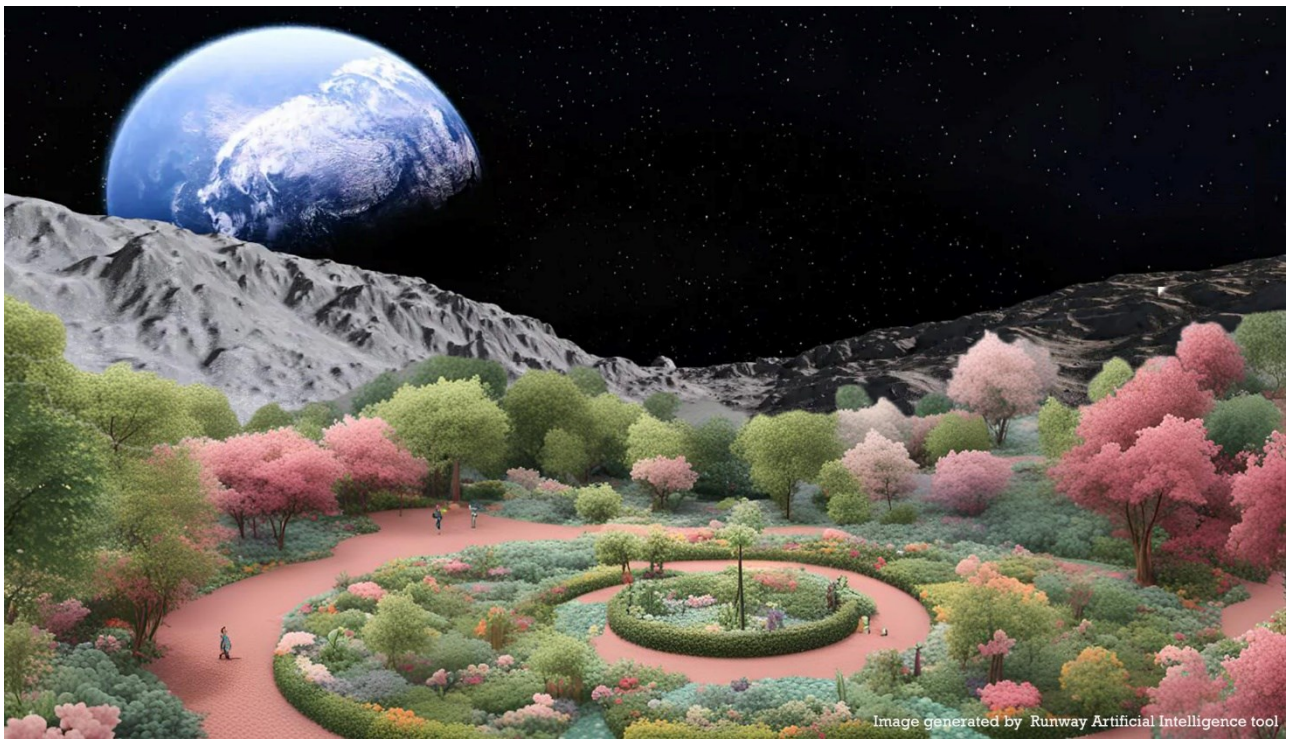
GROWING GLOBAL ENERGY DEMAND SINKS THE GREEN TRANSITION. SPACE TRANSITION IS NEEDED.



["Moon Garden" - image generated by https://app.runwayml.com/]

SRI NEWSLETTER – September 02, 2024
by Adriano V. Autino

In a recent interview with an Italian radio, prof. Emanuele Leonardi, researcher and economist at the University of Bologna, has discussed many clear concepts, dealing with the status of the Green Transition, why it doesn't work, and why it never started working. Hereafter is an abstract, of part of the talk, elaborating some key points, that indicate how deeply the academic researchers are aware of the reality. Something that very seldom is admitted by politicians.

The ecological transition is at a standstill and never started to work

Current data is substantially negative as regards the transition, especially the transition towards a green economy that has slowed down specifically in regards to the car market. Obviously, the ongoing wars have deterred and absorbed a large portion of public investments. The very nature of the transition appears increasingly imposed from above, a fact that creates economic difficulties for popular segments of the population, who are currently struggling with high costs to change their lifestyle. Data describes the slowdown of the green economy, while the oil & gas industry keeps on investing in hydrocarbons, and only expends 1% in renewables. Several oil groups such as Shell and Eni, have revised their decarbonization objectives downwards. The automotive sector's switch to electric cars is struggling to take off. The ecological transition at this stage is stagnant and at a standstill. The equivalent CO2 emissions that should have decreased according to ecological policies have actually increased profoundly and very rapidly. What does this mean? The transition phase is not broken: the transition never really started to work. The European Green Deal ultimately represents a major program of green austerities, in which the working classes and the production world are suffering the most. The ecological transition, whether elitist or popular, is in all cases a policy designed for times of peace and war calls all this into question.

The substitution of fossils with renewables has not been realized, due to rising global energy demand

Significant capital has been invested in renewable energy sources, but the substitution of fossils with renewables has not been achieved and is at most a flanking movement. Such a gradual process should have been expected, but something more immediate was demanded, moving toward a comprehensive paradigm shift. Renewable assets are growing at high speed, which is good news. It was to be expected that an immediate substitution with fossil fuels was not realistic. Delay in the transition process reveals not a

slowness to adopt new technologies, but rather indicates a tendency towards the non-diminution of fossil fuels. The dynamic that is being established is that the acceleration of renewables does not actually block the development of fossil fuels either at an absolute or relative level. In reality we are witnessing a parallel process that makes the obtained efficiency advantages potentially useless. The underlying issue is that the world's energy demand keeps on growing. In the end, there may be more sources to satisfy it, but all of these sources will grow. This is the exact problem. What does not work, and has never worked, is the scenario of reducing energy needs. It is possible to envision a slow replacement of fossil fuels with renewables, if and only if global energy demand decreases, and this is not just a question of wasteful usage.

The objectives of de-carbonization by 2030 have already failed

The objectives of the (Italian) integrated national energy and climate plan have already failed. To reach the target of de-carbonization of the car fleet by 2030, approximately 660.000 electric cars should be sold each year, instead if all goes well this year we will reach a maximum of 80.000 units. globally, we want to stay in the automotive sector, but we also want to move to producing electricity within the public and collective sustainable mobility chain. That is, to start thinking about the type of industrial development not based on the centrality of the private car. “At a time when we seek less energy expenditure, evidently, two cars per family are not sustainable even if they were electric.“

Just to clarify, the interview was released by Radio Popolare of Milano, a historic leftist radio, and the interviewed professor, in his talk, doesn’t conceal his proposed solutions and corrections, all of them focused the direction of de-growth, led by the decrease of energy demand. But what really struck is the admission of the failure of the Green Transition, due to the blatant increase of global energy demand. This is a clear confirmation of the view that we, Space Renaissance, have analyzed and assumed, since the SRI 3rd World Congress in 2021 and to date. Ultimately, with the tremendous momentum of Artificial Intelligence, and e-money flows, supercomputers and big data servers are sucking up ever increasing quantity of energy.

At the same time, storage is becoming mandatory to manage non-programmable power sources like solar and wind. Extracting, and above all processing, the required raw minerals and rare earth elements – cobalt and other elements needed to produce batteries for electric vehicles as well as energy storage in general – also requires a huge amount of energy. Since such processes takes place mainly in countries like China and Indonesia, which produce power mostly by burning coal, the amount of CO2 emitted to the atmosphere is actually increasing, despite all the declarations about de-carbonization. Therefore the energy transition, the way it is being done, is actually backfiring.

Should we attempt to apply a de-growth solution, in order to decrease the global energy demand, it is clear what will happen: the electronic society – so much advocated by the green movement, as a means to decrease mobility – will more and more become an expensive privilege, reserved to the wealthier classes. Private transportation will be reserved for the affluent while the lower classes will be “educated” for collective mobility, and to accept the authorities ability to deem what is “truly necessary” and what will be defined as “superfluous”.

Dictatorships, and tendencies to despotic governments are already present, both in Western and Eastern worlds. It will not make much difference if non-democratic social models are established in the name of leftist eco-green ideologies, or in the name of rightist elitist ones. The result will be the same: pervasive social elevation will be blocked for long time to come, or more likely it will revert, bringing medium and low classes to lower levels.

Of course, there is an alternative to this inescapable and narrow path. As becomes more and more evident, the problem might be non-resolvable within the limits of planet Earth. Yet the outlook fully changes through the innovative perspective of civilian space development. Expanding civilization into outer space is a practical alternative to the depicted and gloomy future. Progressively moving many levels of industrial development into the geo-lunar space region will halve the growing demand for energy on Earth. And it will relieve Earth’s environment, as the authentic green transition. The placement of large servers and supercomputers in Earth orbit and on the Moon, will contribute to the energy balance on Earth. These remarkable techniques – along with the contribute of renewables -- can assure a successful transition to a sustainable future.

Please note that such solution can be optimal for both (true) leftist people, interested in social growth for all, and for (true libertarian) rightist people, interested in freedom, and a real free market. SRI has proven for many years, that these two positions, which both share humanist ideals of progress, can survive and work together, of course often discussing the issues!

We will take up all these topics, and more, on 19 September 2024, at U.N. Plaza 777, NYC, within a whole-day hybrid workshop. Everybody is invited to attend:

A Space 18th SDG for the Future

2025, is a crucial year to review both the U.N. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Space 2030 Agenda

September 19 2024, 13:00 UTC (15:00 CEST, 9am US EDT)

In advance of the U.N. Summit of the Future and 79th General Assembly

[English language editing by Amalie Sinclair]

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Also, see the SRI Position Paper on the Key Critical Issues before 2030. https://www.amazon.com/position-paper-critical-issues-toward/dp/B0CVVP6NKT/

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