first goal of peasant's activity is to ensure food security in a region and contribute to the preservation of the environment, it is quite obvious that large agro-businesses, GMO's and liberalisation should not be the guidelines in this sector. The same exercise can be made for all activities, and in each case, an appropriate scale has to be found. Re-localisation of a number of activities must therefore be on the agenda of the GND.

Space is also something we have to share in a just and rational way. As world population increases, land demand for human use (food, housing, offices, leisure, etc.) increases as well. We have to work on proper land use strategies, combining our needs and what our environment can offer. Sustainability is to be translated concretely in the organisation of our cities and countryside in terms of transport systems, housing, food production and distribution, public services, etc. It seems essential to re-create a degree of local/regional self-sufficiency, that is to enable people to live, work, move and have access to private and public services in a given area while minimizing the financial and environmental costs. Good public transportation systems⁵, as well as some degree of relocalisation of the economic activity are essential to that.

2.4. Our relation to time

Many of us often complain that we don't find enough time to reach a balance between different aspects of our lives, in particular between professional and private life. This is a major paradox of our society. Life expectancy in Europe has never been higher and we have dramatically reduced our working time throughout the 20th century. ICT's and new ways to travel have reduced the physical distances between human beings. Nevertheless, we have never felt so frustrated by the lack of time to enjoy our lives, and the pressure has never been so high to work and produce every day more and faster. The drive for short-term shareholder earnings, the permanent quest for novelty, and the prominence of competition have negated the importance of quality and the value of time.

This short-termism is a major feature of our societies, in political, financial, environmental areas, and our lives under permanent pressure. Our society is on a

⁵ Let us not forget indeed that transportation is key here: for instance, the share of transport in total EU25 greenhouse gas emissions rose from 17% in 1990 to 24% in 2004. Source : European Federation for Transport and Environment

permanent *fuite en avant*. We need to reclaim time, to enable long-term initiatives and projects, and to regain a sense of priorities between the different dimensions of our lives. We have to get away from a comprehensive, oppressive and unsustainable culture of short-termism.

It's time to get over with our chronic schizophrenia. Each consumer is also a worker. What is the point of producing more, faster and cheaper for the benefit of consumers, if all this means to put workers under huge pressure? Reducing short-term pressures on the worker would not only allow him/her to better enjoy his/her work and the rest of its life, but will also likely in turn improve his/her efficiency and performance (less turn over, less days of sickness, less stress and other work-related diseases, better commitment to the management objectives etc.). It is indeed striking to realize that every year in the European Union, 5,720 people die because of work-related accidents, while an additional 159 500 European die from work-related diseases⁶.

Similarly, the dogma that encourages and rewards the creation of maximum profits in a minimum of time is totally unsustainable and unfair. Take for instance the role played by shareholders in big companies, or the importance of speculation on financial markets. The possibility to make quick money in the short-term, without creating corresponding value and while threatening long-term stability of any business is a major reason that explains the instability of current capitalism and the inequalities it produces.

Reclaiming the time is central to change towards a sustainable and prosperous society. We need to decrease speed and to reclaim time to allow for innovation, creativity and freedom. This same logic can apply to many other areas. For example, wouldn't the agreement to take more time to travel, or a slightly slower way to ship things when it is not an urgent matter, favours environmental-friendly transportation? Wouldn't the allocation of more time to young people to make their orientation choices at school, give them better access to information, for the benefit of the whole society?

⁶ Source: European Agency for Safety and Health at work, <http://osha.europa.eu/en/faq/statistics/>