

THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO GROWTH

By J.J. Montagnier

Introduction

In this chapter, we will explore why humans are driven to such strong material growth and how we could transition to a less resource-intensive form of growth in light of future physical resource constraints. Given that humans are naturally driven to growth, how do we canalize our will to grow appropriately and in line with the new incoming energy of the age?

Unconstrained Material Growth

During a materialistic epoch, such as the one that we are in, it would be natural for civilizations to generally tend towards material growth, because humans are to a large extent bound by the dominant energy of the age in which they find themselves [see [Part 5](#)].

Most cultures would, nonetheless, endeavor to preserve and promote spiritual practices that would offset materialism in order to maintain some balance. There is usually a natural understanding amongst spiritual leaders in all cultures that by abandoning spirituality completely, people could 'lose their heads' in materialism – and that would be especially true in a material age. Should that happen, sufficient internal moral codes to limit external material excesses would disappear.

Disconnected Material Growth

Material growth, accomplished with restraint and within an environmentally conscious framework, would require maintaining a connection with the natural environment, but the concept of modern progress in itself depends to a large extent on moving away from nature. Urbanization and modernization go hand-in-hand, which means that physical removal from nature is usually followed by intellectual removal from nature – and vice versa.

The Power of Modernization

Bearing physical constraints in mind would always be the wise thing to do, especially when moving away from nature; however, maintaining such an equilibrium when almost permanently isolated from nature may be easier said than done.

When societies are swept up in the heady currents of modernization, with the driving force being progress at all costs, nature and the environment recede into the background. They are only occasionally focused upon, usually temporarily, mainly when large environmental crises hit news headlines.

The price that we would pay for living within resource constraints would be reduced material growth with limited modernization, while the price that we are paying for

powerful, unconstrained modernization is a loss of perception in relation to natural resource boundaries. The more we modernize, the further we drift away from limited resource realities and the more our collective myopia grows.

Severed Connections

A loss of connection with nature results in a loss of empathy for it by not having any direct relationship with it. Indeed, the idea of having empathy for nature would in itself seem odd to many. However, watching National Geographic documentaries about the living earth, with us as part of the biosphere, simply doesn't suffice.

You have to live in the natural world, or live very close to it, to engage with it and to experience it in order to have a connection with it. When such direct and natural interactions with nature are lacking, a sense of the sacredness within nature is lost. Maintaining a moral approach towards the natural world and the biosphere then falls by the wayside.

When we do not know nature directly, our inclination to appreciate it, respect it and care for it is diminished, and so is the likelihood of feeling a sense of duty or responsibility towards the natural world.

One-Sided Growth

Interacting with nature regularly puts people in a better position to have natural empathy for it, because they would understand that nature has natural empathy for them in the sense that it provides for them. Everything that we use and consume comes from the natural world first and foremost. It is then processed and refined, but the modern mind tends to not make that connection consistently enough.

There is no doubt that incredible human progress has been made through modernization, notably in the sciences and technology. This progress has undoubtedly led to the further development of the human mind, but it has also led to a one-sided form of development due to our intellectual disconnect from nature.

An imbalance has developed in that modern humans do not fully comprehend that they are naturally and fundamentally connected to nature at all times, and that they are an intrinsic component of nature. We are not alien to this world and neither are we aliens in it, but one-sided intellectual development away from the natural world can and does at times lead to such a perspective.

Committed to Material Growth

Our dependence on material growth for modern prosperity, welfare, safety, comforts and quality of life – things that everybody wants and aspires to – means that our capacity for prioritizing anything outside of this paradigm is greatly compromised. Even the idea of limiting material growth would, in many cases, motivate an even stronger commitment to it.

Indeed, having to let go of material growth without anything to replace it would be near-impossible for most people. Much of what they have ever known, especially in the

developed world, has had to do with material growth, with a bit of spiritual growth on the side. Therefore, the idea that material growth could potentially come to an end one day would oftentimes be experienced as a looming disaster of epic proportions.

Growth of the Urban Class

Once people are modernized, they rarely voluntarily revert to the pre-modernization state. By the same token, once urbanized, people generally do not return to the land.

It can be observed in developing countries that when individuals from indigenous communities become urbanized and modernized, they tend to consider themselves as having become more advanced than their peers who had maintained their traditional lifestyles in rural areas.

This is a phenomenon that has become clearly visible in the developed world, too. City dwellers often consider themselves to be more educated, more sophisticated and more forward thinking than rural or farm residents. This became quite evident during events that played out during and after the UK-EU 'Brexit' membership referendum in 2016 and during the USA presidential election in the same year.

It would appear that on the part of the urbanized population there tends to be a lack of understanding of what it takes to live and work close to the land and how the educational, technological and social requirements would be different.

Urbanized middle and upper classes, therefore, seem to develop a tendency to look down on those who had "stayed behind" in the country. There is, perhaps, a perception that rural people suffer a deficit in education and a lack of sophistication and, therefore, by implication, that they lack class. In spite of such perceptions, the urban class remains fully dependent on farming communities for their food supply.

Although there are many communities worldwide with one-foot-in and one-foot-out of urban living due to spending time in the countryside with family members or by commuting from the countryside to towns or cities for work, once people become fully urbanized and have never known rural life, then choosing to become a farmer becomes a rather remote possibility.

Towards Upward Mobility

There is, presently, a strong, ongoing, worldwide trend towards urbanization [1]. The number of countries where this trend does not feature is no more than a couple of dozen [2]. This means that there is an ongoing trend towards more materialism through the consumerism which is an embedded feature of urbanization and modern living.

When people urbanize, they get access to a variety of goods, services and forms of entertainment that they would otherwise not have access to on a consistent basis. They would also have access to modern infrastructure, amenities and technological conveniences which are lacking outside of urban areas. There are also educational and skills-oriented opportunities available in urban areas, which rural environments simply don't provide. There is a strong correlation between urbanization and prosperity [3].

The Freedom to Grow

Personal growth in a material sense requires freedom. Community-oriented, traditional lifestyles don't usually provide many opportunities for fully pursuing personal interests and objectives. Modernization, however, promises to potentially deliver individual achievement and success on multiple levels.

That people would choose to modernize in order to self-realize is simply a logical conclusion of going after opportunities, in many cases pursuing new opportunities that are opening up [4]. It is, therefore, little surprise that given the innate drive of humans to progress and to evolve, people would be drawn to self-realization through modernization within a materialistic paradigm.

Modern progress (through industrialization, mechanization and automation) only becomes a problem when global population numbers grow to the extent that massive environmental degradation is caused by so many people self-realizing through modernization that it ends up threatening the collapse of civilization back into a pre-modern age.

Material vs. Spiritual Growth

The natural close proximity that indigenous people have to nature allows them to maintain – quite naturally – an equilibrium between materialism and spirituality. Indeed, indigenous people are often more spiritual than materialistic, even within the context of a material age.

Human consciousness being predominantly materialistic in its orientation in the present age means that becoming more spiritual and less materialistic within an urban environment could have the benefit of reducing overconsumption on an individual level.

There is, however, a relatively large difference between personal development in a modernized setting compared to nature-based spirituality. Becoming more intellectually spiritual through self-development while living in a city does not necessarily result in having closer contact with nature.

One Foot In and One Foot Out

On the other hand, it is also true that many people do, indeed, manage to maintain some form of balance by getting out of cities frequently for nature-based activities. In addition, they may also maintain frugal and responsible environmentally conscious living practices.

These individuals would probably cope better should a need ever arise to leave urban areas and return to the land. Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that even this section of society would relocate en masse from urban areas by their own volition.

Individually removing oneself on a permanent basis from a city or town could be a solution and would, perhaps, be the only real way to bring about a personal transformation in terms of actively being more in harmony with the environment on an ongoing basis.

Modernization vs Simplification

Even so, should one make heavy use of vehicles or machinery in the countryside, one's carbon footprint would not be much different from someone living in a megalopolis. In other words, only by reverting to the most basic of lifestyles would one actually reduce one's personal impact on the environment and the planet.

This is due to exponential global population growth [5]. The more people there are on the planet, the higher each individual's impact is. If we had maintained smaller numbers, the level of modernization might have been lower and our individual impact less, even when using modern technologies and equipment.

The bottom line is that, for the time being, nobody wants to go back in time in terms of progress and, in the minds of the vast majority of people, progress means modernization, which is, of course, also true for them on a practical, material level. Modern progress is what the vast majority of people want.

'De-modernizing', degrowing and deindustrializing go directly against the modern concept of progress and are completely counter-intuitive to the majority of people, regardless of resource depletion realities on the ground, obvious problems related to unsustainable population growth and ongoing environmental degradation.

Negative Progress

Once intellectually modernized through urban living and by embracing modern technologies, there's virtually no going back. In that sense, one could say that collapse is by design, because there seems to be no reverse gear built into the human psyche once it has become modernized.

Collapse happens when the majority of people within a civilization are unable or unwilling to change their thinking or their behaviors when such change would be the only way to save their civilization. Civilizations, therefore, in some cases progress themselves into collapse.

Destructive Growth

It is well recorded and reported that the environment is taking an extreme toll and showing serious signs of stress globally, while the climate is beyond doubt adversely affected. If we are unable to alter our growth trajectory, we could potentially grow ourselves into extinction through ever-increasing, ever-destructive material growth before we manage to change our thinking or before we run out of physical resources.

Early-Warning Systems

In 1992, over 1,700 scientists – including 104 Nobel laureates – from 71 countries signed a document named World Scientists' Warning to Humanity [6].

"WARNING: We, the undersigned, senior members of the world's scientific community, hereby warn all of humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of

the earth and the life on it is required if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated."

The paper highlighted specific areas in which the environment was suffering critical stresses – namely, the atmosphere, water resources, oceans, soil, forests, living species and population growth.

A section called "What we must do" listed the following recommendations:

1. ***We must bring environmentally damaging activities under control to restore and protect the integrity of the earth's systems we depend on. We must, for example, move away from fossil fuels to more benign, inexhaustible energy sources to cut greenhouse-gas emissions and the pollution of our air and water.***
2. ***We must manage resources crucial to human welfare more effectively. We must give high priority to efficient use of energy, water and other materials, including expansion of conservation and recycling.***
3. ***We must stabilize populations. This will be possible only if all nations recognize that this requires improved social and economic conditions, and the adoption of effective, voluntary family planning.***
4. ***We must reduce and eventually eliminate poverty.***
5. ***We must ensure sexual equality and guarantee women control over their own reproductive decisions.***

In the analysis section, it stresses: *"The greatest peril is to become trapped in spirals of environmental decline, poverty, and unrest, leading to social, economic, and environmental collapse."*

The 1992 *World Scientists' Warning to Humanity* concludes: *"A new ethic is required – a new attitude towards discharging our responsibility for caring for ourselves and for the earth."*

A New Warning

In 2017, a second warning was issued by the world scientists, with a 25th anniversary update on progress that had been made since the original warning in 1992 [7]. The second warning was considered unique in that it was said to have the highest number of scientists who had ever co-signed, and formally supported, a published journal article.

According to the second warning, progress had been made in only one of the critical stress areas since 1992 – namely, a reduction in the prevalence of ozone-depleting substances.

However, according to other reports, the ozone is not actually recovering at lower altitudes above densely populated areas, but only at higher altitudes and, as mentioned before, densely populated areas are, in fact, continually expanding due to ongoing urbanization [8] [9].

The other critical stress areas showed no improvement. From 1992 to 2017, the global population went up (by 2 billion – an increase of 35%), emissions went up, temperatures rose further, ocean dead zones increased, freshwater resources declined

and so did reconstructed marine catch areas, the total combined forest area in the world became smaller and the overall abundance of vertebrate species fell (see report for details).

The Economic Growth Imperative

It's worth doing some analysis on the reasons why very little has been achieved since 1992 in terms of "What we must do". In a nutshell, it's all about the economic growth imperative.

Macroeconomics is the study of the overall economic performance of a country, and 'the growth imperative' is an underlying principle of macroeconomics that takes the view that growth is always good for an economy [10]. The reasoning behind it is that continuous economic growth –measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – reflects better living standards for the population.

Better living standards become possible when there are more jobs and higher salaries, and that would depend on more manufacturing, more production and more service delivery. These economic activities are driven by the main objective of companies for more profits for themselves and for their shareholders (their shareholders often being employees and ordinary working people.)

Higher industrial output and more jobs result in more taxes from corporations and individuals. More taxes would mean that governments can provide better social support systems, health care services and infrastructure development and can improve overall living standards.

The growth imperative is, therefore, fundamental to modern progress, and it is usually reflected in economic policymaking worldwide as it always aims to stimulate more economic growth for the economies of all countries.

Towards More Upward Mobility

The possibility of achieving better living standards draws people from rural areas towards urban areas which results in more industrial activity – which then causes more environmental degradation [4] [3] . Any long-term decline in economic growth would cause a decline in living standards for just about everyone, except for those who had never had their living standards raised in the first place.

Generally speaking, once living standards rise and people enter the middle classes through upward mobility, they vote for politicians who would continue to secure their living standards. Also, voters usually wish that the politicians they vote for support policies that would provide opportunities for the further raising of their quality of life through sustained and consistent economic growth.

This means that virtually all economically active people support the economic growth imperative, whether in developing or developed nations. The more that people have their material living standards raised, the higher the demand becomes for more material growth which, in turn, exacerbates the negative impact on the climate and the environment.

Sustainable development is, therefore, an oxymoron, because in the bigger scheme of things the economic growth imperative almost always wins out over limited resource realities and environmental concerns. If that were not the case, political parties that champion environmental causes would lead election counts, but they usually trail far behind political parties that champion economic growth.

The Material Growth Trap

This brings us closer to understanding why very little progress has been made since the *World Scientists' report* of 1992. Simply put, virtually all the recommendations made in the report are likely to take a backseat for as long as the economic growth imperative remains an imperative.

To put this further into perspective, let's revisit the main recommendations made in the 1992 report and explore them in more detail.

Bringing environmentally damaging activities under control to restore and protect the integrity of the earth's systems that we depend on ... will take a backseat for as long as fossil-fuel-driven industrialization, with its negative impacts on the climate and environment, remains a core component of modernization and economic growth.

Moving away from fossil fuels to more benign, inexhaustible energy sources to cut greenhouse-gas emissions and the pollution of our air and water ... is unlikely to be achieved while the economic growth imperative demands further fossil-fuel-driven industrialization. Renewable energies are unable to drive economic growth to the same extent as fossil fuels because of much lower energy output [11]. The use of fossil fuels will, therefore, continue to be prioritized over renewable energies, because no one is prepared to lower their living standards.

Giving a high priority to efficient use of energy, water and other materials ... will continue to be hampered by industrial expansion, modernization, urbanization, intensive farming and population growth, all of which are results of the economic growth imperative. These activities all demand huge volumes of energy, water and other materials. Efficiency can be and has been improved; in the bigger scheme of things, however, it has little impact if there are ever more of the above activities taking place (please see: Jevon's Paradox).

Stabilizing populations ... would require letting go of the economic growth imperative, because sustained economic growth to a large extent relies on population growth, especially when better levels of productivity and higher levels of consumption by fewer people cannot be generated through optimised productivity and higher levels of consumerism when there are fewer consumers [12] [14].

... improved social and economic conditions, and the adoption of effective, voluntary family planning ... has contradictory objectives, because improved social and economic conditions require more modernization and industrialization, which tend to initially stimulate population growth further before it slows down later [15]. Voluntary family planning works to a degree but has limited impact in developing nations.

Reducing and eventually eliminating poverty ... is hard to achieve in the developing world with ever-increasing population growth. Reducing and eventually eliminating poverty requires modernization and industrialization. Bringing everyone in the world up to First World standards would require several planets worth of resources, because there are already so many people on the planet [16]. Western standards of living have become the benchmark for what everybody would like to achieve worldwide. The more people there are globally, the more people there are who demand Western standards of living.

Ensuring sexual equality and guaranteeing women control over their own reproductive decisions ... have been achieved to an extent, especially in developed nations where a plateau has been reached in terms of birth rates and where, in many cases, fertility rates have dropped [12]. The result, however, is that low population growth often means a slowdown in economic growth, because improved production methods cannot always offset a reduction in the number of people available for the labor force. Due to the growth imperative, economies cannot stagnate for too long and so low birthrates are often compensated for by mass immigration programs to replenish the workforce [13] [14].

To conclude, the possibility of *becoming trapped in spirals of environmental decline, poverty, and unrest, leading to social, economic, and environmental collapse* – as predicted in the 1992 report – will remain an almost inevitable outcome due to the economic growth imperative which, today, is almost universally embraced by individuals, corporations and governments.

A New Ethic

The *World Scientists'* report of 1992 talks about the need for a new ethic, but it's difficult to see how a new ethic would be embraced while the majority of people hold onto the economic growth imperative. Only a change in our collective inner attitude could change our collective outer conduct.

Should the Spirit of the Age change organically, a new ethic could potentially arrive naturally, (as discussed in Parts **3** and **5**), but that would require a shift in the metaphysical energy of the age which would result in a general shift in human thinking. Such a shift will arrive incrementally – but may not arrive soon enough to avoid a collapse of our civilization.

As we know, the problem we are facing is that the material growth imperative is responsible for the consistent destruction of the environment and biosphere because our global industrial civilization depends on the burning of polluting fossil fuels. This continuous destruction threatens to eventually result in our planet becoming uninhabitable.

A time will eventually come when humans will be less materialistic in terms of their thinking and would naturally want to move away from the material growth imperative (see Part 5) but, until such time, everything points to the fact that it would be up to individuals to make such a shift on their own (as far as that would be possible for them), both in thinking and in lifestyle.

When physical resource limits for further economic expansion and continuous material growth eventually set in to the extent that the majority of people are personally and directly affected, a general shift in thinking may occur. Regardless, lifestyle changes will eventually be forced upon people due to a decline in the availability of affordable fossil fuels and due to climate change (See: Limits to Growth – A Final Warning.)

Eventually, the number of people motivated to shift to another form of growth would swell exponentially and they would then follow in the footsteps of those individuals who had made the shift earlier on. In the meantime, all evidence points to the fact that the vast majority of people would only choose to make changes that involve a reduction in quality of life through external circumstances. They will not choose to do so except if it is absolutely necessary, which is fair enough because that is simply an example of human nature in our current paradigm.

There Are No Limits To Growth

There *are* no limits to growth. Although there are limits to external growth, there are no limits to internal growth. One thing that will never change is our will to grow. As humans, we are absolutely driven to grow. The very reason why we are here is to grow – but not only materially so, and that is where we need to change our thinking. What has to change is the way that we grow. We need to shift our approach from being outer-growth-oriented to inner-growth-oriented.

The Great Shift

Growth is cyclical; sometimes it is material and sometimes it is spiritual (as illustrated in Part 5). We have entered an era of exponential spiritual growth while the window for material growth is closing. Most people are so committed to material growth that they are unable to make the shift in advance – and few are even contemplating it.

From Circles to Spirals

Material growth is a closed circle – a self-reinforcing loop that relies on the continuous availability of limited external material resources, some of which we will eventually run out of, without there being any substitutes.

Spiritual growth in the form of inner self-development is an open, ascending spiral with infinite growth potential that draws on unlimited intangible resources within and which can be tapped indefinitely for internal expansion.

Making the Shift

The whole objective of self-development and self-transformation is to grow beyond the general state of being that is the standard level of development of the times. Those who follow this path become the pioneers who traverse The Valley of Shadows in advance. They transcend the limits of the present paradigm early by living in the next paradigm consciously and practically, while still being in the old paradigm at the same time.

The Inner Growth Imperative

The inner growth imperative will, one day, become as powerful as the outer growth imperative is today. To be in line with the new energy in advance, we would need to switch over from an external economic growth imperative – based on material and physical accumulation and consumption – to an internal self-realization growth imperative that is based on internal expansion and the accumulation of non-tangible inner-wealth.

Once we have made this shift consciously and intellectually, we will have the ability to be happy with less and we will be able to embrace the coming changes more naturally. We will also have reduced our carbon footprint in advance. Individuals who choose this path are a minority, but they will be better positioned to pioneer and conceptualize new ways of living compared to people living exclusively in a material growth paradigm physically and mentally.

The Vision Quest

We have to evolve into creating for ourselves non-material comforts and pleasures. We have to create an environment that would provide peace and spiritual prosperity, notwithstanding having less material abundance. We have to formulate a new ethic that allows for personal and individual freedoms within the context of a renewed responsibility to our community and our environment at the same time.

This and more are achievable, but it would require forward-thinking people who are motivated to make an early shift. While we still have time, we need to envision the world that we would like to live in. It is most likely going to be a low-carbon or post-carbon civilization, meaning that we are going to return to a slower way of life. Taking a positive view of this probable future and having a pragmatic approach towards it would enable us to envision solutions more clearly as we shift.

Towards Simplicity

The meaning of progress and development will change. In the future, it would mean a return to a simpler life, combined with personal inner development, as opposed to a complex life with external development in the form of possessions and status.

We have to revert to the Great Year Within and uplift ourselves. We have to spiral upwards along with the upwards-moving energy on the ascending arc of human evolution. Such a state can only be reached through self-development.

The more people start moving in this direction and combine it with a one-foot-out approach – spending more time in nature – the sooner we will make the transition in advance and the more people will be available to build resilient communities in anticipation of the coming changes.

By J.J. Montagnier

Copyright © 2018 · All Rights Reserved

This article has been written for general consumption and some concepts have been simplified. The views and opinions are those of the author. Creative license has been applied to make some concepts more accessible. Please note that all articles in this series are written in a highly condensed format. Readers are encouraged to do further reading for deeper understanding - please see references.

References to and excerpts from this article may be used, provided that full and clear credit is given to the author and with appropriate and specific direction to the original content: please use the page address (URL) in the browser to link to.

Resources:

1. http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/popups/mod13t01s009.html
2. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>
3. <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth#urbanisation-and-prosperity>
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_mobility
5. <https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth>
6. <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2017/11/World%20Scientists%27%20Warning%20to%20Humanity%201992.pdf>
7. http://scientistswarning.forestry.oregonstate.edu/sites/sw/files/Warning_article_with_supp_11-13-17.pdf
8. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2018/02/06/sorry-earth-the-ozone-layer-isnt-healing-itself-after-all/#2094a78a5418>
9. <https://weather.com/science/environment/news/2018-02-07-ozone-layer-thinning-climate-change-chemicals-global-warming>
10. <https://www.economicshelp.org/macroeconomics/economic-growth/0>
11. <http://euanmearns.com/eroei-for-beginners>
12. <https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>
13. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dependency_ratio
14. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-lowest-birth-rates-in-the-world.html>
15. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_transition
16. <https://persquaremile.com/2012/08/08/if-the-worlds-population-lived-like/>

--

Please visit EnergyShifts.net for more chapters in this series.

**