An example of a behavior that must change is planned obsolescence. This wasteful practice is a winning strategy in the current marketplace. It is a solution to the problem of overproduction; mass production in mechanized factories and global supply chains can easily produce more of any good than the population can use. Once you have saturated the market, and every human on planet Earth owns one of your widgets, how can you continue growing, keep increasing profits, and keep investors/ the stock market happy? Well, you simply have the buyer throw out the widget so that they can buy it again.

To remove the incentives that created planned obsolescence is a daunting task, and may require ending capitalism as we know it. But it is a necessary step on the road to degrowth. We must build a culture that rewards producers for *not* constantly growing their company, for being satisfied with selling their widgets to some subset of humanity rather than disposing of it so the widgets can be sold over and over again. We must build a culture that values durability and repairability over increased production, and where everyone can access what they need. We need degrowth.

IFFY BOOKS

What is Degrowth?

by Nelson Chu Pavlosky

Degrowth is the proposition that human well-being must be decoupled from economic growth, in order to ensure the survival of our civilization, humanity itself, and the biosphere. Our capitalist system assumes and requires infinite growth, despite existing on a planet with limited resources. When these requirements are not met, if GDP and other collective hallucinations of economics trend downwards, people suffer and starve, or perhaps are punished by austerity measures and debtors' prisons. This cannot continue. We must construct systems that allow humans to flourish and thrive without regard to the ups and downs of markets.

Why is degrowth necessary for our survival? One reason is that the climate crisis demands that global civilization achieve negative emissions by 2050, and climate justice requires that already developed countries that have

already benefited from historic emissions, such as the USA, achieve this much sooner, so that less developed countries have time to build infrastructure to provide their people with a more equitable level of comfort. This is still quite achievable, if we treat the situation like an emergency and recognize that technology alone cannot save us.

Many well-intentioned people concerned about the environment advance renewable energy sources and energy efficiency as solutions to the climate crisis, and while these measures are necessary, they are not sufficient.

Renewable energy alone will not reduce emissions enough because manufacturing, transporting, and installing renewables currently produces emissions. There is a hard limit to how many solar panels we can install each year while remaining within our "carbon budget." If our society's demand for energy continues to grow, if it does not decrease, we could blow our carbon budget just on installing renewables, leaving the rest of our society's needs to exceed acceptable emissions. Well before that point, it will become apparent that installing renewable energy does not actually replace use of fossil fuels. So long as energy demand increases, we will have both solar panels and coal, wind turbines and gas plants, and emissions will not be avoided.

Can't we reduce energy demand by switching to more energy-efficient technology? No, energy efficiency alone will not reduce actual energy use, because of the Jevons Paradox. This states that if an application begins to use less energy to do the same work, thereby saving money, people will simply use that technology more, and total energy use will remain the same or increase. One example is that with older technology, incandescent lighting, animated billboards and jumbotron video screens would have used absurd amounts of energy and were insanely expensive, so billboards were static print lit with a few spotlights. Modern LED lights are much more energy-efficient, so video billboards are now commonplace, using much more energy than a static billboard lit by LED lights would use. LED lights enabled new applications of lighting, and total energy use did not decrease.

If merely switching to renewable energy will not save us, we must also reduce energy use. Energy-efficient tech is insufficient to reduce energy use. How, then, can we actually reduce energy use? Simply, we must do less. Less labor must be done, fewer products manufactured. We must reduce travel and shipping tonnage and speed.

Wouldn't that crash the economy? Yes, as currently organized. Thus the need for degrowth. We need strategies and tactics for reducing activity without harming people. Unfortunately this requires changing people's behavior, how our institutions function and their incentives, and this is much harder than swapping out our gadgets and building new infrastructure.