

ABOUT "DECRECER"

(Bene Bergado)

For me, the DECRECER project involves delving deeper into issues raised in previous projects. Moreover, biographical and ideological aspects merge more than ever in this project. In some way, going back to the past brings consistency to the present.

What is the reason for unlimited growth in production is a question I have asked myself since I was a child. To think that if a company wants to do well it needs to grow exponentially year after year, inevitably leads to collapse.

As stated by Margarita Mediavilla, one of the main reasons for the unlimited sense of our capacity for production and consumption in our developed societies is the quality and versatility of the fossil fuels that we have been able to extract at the pace we have wanted. They are ideal energies for growth and have allowed us to develop an economic system with no concept of limit: capitalism.

Faced with this logic of capitalism based on a continuous and unlimited growth, fed by the most complete and powerful energy known to man, i.e. oil, the planet has become a mere supplier of resources that is no longer capable of regenerating at the unbridled speed of our consumption. We live wastefully, squandering with complete disregard for the resources nature has conserved for millions of years. This way of living has led us to a global crisis in which we are facing a depletion of natural resources: raw materials and fossil fuels, the fragmentation and destruction of ecosystems, and high levels of pollution on land, sea and air.

The degrowth thought current proposes controlled regular reduction of production in order to establish a new relation of balance between mankind and the planet earth as humanity's sole option for survival based on frugality and self-limitation. It can be summarised as "living better with less".

We are living in times of frenzied consumerism coupled with an obsession for economic wealth, in a world where millionaires are envied, and with a population blinded by the dazzle of enormous luxuries. Consequently, degrowth is not considered an attractive discourse a priori, since it undoubtedly deals with an ideological proposal requiring austere habits as well as large doses of empathy and solidarity.

Consumerism has become a new religion for millions around the world and this consumer addiction, added to financial fundamentalism, sustains an economic model that devours natural resources. Compulsive consumption of goods is the main cause of environmental degradation. Yet, degrowth is not going to be an option but rather a need imposed by the devastating impact of economic growth.

The inevitable energy transition we are heading for with renewable and technological energies that cannot be stored (such as liquid fuels) nor grown, are energies limited by the territory and compete with it.

The enormous difficulty for a true transition is that our society and industry are moulded by fossil fuels, essentially oil, as the great energy bargain, according to Margarita Mediavilla.

The current socio-economic system is incapable of reacting to the energy shortage, for it refuses to accept that new energies cannot be based on exponential growth and immediate benefit, which is the basis of capitalism. The economic system is adapting itself based on poverty and economic crisis.

We are heading towards a world of low energy and inevitable life changes. Although technology can help, radical socio-political changes are required, where art and artists with our integrating work processes can at least show and make visible some paths to wean off and dismantle habits of superfluous excess.

Quoting Isabelle Stengers, "We are terribly under-prepared to deal with what is happening." The motto "live better with less" aims to liberate us from an economic model of scale, competitiveness and urgency that makes us dependent. It is intended to change this social imaginary where those of us living amidst the luxuries of affluent societies always want more, and

those who do not live in these affluent societies, would like to do so. The idea of wealth should be redefined to be acknowledged as a moral, intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction, as an awareness of the limits of what is real, and as the assumption of our responsibility as authors of the future. This “decrecer” exhibition aims to convey that which is intrinsic in artistic creation, i.e. responsibility for our own life, responsibility for what we do and what we convey with it. Artistic creation rehearses this feeling of being and becoming capable, taking responsibility for and assuming the consequences.

In this call to action, the exhibition installations and sculptures dialogue with the need for a deceleration through the awareness of limits and the dynamic strain between art and what it is about: its artistic processes and its more explicit themes.

Hence, “degrowth” is not only the contents or an issue of this exhibition, but also and above all a commitment inherent to artistic experience. The creation processes involve a search for coherence among means and purposes, intentions and realisations, expression and action. My creation processes poetically incorporate the physicality and symbolic background of materials -whether recycled waste or noble recyclable materials, such as bronze-, procedural transparency, formal configuration of works -assuming a transversal artistic inheritance-, emotional and sensitive experiences, biographical resonances, symbolic and reasoning factors, ideological and intellectual positioning... Thus, works of art do not only represent the world but are also a specific channel of action in it. They make interdependence processes present, among people and their ways of symbolising the world, likewise among what is human and the background to which they belong. They reveal a form of responsibility and attention towards life, and a way of intensifying and caring for something specific, something real. In this sense, “degrowth” is an allusion to the containment and co-responsibility inherent to the artistic experience.