

SYNOPSIS

# Enough!

Regional Project on  
Social-Ecological  
Transformation

**THE URGENT NEED FOR  
SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL  
TRANSFORMATION  
IN LATIN AMERICA**







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### **Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America**

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Regional Project on Social-Ecological Transformation

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### **Synopsis**

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## **FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Our ways of living, producing, and consuming are fast reaching their limits. Just like in the rest of the world, Latin America is experiencing a period of destruction and environmental degradation that threatens the well-being of not just future generations, but also of the natural world as we know it. According to the most recent reports published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), if current emissions aren't drastically reduced over the next decade, it is highly likely that the earth will experience an increase of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels from 2030 to 2052. In order to achieve the less ambitious goal of limiting warming to 2°C, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions still need to decrease by 25% by 2030 in comparison to 2010, and it is necessary to reach zero net emissions by 2070 at the latest.

This reality, along with humanity's increasing ecological footprint and ongoing externalization of environmental costs, reflects the systemic errors of the fossil capitalism that has survived into the 21st century and the deficiencies of the global economy. Despite the encouraging debates regarding carbon taxes in some countries, as well as the ongoing implementation of certain energy transitions, public policies in both the Global North and South have failed to act or react to the socio-environmental challenges caused by our imperial mode of living.

With the 2015 Paris Agreement and the establishment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the international community achieved multilateral consensus, a milestone in the fight

against environmental degradation and social exclusion. Despite the commitments from national governments, the implementation of these agreements has been slow. While the frightening inequality between the haves and the have-nots continues to get worse, global emissions continue to grow, exacerbating the effects of environmental catastrophes on the most vulnerable in the short, medium, and long term.

Our current reality requires extraordinary changes to address this crisis. In order to avoid exceeding the planetary boundaries identified by the Stockholm Resilience Centre in 2009, it is necessary to leave fossil capitalism behind; change our energy systems to renewable sources while significantly decreasing our energy use; abandon or modernize major traditional industries; recover ecosystems degraded by changes in land management; transform cities, with an emphasis on expanding and improving public transport; implement new housing policies that address financial speculation; and establish new land management plans that prioritize the protection of social, environmental, and public resources. Our economies are based on exploiting labor and the earth's natural resources, combined with extremely low taxation of capital gains and income. A short-term and reductionist way of thinking that places economic growth at the center of political and economic actions still predominates, reducing well-being to the purely economic sphere and confusing potential means with the ends.

In Latin America, the situation is even more critical: within a context of weak institutions, the wealth created through natural resource exploitation has only served to strengthen profoundly unequal socio-economic structures. The region's insertion in the global economy depends largely on the export of agricultural, fossil, and mineral raw materials, while its insertion in knowledge and technology-based value chains is incipient, and regional integration is limited. The rentier elite continue to benefit from the extractivist status quo, while the social, environmental, and economic balances of extractive industries are in the red across the majority of the region. There is limited political will and capacity to implement policies that strengthen equality and protect the environment, and large portions of the population in Latin America lack access to quality public services, including education, public transport, healthcare, and social

security. Many Latin American citizens are also negatively impacted by the informal economy and insecurity. Socio-environmental conflicts have increased significantly due to the expansion of extractive activities both during and after the commodities super cycle. The current fires in the Brazilian Amazon, a result of the expansion of agroindustry, and the conflicts in the so-called Orinoco Mining Arc in Venezuela, which covers an area twice the size of Costa Rica, are clear examples of the devastating impact of the discourse of extractivism.

Within the context of a development approach focused on neo-extractivism, the resulting socio-environmental challenges, and the lack of response from progressive political actors (with certain exceptions, such as ECLAC's 2030 Agenda), in 2015, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Latin America convened a working group of high-level experts in an effort to encourage discussions regarding how Latin America can change course to move away from its current focus on productive specialization. Thanks to the diversity and expertise of this group, we were able to successfully engage in a profound conceptual and political discussion of development approaches from a Latin American perspective. The FES Transformacion Working Group incorporated experts from 14 countries and a diversity of disciplines and industries, including professors, academics, and members of civil society, as well as former government ministers and Congressional representatives from several countries and former members of ECLAC, among others.

In addition to sharing common criticisms of the challenges and trajectories of development in the region, members of the working group contributed their experiences based on their particular area of expertise and socio-political context, which allowed the group to identify the complexities and contradictions of the current reality of the region.

This is not to say that the discussion process was easy. The group represented very different political positions, ranging from classic social democracy to more alternative views, with some members supporting more gradual reforms and others supporting more revolutionary ruptures. Facilitating productive discussions among such a particular and diverse group required, first of all, the ability to listen and learn from others. Multiple different themes, concepts,

and debates emerged as a result of focusing the group's discussion on development approaches in Latin America. Discussing opposition to neo-extractivism based on the experience in a certain country is different than discussing this same topic from the perspective of someone that formed part of the government of another country. The focus of the conversation changes when approaching capitalism from a union perspective, from an industrial policy approach, or from an emphasis on the plural economy.

A full 18 months of work were dedicated to establishing a common language and a mutual understanding of the key concepts necessary to establish guidelines for progressive political debate in Latin America and beyond, a response to the lack of political visions from social democratic and socialist parties around the world in the face of socio-environmental challenges. This aligns with the nature of an independent political foundation, as we were able to allow the process conversations and concepts to mature over time.

As a result of the different disciplines and experiences represented by the members of the FES Transformacion Working Group, there were many differences of opinion, as well as shared perspectives. The issue of a social and solidarity economy emerged time and time again until it became a core focus of the expert working group's vision. On several occasions, we believed that we had successfully defined our position regarding the more philosophical roots of our current efforts, only to have differences of opinion emerge once again. And this is the process that led to the creation of *Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America*, which captures the Working Group's approach to social-ecological transformation in Latin America. Engaging with and exchanging ideas among all members of the Working Group, as well as with the editorial board, external specialists, recognized academics, social and political actors, and colleagues from the FES national offices in other Latin American countries, was crucially important during this process and helped us strengthen certain key ideas and the general cohesiveness of the publication.

Although the political and international contexts have changed dramatically since 2015, the discussions and proposals presented by the Working Group remain relevant. Today, frustration with the traditional

political class is at an all-time high. In order to avoid further societal distortions and protect the environment, it is urgently necessary to maintain the global temperature within the levels previously mentioned. *Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America*, summarized here, is a critical analysis of our current reality meant to provide a conceptual framework for potentially transformative policies that incorporate the understanding that our socio-economic and cultural existence is fundamentally inseparable from the planet on which we live. It is based on a vision guided by the intellectual wealth of Latin America, which in turn has been influenced by the thinking of universal authors such as Karl Polanyi, who are committed to subordinating the markets to the needs of our societies in a way that respects and maintains a balance with nature. Social-ecological transformation is a paradigm under construction, a jumping off point for discussing the future with different social and political actors and to answer certain fundamental questions. How do we want to live, produce, and consume in the future? How can we do all these things without compromising life on Earth? What should be prioritized in the process to transform our economies? Can Latin America emerge from extractivism?

The books that form part of the FES Transformation Library seek to contribute to the debate and establish a dialogue with organized civil society, progressive political actors in the region, ruling and opposition parties and movements, trade unions, indigenous and feminist movements, international organizations and think tanks, and all those who are currently working or have worked in the past to create an inclusive world.

This project, part of the FES Regional Project on Social-Ecological Transformation, would not have been possible without the commitment and support of many different people. We would like to thank the members of the FES Transformation Working Group for their time, expertise, conviction, passion, and patience, which they showed time and time again during the many meetings, discussions, and conferences hosted over the past four years. Many thanks to Alejandro Chanona, Alfonso Iracheta, Álvaro Cáliz, Antonio De Lisis, Fernanda Wanderley, Gerardo Ardila, Gonzalo Martner, Gustavo

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Special thanks to Elizabeth Martínez, Mariana Blanco, and Mariel Navarro from the FES Transformation team for their invaluable support during this project, including the editing process and the Transformation Library in general. This initiative wouldn't have been possible without their professionalism and dedication. Joana Stalder and Lara Hirschhausen also provided their support during key stages of the project. Thanks to Ricardo Vázquez Ortega and Esteban Granados for the graphic design, the layout of the texts, and their quick and constructive support during the process. Thanks also to Carlos Sánchez for editing the book and Raquel Laniado Amiga for editing the synopsis.

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This book marks the beginning of the second phase of the project: a process of dissemination and debate throughout Latin America and hopefully beyond. We hope that this approach helps



strengthen and promote new visions for Latin America and contributes to expanding the conversations about development in other parts of the world.

— CHRISTIAN DENZIN

Director of the Social-Ecological  
Transformation Regional Project  
in Latin America  
Mexico City, September 2019

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social-ecological transformation is a paradigm under construction. As a result, it welcomes, connects, and engages with contributions from diverse contexts that seek to identify solutions to the socio-environmental crises in Latin America and around the world. *Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America* (2019) seeks to incorporate and connect the copious amounts of information available on social and environmental issues in a coherent and practical way.

The first section of the book offers a comprehensive, historical overview of the social and environmental crises that have led to the present situations in Latin America and around the world. The second section presents a conceptual framework for the social-ecological transformation necessary to respond to these crises, including proposed definitions, principles, targets, and objectives that can be used to facilitate a unified approach to these crises and support efforts to move towards a prudent and shared future. The third section presents policy proposals across various areas, including institutions, the economy, work conditions, consumption, productive sectors, land management, and culture, while the final section proposes an indicator matrix that is relevant to social-ecological transformation.

The publication highlights two fundamental dimensions of the current crises: structural inequality and environmental degradation. Both are associated with the contradictions of global capitalism, and

both have reached unprecedented levels that threaten both humanity and the natural world on a global scale.

Violence, displacement, disconnection from traditional modes of living, the out-of-control expansion of economic activities and cities, abuse against workers, and marginalization and exclusion are fundamentally connected to the unlimited accumulation of capital, as well as the predatory and destructive patterns that deplete our natural resources, impoverish biodiversity, and degrade ecosystems.

Latin America has not escaped this current crisis of capitalism: with economies that have historically been dependent on raw materials, Latin America is now one of the most unequal regions in the world.

Although modern-day global capitalism has led to improved living conditions, it is also responsible for reproducing and amplifying the increasing concentration of economic benefits. This trend is exacerbated by the dominance of speculative finance and the relocation and offshoring of chains of production controlled by multinational companies, which retain the knowledge and technologies generated and appropriate the most significant dimensions of value creation, to the detriment of peripheral societies.

The unrest and conflicts that have persisted and in fact increased in Latin America and the Caribbean are the result of poverty and exclusion based on social class, gender, race, and ethnicity. These issues have increased and exacerbated environmental degradation in the region, leading to a universal decrease in the benefits derived from nature, which were considered to be practically inexhaustible until recently.

Although the global context is relevant, it is possible to implement transformative and substantial actions at the regional, national, and local level. It is possible to create new approaches that establish connections between democratic and social-ecological dimensions and holistically connect the factors that determine the structural evolution of societies.

We propose an understanding of social-ecological transformation as a process of systemic change, a transformation of the relationship between society and nature, and an overhaul of the social structures that facilitate—within the conditions of each society—virtuous

cycles that support the sufficient provision of basic goods, greater distributional equality, and improved ecological carrying capacity.

The goal of this transformation is to coexist in our diversity (“living a good life and living well”) within a social democracy and with a plural and resilient economy focused on equitable and sustainable well-being, as well as the free expression of the ideas, cultures, and interests of the various actors that exist within society.

Based on this conceptual approach, we have established policy proposals focused on four primary areas: a) Institutional: strengthening the social and democratic State governed by the rule of law; b) Economics: diversifying and de-centralizing the economy while increasing its inclusiveness and resilience; c) Territory and Cities: recovering urban planning, regulation, and public management; d) Education and Culture: transforming consumption patterns and supporting learning, scientific and technical innovation, and cultural democracy.

The primacy of a social and democratic State governed by the rule of law serves to not only guarantee the legitimacy of origin of democracy, but also the legitimacy of using this system to produce tangible results that provide quality of life and opportunities to a population, as well as support and sustain citizen’s individual and collective rights.

In Latin America, an economy focused on equitable and sustainable well-being must take action to overcome the region’s excessive dependency on extractivism. This requires stimulating other sectors in order to extend participation in productive activities and their corresponding benefits to all members of society, as well as promoting healthy and sustainable modes of production and consumption.

The redistributive capacities of the State must be expanded, along with its participation in strategic sectors. The State must also protect and promote decent work and the social and solidarity and care economies. Energy systems must democratize decision-making within the industry, moving towards clean and renewable energy sources and addressing issues of accessibility. Reindustrialization must focus on clean production and consumption cycles that take advantage of the possibilities represented by recycling and increase the value added within production chains. The service sector must be expanded and strengthened in order to improve living conditions

and diversify and renew the economy through an emphasis on care services. Agriculture must produce sufficient quality food for the population without damaging ecosystems or biodiversity and must increase the participation of agricultural household models.

Land that is currently treated as dormant space, subject to the interests of capital, the exploitation of natural resources, and the uncontrolled and inorganic growth of cities, must be recovered for social, equitable, healthy, and sustainable uses.

Culture, today subject to the interests of capital, which control science and technology and push us towards consumerism and homogenization, must be recovered as a space to reproduce and renew practices, values, and the very purpose of life.





**CHAPTER I**

**Social and Ecological  
Crises in Latin America  
and Around the World**





Our concept of social-ecological transformation is based on an assessment of the social and environmental conditions present in Latin America within a global context. This approach is based on the understanding that we are living in a time of transition in which human activities have a profound impact on the planet and imbalances have worsened as a result of various long-term historical processes, especially due to the rise of the current economic regime of the unlimited accumulation of capital.

## 1.1 Global Crises

Some say that we are living in the Anthropocene, a proposed geological epoch defined by the significant impact of human activity on Earth's ecosystems, which puts life as we know it at risk. Population growth rates in more impoverished areas, unequal distribution of land and resources, and unsustainable expansion of economic activities to the literal ends of the earth have resulted in the unsustainable growth of cities, the devastation of natural resources, the contamination of the biosphere, and the deterioration of the biogeochemical flows that sustain life as we know it, in addition to causing other disruptions.

The era of European colonization led to the advent of what Sven Beckert (2015) refers to as “war capitalism,” a complex global production system based on the exploitation of the land and labor of broad swaths of the population.

The legacy of these colonial economies, based on the predatory dispossession of land and oligarchic control of mining and agricultural resources, explains, in large part, why Latin America is home to the countries with the highest levels of income inequality.

War capitalism contributed to the start of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain and its eventual expansion to the rest of Europe and North America. The Industrial Revolution was followed by other technological revolutions that contributed to the economic split between the West and the rest of the world, resulting in a handful of high-income countries and a large majority of low-income countries. The Industrial Revolution gave rise to extraordinary economic growth measured in terms of global GDP, simultaneously allowing millions of people to emerge from material poverty while also reproducing profound inequalities and giving rise to new forms of structural violence.

Capitalism aggressively disassociated methods of production from traditional societies, fracturing the relationships that existed between these cultures and the natural world. It also eroded a variety of existing institutions, such as reciprocity, exchange, and solidarity, and embedded productive activities within the market economy and the desire for profit. For Immanuel Wallerstein, modern capitalism isn't defined by the simple existence of individuals or

enterprises that produce products and services with the intention of making a profit or by the presence of salaried employees—these things have existed for thousands of years. Instead, Wallerstein states that “[w]e are in a capitalist system only when the system gives priority to the endless accumulation of capital.” (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 24).

This current “world-system” has resulted in a globalized capitalism defined by the dominance of financial and rentier interests. This system is marked by a growing trend towards the concentration of economic benefits and the increased power of financial speculation. The relocation and offshoring of industrial production on a global scale has increasingly allowed multinational companies to control the technology, design, production, and distribution of goods and services, which are then traded internationally by outsourcing to smaller companies distributed around the world. Many periphery countries hardly benefit from these value chains as their contributions consist of activities with limited economic value and minimal technological innovation. A new dynamic of winners and losers has been created on a global, national, and local scale, which helps explain the recent outbreaks of xenophobia and protectionism in some of the more privileged countries.

Well-being indicators have improved worldwide since the Industrial Revolution, particularly since the second half of the 20th century. In 1820, life expectancy at birth in the Western world was 36 years, while this number had increased to a global average of 71.4 years by 2015. However, these improvements to average well-being have occurred within a context where a gap still exists between those who manage to lead a dignified life and those who are barely able to meet the basic needs necessary for survival.

Although income indicators show that poverty rates have decreased, a significant percent of the global population still lives below the poverty line, including a significant number of people living in situations of extreme poverty. A similar trend can be seen with food shortages—although the number of people impacted by food shortages has decreased, malnutrition and hunger are still a significant issue.

Although income inequality within the global population grew steadily up to the 1990s, it has since declined, thanks in particular to

the rebound of some Asian countries. Inequality has also been reduced considerably within certain countries thanks to internal decisions, but these indicators are neither stable nor homogeneous, and they are sensitive to variations depending on the concessions granted to capital by each country, as well as existing redistributive policies. Within this context, Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions with the highest levels of income inequality in the world.

**Table 1. Average Gini Coefficients (Unweighted) by Region, Based on Household Income or Consumption Surveys**

Varies from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality)

Region	No. of countries	1993	No. of countries	2013
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	13	0.339	23	0.314
Developed countries	21	0.314	20	0.318
Middle East and North Africa	5	0.398	2	0.334
Southern Asia	4	0.310	3	0.362
Southeast Asia and the Pacific	9	0.378	7	0.373
Subsaharan Africa	20	0.476	9	0.438
Latin America and the Caribbean	21	0.490	20	0.480
World	91	0.401	81	0.371

SOURCE: World Bank (2016, p. 86).

Globally, humanity's environmental impact has increased precipitously during the last half century and must be adjusted immediately. The global population has reached more than 7.4 billion people, which has led to enormous strains on the biosphere, the massive extraction of natural resources, and the aggravation of social issues. Cities have grown. Half of the global population now lives in cities, and the need to feed this population has led to an increase in the land allocated to agricultural and livestock farming, which now occupies a third of the earth's surface.

Predatory economic behaviors and practices have become the main threat to nature. The sustainability of fishing—which is a vital source of nourishment—is at risk due to harmful practices and poor management. Deforestation has severely impacted forest resources, resulting in the desertification of millions of hectares of land every year, which has negative impacts on water and the atmosphere.

We've already exceeded two planetary boundaries: climate change and biosphere integrity (Steffen et al., 2015). There is scientific consensus regarding humanity's role in climate change and global warming, which are causing extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, sea level rise, ice sheet mass loss and the acidification of oceans, and the calcification of coral and reefs, among others. These disturbances have cascading impacts on ecosystems and animal and plant diversity, including on humanity. The yields of basic food grains (corn, wheat, and rice) are decreasing due to pests, insects, pathogens, and weeds, as well as the impact of rising temperatures.

In 2016, the Paris Agreement entered into force, with signatories committing to reduce greenhouse gases and ensure that the global temperature increase does not exceed 1.5° C. The most significant environmental commitment to date, this agreement recognizes the risks and the need for global cooperation. However, certain countries have not ratified the agreement, and the United States recently withdrew. Environmental agencies warn that the goals must be significantly more ambitious, and that the damage to human societies will be severe if the established goals are not met, not only in terms of economic growth, but also in terms of health, livelihoods, food security, and water supply.

The primary factor in climate change is the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, one of the six main greenhouse gases. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are primarily the result of burning the fossil fuels that power a large part of the global economy: transport, electric power generation, industry, and so on.

Within this context, it is important to consider equity when establishing the distribution of responsibilities necessary to address the existing environmental challenges. Today, 70% of humanity lives on a below-average income, so equitable efforts to reduce

humanity's ecological footprint must emerge from the remaining 30%. This shows just how intertwined distributive and environmental processes are. The neediest portion of the population emits substantially less CO<sub>2</sub> than the wealthiest, the sector that should be making the most significant effort to encourage responsible consumption. These high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are characteristic of the conspicuous consumption of high and upper-middle income groups in the region, which has a significant weight within aggregate consumption due to the extreme concentration of income.

A rapid transition is necessary for humanity to move beyond the current combustion-engine era. However, that transformation should not be implemented because humanity has exhausted its fossil fuel resources—coal, oil, and natural gas—but rather because this transition will prevent climate change while increasing affordability.

If climate change goes unchecked, humanity is on the brink of what could be the sixth major extinction event on Earth. More than 25,000 plants and animals are threatened with extinction. If we maintain our current rates of greenhouse gas emissions and do not stop or successfully limit the global temperature increase, we stand to lose approximately 60% of all insects and more than 40% of all vertebrates (Warren et al., 2018). Deforestation is another contributor to biodiversity loss, primarily due to the unsustainable expansion of agriculture and the logging industry. The highest rates of deforestation and the largest increases in agricultural area occur in tropical and low-income countries. The impacts of deforestation are compounded by soil degradation due to climate change, various economic activities, and different types of land use. The majority of future soil degradation is expected to occur in Central and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia. By 2050, this degradation has the potential to impact some 3.2 billion people and cause the forced displacement of between 50 and 700 million inhabitants of these regions.

## 1.2 A New Era in Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is a socially, culturally, and ecologically diverse region, and this diversity is a benefit, not a limitation. The region is home to a vast diversity of environments, ranging from the predominant tropical rainforests to the chilly Nearctic landscapes, as well as a great diversity of societies marked by deep differences and gaps between groups and classes. Latin America and the Caribbean has the most unequal societies in the world when it comes to income and wealth inequality, despite positive results from recent efforts to reduce inequality and address the most severe poverty.

The population of Latin America and the Caribbean reached a total of 635.2 million in 2018, passing into Stage 4 of the demographic transition with an average growth rate of 1%. Latin American countries are classified as middle income on the global scale, and the majority of the region's population—80%—lives in cities, although these cities are marked by high levels of violence and marginalization (United Nations, 2017).

The independent nation states that emerged in the 19th century formed the territorial, economic, and legislative foundations of today's Latin American societies and contributed to shaping the foundational agreements that inform modern governance, income distribution, and the social division of labor. These agreements are focused on alleviating the social inequalities and distributive conflicts that have emerged due to the concentration of property, income, and opportunities, although these objectives have not been fully achieved. Although some governments have increased the distributive capacity of the State, social inequality continues to be a structural issue, now exacerbated by increasing environmental deterioration. Economic growth has failed to overcome the region's historical pattern of dependence on the exploitation of natural resources, and the resulting negative externalities, combined with other factors, have had a negative impact on biodiversity and natural resources.



During the first part of the 21st century, public policies implemented in various countries led to a type of “new State refund,” including a greater tax burden, more active social policies, and certain productive diversification policies. During this time, governments associated with various forms of progressivism came into power and implemented redistributive policies, although few of these policies included extensive productive diversification.

Economic, political, and social conditions have improved since the start of the 21st century, but progress has been unstable, marked by upsets and setbacks. Latin America is still dependent on raw material exports, and the fluctuations of the prices of these materials results in economic volatility and high social and ecological costs. Democracy predominates in the region, but people have lost faith in the system as a result of high levels of corruption and governments’ limited capacity to respond to the demands of the people. Various countries are now regressing to personalist or authoritarian forms of government. Additionally, the decrease of formal armed conflicts in certain countries has not prevented the spread of violence associated with socioeconomic inequalities, social segregation, and drug trafficking. Latin America currently has one of the highest homicide rates in the world.

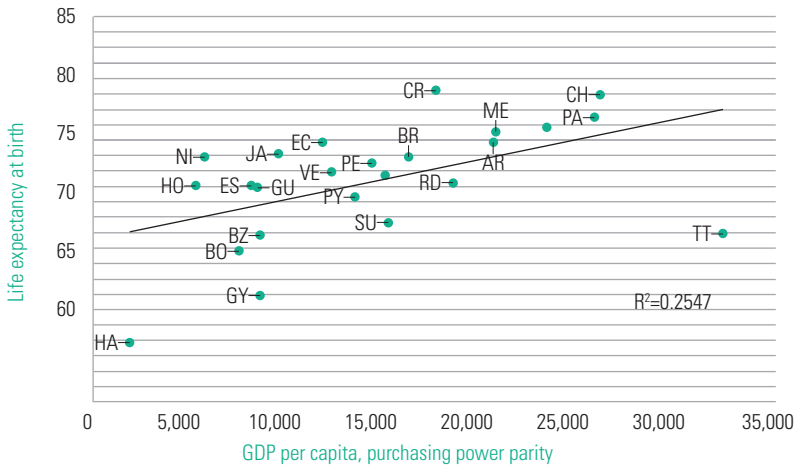
Beyond GDP per capita, an assessment of average life expectancy at birth in Latin America presents another way of measuring average well-being.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, comparing GDP per capita with the

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1. Life expectancy at birth is one of the most important direct indicators of well-being. A relatively significant correlation is found (the coefficient of determination [ $R^2$ ] is 0.25) between the level of GDP per capita and the life expectancy at birth in the region (Graph 1). However, a significant dispersion is seen. Although countries with higher life expectancy at birth tend to be within the high and middle ranges for GDP per capita, there are also cases such as Trinidad and Tobago, which has the highest GDP per capita in the region thanks to its oil and gas refinery industry and yet has one of the lowest life expectancies at birth. There are also cases of countries with lower GDP per capita and higher life expectancies at birth, such as Costa Rica compared to Panama, Uruguay, Argentina, and Mexico. Additionally, some countries have similar levels of GDP per capita but significant differences in life expectancy at birth, such as Costa Rica compared to the Dominican Republic and Brazil or El Salvador compared to Bolivia. Other countries have very different levels of GDP per capita and yet have

infant mortality rate suggests that the policies implemented in certain countries do much to improve the well-being of the groups with more precarious living conditions.

**Graph 1. Life Expectancy at Birth and GDP Per Capita in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018 (24 Countries)**



Source: FES Transformation, 2019, using databases from the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Development Programme.

The informality of the labor market is also one of the primary factors behind intra-regional disparities in well-being. In Latin America, a high percentage of the population is employed in the informal sector, which is unregulated by the State and insufficiently covered by existing legislation. Although these workers have access to income, it is precarious work. According to the International Labour Organization (2018), informal employment rates in the region rebounded in 2016, with 50% of workers employed in the informal

similar life expectancies at birth, such as Ecuador and Argentina, Haiti and Guyana, or Paraguay and El Salvador/Guatemala.

economy. In some countries, rates of informal employment are even higher. Various factors impact the labor market, such as neoliberal policies, gender inequality, rural versus urban, and different levels of productivity across economic sectors. Income inequality between different groups and social classes has persisted, marked by two notable phenomena: 1) the tendency towards reducing income inequality has declined significantly in recent years and 2) the share held by higher income groups has increased and, in some countries, may never have decreased at all. The simple average of the Gini coefficient calculated for the region decreased at a rate of 1.5% per year from 2002 to 2008, 0.7% per year from 2008 to 2014, and 0.4% per year from 2014 to 2016 (ECLAC, 2018).

The extractivist boom of the last three decades resulted in the reprimarization of Latin America's economies after previous efforts to implement import substitution industrialization. As a result, the region has become much more dependent on the extractive sectors than before. This has been accompanied by negative social and environmental consequences, including the acceleration of land concentration and a significant increase in conflicts due to the violation of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of entire populations. Today's neo-extractivism is no longer able to claim that it contributes to consistently addressing social divides (Svampa, 2017).

The enormous wealth of the ecosystem biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean, vitally important for both the region and the world, is now under threat. The mass extraction of resources, industrial agriculture, and sprawl, among other activities, are all negatively impacting the resilience of these resources.

The region is home to 12% of land surface, 20% of the earth's key biodiversity areas, more than 30% of available fresh water resources, and almost 50% of tropical rainforests. It also contains 29% of seed plants, 35% of mammals, 35% of reptiles, 41% of birds, and 51% of amphibians—representing a total of 122,000 species—along with a third of the freshwater fish fauna (5,000 species) and at least 33% of the plants cultivated by humans. It is a unique source of resources in terms of food, shelter, drinking water, fresh air, flood mitigation, disease and pest control, and more. The region contributes regulating

Map 1: Mining Conflicts in Latin America



Source: Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina database (January 2019).

services, such as pollination, climate regulation, and air quality, as well as non-material contributions, such as exceptional landscapes and sacred places. Additionally, the region contributes to the continuity and cultural identity of its populations.

Latin America and the Caribbean is home to 13% of the global population, but it represents 40% of the global ecosystem's capacity to produce the material resources used by humanity. These contributions directly support sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and tourism, which together represent 15% of the region's GDP, 17% of its

workforce, and 50% of its exports (Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2018).

However, under current governance systems, biodiversity and material resources have, on average, decreased over the past 12 years, although successful efforts to protect ecosystems and reverse environmental degradation show that progress is still possible.

**Biodiversity is under pressure in Latin America and the Caribbean: 65% of material resources are declining across all units of analysis, with 21% declining precipitously.**

Latin America and the Caribbean has a greater biocapacity per capita (5.3 global hectares [gha]) than the global average (1.6 gha), however, its ecological footprint per capita (2.7 gha) is only slightly lower than the global average (2.8 gha).

Ecological footprint and greenhouse gas emissions indicators facilitate an assessment of the impact of different global economies based on whether the economy is dominated by productive sectors that create more or less pollution.

There is a relatively significant correlation between GDP per capita and ecological footprint, i.e., the total sum of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the use of land-based (built-up areas, agriculture, livestock, or forestry activities, etc.) and ocean-based (fishing) natural resources.<sup>2</sup> However, a certain dispersion is also noted among countries with similar levels of GDP per capita and wide variations in ecological footprints,<sup>3</sup> as well as countries with wide variations in GDP per capita and similar ecological footprints.<sup>4</sup>

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2. The R<sup>2</sup> is 0.33 for 2016 (See Graph 2). The country with the greatest GDP per capita and the largest ecological footprint is Trinidad and Tobago, a result of the country's gas extraction and oil refining activities.

3. This group includes Chile, which exports natural resources and has a footprint of 4.3 gha, which is about twice the size of the footprint of Panama's service-based economy (2.3 gha). Although they have similar GDP per capita, Brazil's more diversified economy has an ecological footprint of 2.8 gha, while Colombia, a country with a significant agricultural sector, has an ecological footprint of just 1.7 gha.

4. The countries with major variations in GDP per capita (ranging from USD\$5,000 to USD\$15,000) have similar ecological footprints (less than 2 gbh).

Table 2: Environmental Degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean

<p><b>Forests</b></p> <p>Since 1990, forest areas have decreased in South America (-9.5%) and Central America (-25%), but have increased in the Caribbean (+43.4%).</p>	<p><b>Water</b></p> <p>Water-related challenges, including barriers to access, pollution, scarcity due to climate-change-induced droughts, and other issues, impact 50% of the region's population.</p>	<p><b>Habitats</b></p> <p>Agricultural intensification has led to habitat conversion, soil nutrient imbalances, and the intensive use of pesticides and other agrochemicals. This has negatively impacted ecosystem function, as well as air, water, and soil quality.</p>	<p><b>Climate</b></p> <p>In certain areas, climate-change-induced increases in temperature and rain fall have negatively impacted energy flow through species and ecosystems and are associated with increased die-offs of plants and animals.</p>	<p><b>Oceans</b></p> <p>Marine biodiversity, mangroves, and coral reefs have also experienced a substantial decline in recent decades.</p>
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Source: Compiled by author.

Graph 2. Ecological Footprint and GDP Per Capita in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016 (24 Countries)



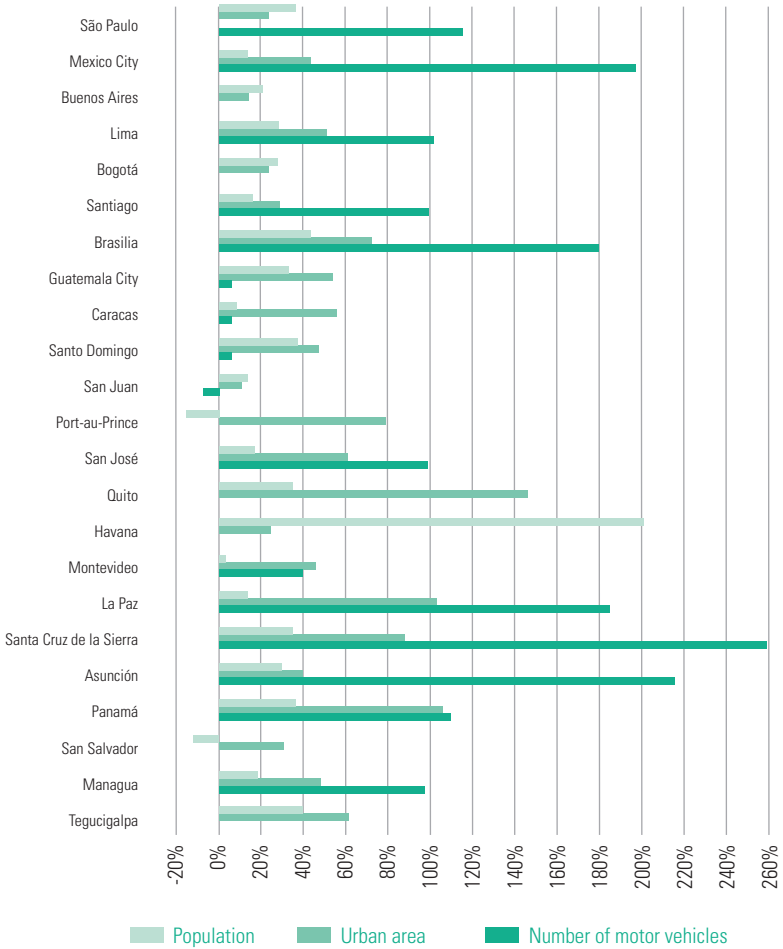
Source: FES Transformation, 2019.

In terms of land management, increasing needs for housing and the corresponding land speculation in urban areas have resulted in the State ceding control and management of urbanization processes to market mechanisms at both the national and local levels.

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most urbanized regions in the world (80%), second only to North America (81%). However, its cities are marked by significant inequalities and gaps in services and infrastructure, including mobility and the provision of water and sanitation services. Uncontrolled urbanization has led to widespread chaos, the current scale of which threatens inhabitants' quality of life, as well as the environmental sustainability of these settlements. Issues such as deforestation, noise pollution, the contamination and disappearance of rivers and wetlands, the deterioration of air quality, inadequate water, bad or no sewage treatment, congestion, and low quality public transport have worsened in urban and peri-urban areas.

Generally, the poorest settlements are located in the most environmentally vulnerable areas. Practically all of the Latin American

**Graph 3. Percentage Growth of the Population, Urban Areas, and Number of Motor Vehicles in Select Metropolitan Areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000-2015\***



Source: FES Transformation, 2019.

\*The mobility crisis in large cities stands out as one of the primary causes of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as one of the primary motivations behind urban social movements. This can be seen in the rapid growth of the number of motor vehicles in the region—generally around 7-8% annually—which is significantly higher than the demographic and



metropolises continue to grow rapidly, occupying more and more land and expanding urban areas, thus increasing and expanding real estate speculation. This rapid urban expansion destroys valuable environmental resources and steadily segregates the poorest in increasingly distant areas. Additionally, these types of cities generate high emissions that contribute to global warming, a result of changes in land use, increased travel due to sprawl, and greater energy consumption.

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economic growth rates. This increase represents the heyday of automobile use and is a reflection of the inefficiency of public transport systems, the lack of focus on walking and bicycling as standard modes of transportation, and unlimited urban expansion.

**CHAPTER II**

**The Social-Ecological  
Transformation  
Paradigm**



## 2.1 Social-Ecological Transformation

The enormous social and environmental challenges facing Latin American societies on the local, regional, and global scale, combined with the improved understanding that we now have of the interdependence of the economic, political, and environmental spheres, allow us to outline an analytical framework and present systemic proposals that are focused on true well-being without neglecting the conditions necessary to sustain human and natural life on Earth.

We understand social-ecological transformation as a process of systemic change, a transformation of the relationship between society and nature, and an overhaul of the social structures that facilitate—within the conditions of each society—virtuous cycles that support

the sufficient provision of basic goods, greater distributional equality, and improved ecological carrying capacity.

The system based on unlimited capital accumulation represents ongoing wealth concentration, violence and structural injustice among groups and social classes, and an increasingly unsustainable burden on the ecosystems that support economic activity.

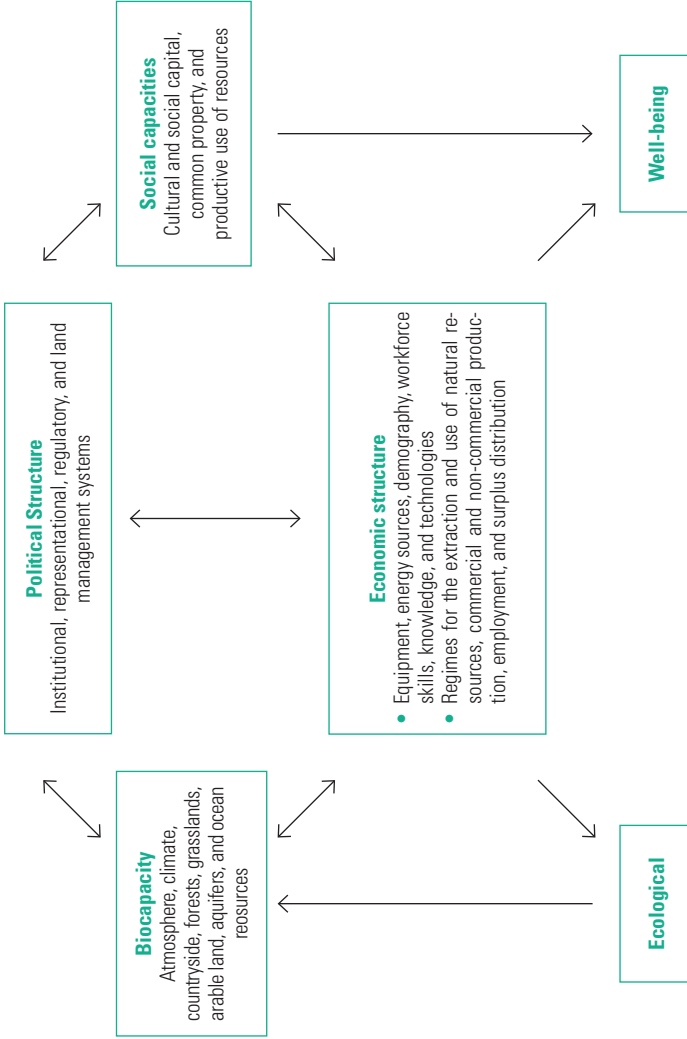
The process of social-ecological transformation encourages positive relationships between social capacities and biocapacities through political and economic structures that mediate the two and whose relationships determine both a society's well-being outcomes and ecological footprint.

Social-ecological transformation is focused on building a political and economic democracy that favors the creation and consolidation of social institutions and practices (i.e., social capacities) that produce sufficient levels of equitable well-being while preserving the conditions necessary for life (i.e., biocapacities).

## 2.2 The Principles of Social-Ecological Transformation

The two fundamental guiding principles of social-ecological transformation are solidarity and responsibility, which take the form of a commitment to the well-being of both present and future members of society. This proposal is based on the belief that the well-being of each individual depends, to a large extent, on the well-being of the other members of their community, as well as on the principle of responsibility to future generations.

Diagram 1: Social-Ecological Interactions



Source: FES Transformation, 2019.

## Fundamental Rights of Non-Domination and Social Democracy

We understand democracy as an associative political structure that ensures the fundamental guarantees—including civil and political rights—and enshrines economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights while sanctioning all forms of arbitrary discrimination. Based on this understanding, democracy must be governed by the constitutional-democratic principle whereby public power serves as the rule of law in order to avoid the arbitrary exercise of authority and oppression. Democracy must also incorporate a second principle of civic republicanism that requires the State to focus on reducing the dominance of private power (Pettit, 2009).

We believe that the primacy of the rule of law and of non-domination will result in broad forms of social democracy that recognize the interests and rights of citizens, as well as their potential to intervene in public life based on their position and collective action, including participating in both in the elaboration of the legislation that will be enacted by the representational and deliberative systems, as well as in direct decision-making regarding certain issues via popular consultation (Castel, 2013).

## The Principle of Equality of Opportunity and Reciprocity

A legitimate government must treat all its citizens with equal respect and consideration. Given that economic distribution within a society is, above all, a consequence of said society's legal and political system, egalitarian conditions must be present within said society in order for economic distribution to occur. We accept Ronald Dworkin's approach, which proposes that equality is based on the objective need for all human life to prosper—independently of circumstances—and of every individual's responsibility to define

his or her own life and pursue prosperity, with true equality defined as equality of resources available to each individual, rather than equality in the outcomes achieved with these resources. In order for individuals to make autonomous decisions, the political order must ensure access to the necessary resources and facilitate access to different social positions.

## The Ethics of Care and Recognition

One of the consequences of equal respect and consideration of all members of society is equitable reproduction and a reciprocal care for human dignity. As noted by Carol Gilligan (2013), “[w]ithin a patriarchal framework, care is a ‘feminine’ ethic. Within a democratic framework, care is a human ethic.” This concept is inextricably linked to the non-market work that is vital to the economy, as well as to democratic principles such as public autonomy and collective self-determination and with ecological values such as protecting nature and preserving it for future generations.

## The Principle of Sustainability

Sustainability assumes a dynamic balance between the social and environmental systems that assures the reproduction of the conditions necessary for life. Ecological sustainability can be defined as an ecosystem’s ability to remain diverse, resilient, and productive over time, as well as its ability to maintain the contributions that are vital for human life and the survival of other species. On the other hand, economic sustainability can be defined as an economic system’s capacity to remain diverse, resilient, and productive—ranging from domestic activities through the global economy. The demand for systemic sustainability is derived from the observed fragility of nature in the face of economic expansion and the compromised interdependence of both spheres. Systemic sustainability requires human societies to evolve within established limits to prevent the irreversible destruction



of fundamental components of nature or its functioning and to ensure the provision of the goods and services required by society.

## 2.3. The Purpose of Social-Ecological Transformation

Social-ecological transformation is focused on ensuring that each community is able to reach sufficient, just, and sustainable levels of well-being within a context of coexistence and diversity and on creating a society in which a good life can be lived well and where the public sphere is capable of using democratic frameworks to engage with and process the inevitable discrepancies that emerge from social and cultural pluralism, as well as the divergent interests that result from diverse productive structures. Achieving a good life requires the creation and development of a human existence based on dignity and self-respect. A good life is understood as a life lived in pursuit of the ethical purpose of each individual and with respect for the importance of a dignified life for others and the resilience of life on Earth, all within a context of justice.

We propose that wealth should no longer be conceived of as the unlimited accumulation of material goods and the infinite extraction of natural resources through human labor, but rather as the cultivation and creative reproduction of pluralistic and satisfactory living conditions for all members of human societies. This requires a transformation that increases the factors that contribute to well-being and decreases the ones that negatively impact well-being, justice, and the resiliency of nature.

Well-being entails respect for the integrity, freedom, and security of each person, and depends largely on inclusion in a community and in a society with rules and practices that support coexistence and reciprocity. Well-being also depends on the sufficient availability and equitable distribution of political, cultural, ecological, and economic resources within each family, community,

Table 1. Objectives and Policies of Social-Ecological Transformation

The Vision of Social-Ecological Transformation	
<p><b>Primary Objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen the social and democratic State and rule of law, coexistence, and collective participation and decision-making.</li> <li>2. Diversify the structure of the economy, preserve common goods, and expand access to collective consumption public goods and the social and care economy.</li> <li>3. Change the distribution structure to achieve universal access to the conditions necessary for a dignified existence and social interaction, as well as effective equality of opportunities among social classes, genders, and territories.</li> <li>4. Transform habitats so that they are more inclusive, culturally diverse, sustainable, and able to manage the causes and effects of daily violence and insecurity.</li> <li>5. Recover biocapacities and ensure their resilience.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Political Approaches</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the government's fiscal and strategic planning capacities, as well as its collaboration with social and economic actors, to support short-term and long-term social and ecological conversion.</li> <li>2. Support conversion through regulation and relative price changes to move towards resilient, circular, and decarbonized production, with plural and decentralized economic actors and increased investment in initiatives to create decent work, with a priority on: a) Highly productive, non-extractive, and knowledge-based selective value chains with global or regional integration that improve both backward and forward linkages; b) Production chains for basic goods, such as better housing, healthy food, and services for individuals and communities, with short production and consumption chains.</li> <li>3. Redistribute income through equitable compensation, especially in terms of gender and care work, combined with a universal basic income and a social protection system that helps citizens manage economic and social risks such as unemployment, illness, old age, and disability.</li> <li>4. Invest in knowledge, education, health, human development, infrastructure, and innovative land management systems in smart cities and integrated rural areas, including electromobility and public spaces that encourage safety, coexistence, and social and cultural diversity.</li> <li>5. Introduce functional and healthy consumption demand cycles; regulate and increase prices of unhealthy or environmentally harmful consumption practices; increase support of efforts to recover and strengthen ecosystem resilience by encouraging collective action and socially responsible behaviors.</li> </ol>

Source: FES Transformation, 2019.

and society, where the appropriation and use of these resources is individual in some cases and collective in others.

The primary objectives of social-ecological transformation include stronger, more inclusive institutions; citizen participation and pluralistic and collective decision-making within a context of non-discrimination, reduced inequality, and respect for cultural diversity; universal access to the conditions necessary for a dignified life and social interaction; the expansion of access to public and common goods; and a shift towards effective equality of opportunities among social groups and genders.

**CHAPTER III**

**Proposals for  
Social-Ecological  
Transformation  
in Latin America**



Social-ecological transformation must address two conditions that impact the present and compromise the future: structural inequality and environmental degradation. In order to address these two conditions, it is important to identify both the general challenges and the specific issues facing modern societies. In order to do so, two basic assumptions are required: first, the need for democracy and rule of law to ensure the effective exercise of social power, and second, the need to move towards a circular, plural, and inclusive economy that not only includes the multiple actors involved in material production, but also provides the inputs necessary for life and cares for the sustainability and reproduction of the conditions necessary for life.

To contribute to efforts to address structural inequality, multiple sections of the publication *Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America* focus on the challenges facing the equitable distribution of wealth, labor regimes and conditions, and the transition to become knowledge-based societies in which the development of science, technology, and innovation systems both supports and leverages the economy and well-being. Additionally—to support the harmonization of the economy and the environment—a series of sections considers the realities of various productive sectors (energy, extractive, agriculture, industry, and services) and of different territories (rural and urban areas) to establish policy proposals that channel the dynamics and activities of these sectors and territories to establish a positive relationship between the quality of human life and the protection and preservation of nature. A special section focuses on the challenges of cultural democracy in terms of preserving and promoting spaces dedicated to cultural creation and reproduction within plural societies.

### **3.1 Strengthening the Social and Democratic State and Rule of Law**

Within a context of increasing social polarization, daily violence, and environmental degradation, the actors involved in social-ecological transformation must be able to secure the majority support necessary to guarantee the effectiveness and primacy of the social and democratic State, as well as guarantee new rights that improve individual and collective living conditions and support the creation of a society that is more capable of positively integrating social and cultural diversity. This requires political advocacy to protect the public institutions responsible for serving the general interest from corruption and abuse by private individuals or oligarchic minorities that seek to capture the State for their personal benefit.

Political action should be focused not just on ensuring the legitimacy of origin of democracy, but also on the legitimacy of its exercise, as measured through the system's ability to produce tangible results on issues such as employment, wages, living conditions, gender equality, discrimination, and environmental protection and preservation. Political action should also focus on ensuring that democracy offers effective answers to the new and emerging demands of more urban and complex societies. In other words, we must create a social-ecological democracy.

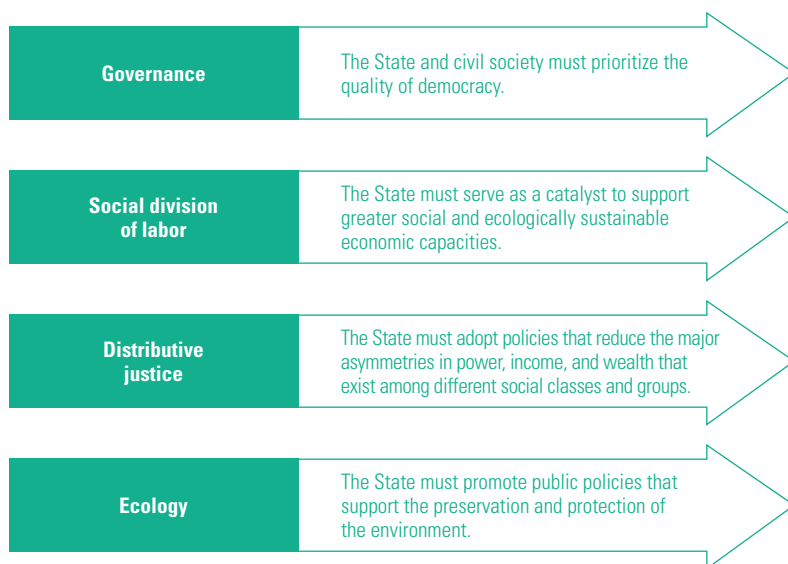
- The State must strengthen its institutions and continue to advance towards the creation of an open government that incorporates higher levels of citizen participation.
- Government activities must be subject to both active and passive transparency mechanisms and should include and consult social partners.
- Professional career systems must be implemented up through the highest levels of government in order to ensure candidates' suitability, including strengthening compliance requirements and merit-based promotions.
- Local actors must be included in order to provide legitimacy to collective action, and civil society organizations should assume the triple role of co-legislating, co-managing, and monitoring.
- The social and democratic State and the rule of law must actively promote the following: endogenous productive activities, the protection of ecosystem services, risk coverage, services to cover basic needs, effective equality of opportunities, and a sense of community in urban and regional planning.
- The State must create active public policies that can be monitored, including clear and available performance indicators that cover the appropriate scope, as well as a cultural policy agenda that is focused on progressively overcoming the cultural model of global capitalism.
- Some policies should be gradual, particularly those focused on creating long-term social and institutional consensus (e.g., policies to restructure the economy). However, urgent action is



needed to address the root causes of issues such as the manifest violation of civil and political rights, or the State’s inability to guarantee social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights.

Social-ecological democracy requires a strategic State that exercises sovereignty over its natural resources and common goods in the name of the collective interests of current and future generations; that grows the areas of the economy that satisfy fundamental needs without subsidizing obsolete activities and organizational models or rentier capitalism; and that is not subordinate to the market but instead governs it, decreasing the activities that destroy the economic and environmental fabric of society. The social-ecological State understands that development should not only be used to facilitate accumulation, but should also be used to support technical advances and productive reallocation, the effective use of externalities, and the improvements to coordination necessary to overcome the indivisibilities and complementarities of investment and production.

Diagram 1: Social Pacts and Priority Tasks



SOURCE: Compiled by author.

Social-ecological transformation requires state intervention in three main areas: a) the minimal functions associated with providing collective consumption goods, security, and economic management; b) the intermediate functions associated with partially or completely subsidized activities, such as education, health, and environmental protection; and c) the activist functions that constitute direct interventions in economic activity, such as industrial policy, access to land and property rights, regulating monopolies, consumer protection, and/or expanding common goods.

**Table 1. Role of the State in Social-Ecological Democracies**

<p><b>A. Minimal Functions: Provision of Public Goods</b></p> <p>Sovereign Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defense and foreign relations</li> <li>• Security and justice</li> <li>• Public administration</li> </ul> <p>Social and Economic Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Preventive public healthcare</li> <li>• Macroeconomic regulation</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Intermediate Functions: Regulation of External Effects, Risk Management, And Redistribution</b></p> <p>Promotion and Management of Positive Externalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal public education</li> <li>• Professional training and innovation</li> <li>• Environmental protection</li> </ul>	<p>Management of Collective and Individual Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention of catastrophes and assistance when necessary</li> <li>• Pension system</li> <li>• Insurance and public healthcare and disability services</li> <li>• Unemployment insurance and professional reintegration services</li> </ul> <p>Regulation of Employment and Direct Redistribution of Wealth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to employment</li> <li>• Regulations defining decent work, minimum wage, and collective bargaining</li> <li>• Cash-based transfers to directly support families and the economy</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Activist Functions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antitrust and decentralization policies, price regulation of natural monopolies, consumer protection initiatives</li> <li>• Commercial, industrial, and energy policies and intersectoral coordination among productive sectors</li> <li>• Support access to production assets</li> <li>• Support for the social and solidarity economy</li> <li>• Protection and expansion of common goods</li> <li>• Support for the circular economy</li> </ul>
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SOURCE: FES Transformation, 2019.

## 3.2 Moving Towards a Circular, Plural, and Inclusive Economy and Decent Work

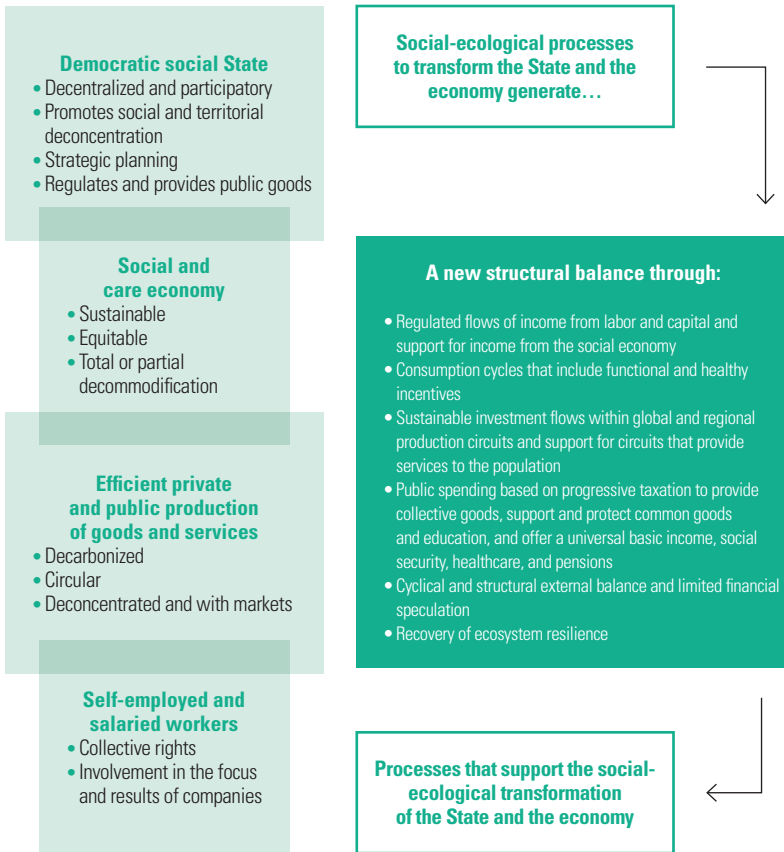
The system of unlimited accumulation and concentration of private capital that increasingly dominates around the world is based on creating and reproducing inequalities, appropriating the work and resources of others, and preying on the environment. The alternative to this system is a social-ecological transformation that paves the way for a mixed economy that is both subject to and supported by a democratic and social State with an active public sector involved in strategic areas, including tax collection, innovation, and value creation to promote full employment. The State must also support and protect social and solidarity and care economies that are able to thrive alongside a regulated and competitive private economy that respects dignified work standards and the circular economy and is focused on generating income, consumption, and investment flows that encourage sustainable, healthy, and equitable transformations.

This new economy—which incorporates the diverse structural-historical traditions of economic analysis—is a democratic economy in that it expressly requires economic agents to act within a framework of democratically established, evaluated, and controlled norms. It also allocates resources using a combination of centralized and decentralized models based on market prices or using price controls, as necessary. This economy presents an alternative to the deregulated market economy in which production and satisfying the needs of the public is focused on maximizing profits and the unlimited accumulation of capital, regardless of the distributional and environmental impacts.

The purpose of this transformation is to create the institutional conditions necessary to shift the focus economic agents towards maximizing innovation, increasing dynamism, and generating creative and equitably paid jobs within circular, decarbonized, and resilient production processes. Our approach maintains that economic concentration must end and seeks to take action to address the crises that

emerge as a result of unregulated markets, including the political, social, and territorial inequality that is produced and reproduced in Latin America and the loss of ecosystem services, biodiversity, and cultural diversity.

Diagram 2. Social-Ecological Transformation to Support a Democratic and Social State and a Plural, Equitable, Efficient, and Resilient Economy



SOURCE: FES Transformation, 2019.

This new economy focused on equitable and sustainable well-being requires a transformation of the regimes of production, distribution, and consumption that are characteristic of the extractive model in order to move towards a circular economy that ensures the satisfaction of the fundamental human needs of every member of society within a context of resilient resource management and use.

We cannot allow the unfettered, concentrated extraction of non-processed or minimally processed materials to continue to self-regulate. This system must yield to the rhythms and productive structures that are needed to maintain environmental, social, territorial, and cultural equilibrium. The economy must move beyond the linear model based on extraction, manufacturing, consumption, and disposal to shift towards an economy based on durable products that are used, repaired, disassembled, and then recycled. Additionally, it must incorporate industrial symbiosis in which the waste or by-products of an industry or industrial process are used as the raw materials or inputs for others. The social appropriation of monopoly rents, rentier cities, and the regulated extraction of natural resources will serve as a key instrument for financing investment programs that support productive transformation. Converting the energy matrix to renewable sources and transforming agricultural production into sustainable models will play a fundamentally important role in the protection of ecosystem services.

Economic democracy is based on a plural economy that acts against the unlimited concentration of capital and actively incentivizes, coordinates, and designs the broadest possible participation of public, private, and social agents in productive activities and the provision of services, as well as in the distribution of the benefits of these activities.

- The process of economic democratization must be supported by policies that support the deconcentration and diversification of productive activities and the redistribution of income, increased access to productive assets, risk coverage, and educational opportunities, as well as improvements to urban and rural environments.

- Additional policies must also encourage insertion into global value chains that increase manufacturing value added while boosting local economies and contributing to their environmental sustainability.
- A social and solidarity economy must incorporate the high percentage of people currently employed in the informal economy into formal jobs.
- Associative economic entities will be encouraged and subsidized using public resources to the extent that they are focused on social outcomes rather than maximizing profit.
- The care economy, which is a major contributor to sustaining life within societies and has primarily been the unpaid and invisible work of women, should be integrated into the social and solidarity economy through public subsidies and community support.
- Public employment programs must effectively value the care work provided to children and the elderly (particularly those that are unable to care for themselves) and/or for disabled citizens, as well as value of community integration services.
- Legislation against harassment and all types of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, must be passed and enacted, and steps must be taken to address the gender wage gap as quickly as possible. Additionally, action must be taken to incorporate women into formal employment and to reach gender parity in government and political positions, private companies, and productive activities.

Economic democracy will be inclusive to the extent that it expands and extends the benefits of economic activities to the full population, including taking action to redistribute capital income through tax and wealth transfer systems. This is a pending challenge in Latin America, the most unequal region in the world.

- Full employment policies will favor the reduction of asymmetries in the labor market and increase real wages, generating virtuous cycles of redistribution and equitable economic growth.

- Societies seeking to improve their population's well-being should ensure that their redistributive policies include the provision of a broad range of urban public goods and social and cultural infrastructure, along with full access to ecosystem services.
- A broad range of “green taxes” will help discourage activities that negatively impact health, have high emissions levels, or are focused on the exploitation of natural resources, while also creating a second dividend that can be used for other social programs.

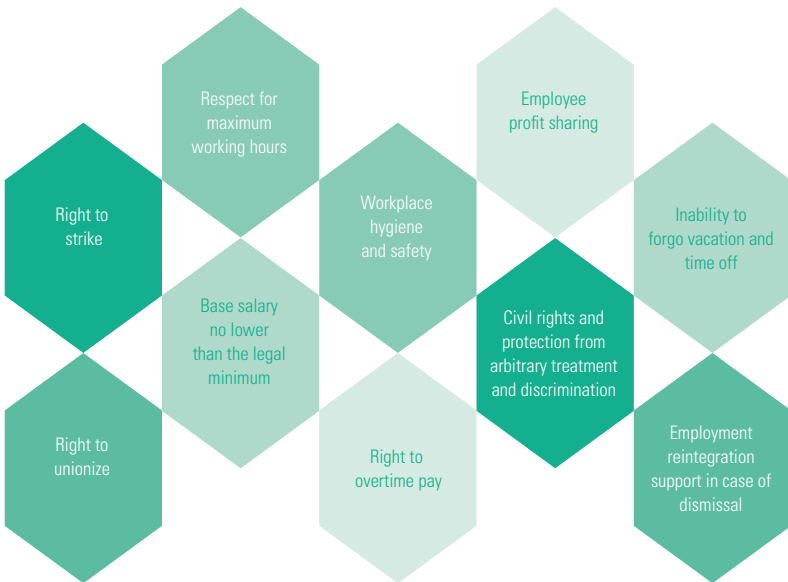
Decent work is a necessary condition for an equitable and sustainable economy of well-being. Workers' dignity depends on companies' hiring power, and this must be regulated.

- Within the current system of companies and institutions, the pressures of commodification and profit maximization conflict with personal, family, and community care activities. As a result, it is necessary to create and implement policies that protect these activities, including policies that establish and enforce standards regarding working time, harmonize and accommodate both work and personal responsibilities, and take steps to change the culture of face time.
- The key factor in the primary distribution of income is public intervention to decrease the asymmetries of power that favor capital in order to balance the equation in favor of employees while also facilitating the dynamic stability of employment.
- A flexicurity approach is needed that does not undermine employees' rights while allowing production units to adapt to their changing circumstances, giving employees the opportunity to increase their income based on the company's increased productivity, retain a source of income in case of unemployment, and access training for labor market reinsertion. In other words, it is a component of shared participation and security in the employment relationship.
- Expanding the social responsibility of private sector entities requires a reassessment of the purpose of a company that

goes beyond a focus on maximizing profits to include the company's social impact, quality of its products, ethical business practices, humanized employment relations, and environmentally friendly activities.

- Labor legislation must cover more than just individual employment agreements—a fundamental aspect of social cohesion—in recognition of the fact that these agreements may not be mutually beneficial or may be incapable of preserving human dignity at work or generating income distributions that are socially tolerable.

Diagram 3: Codification of Labor Relations



SOURCE: Compiled by author.



## **3.3 Changing Consumption Practices, Production Systems, and Land Management**

An in-depth critique of capitalism has shown the urgent need to modify certain consumption patterns that are closely related to this system. From a social-ecological perspective, changing these patterns could help support humanity's efforts to overcome its current destructive tendencies when combined with scientific and technological developments in the various productive sectors and new ways of framing social problems and land use.

Implementing alternatives to the increasingly unsustainable consumption patterns that are destroying the social fabric of society and the environment will require implementing cultural changes to balance the satisfaction of material needs with good living. Similarly, current and future advances in clean energy technologies, sustainable food systems, and changes to land use and urban and rural development present real opportunities to increase the well-being of the majority, reduce inequality, contain environmental degradation, and end greenhouse gas emissions in Latin America and the Caribbean by the middle of the 21st century.

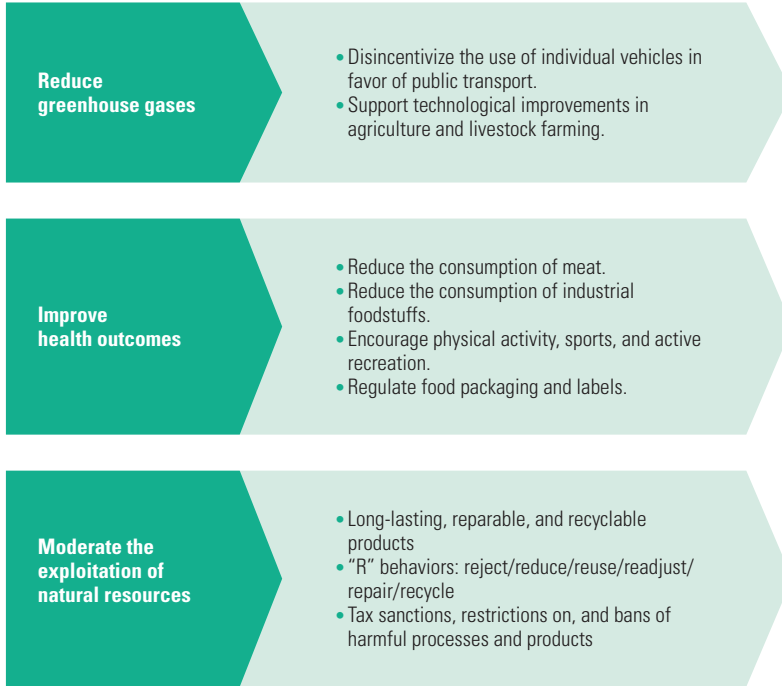
### **Aligning Consumption with Good Living**

The consumption of goods and services is essential for sustaining life. However, capitalism's need for incessant and accelerated expansion to support its production systems has disrupted the balance of consumption cycles. Detaching from artificially constructed desires (such as conspicuous consumption and waste), combined with a new understanding of the simpler pleasures of life—including enjoying free time and living the good life—and ideas and behaviors that appreciate

and respect nature, can help dismantle the counterproductive consumption that defines our current social and cultural model.

- In order to move towards less harmful forms of consumption, it is necessary to promote and support educational and cultural changes, as well as changes to the way we organize our day-to-day life and social relationships, including within family, our community, at work, on public transport, and during our free time, among others.
- These social and cultural transformations are only viable if they are systemic. In other words, they must simultaneously involve consumers, companies, and the State in a synergistic relationship that incorporates environmental concerns, takes action to address them, and effectively impacts production and consumption chains.
- This new economic structure must include drastic changes to our modes of consumption and our lifestyles, including abandoning the use of goods and services that are energy and natural resource intensive.
- These lifestyle changes must include changes to the gender division of labor, which has traditionally negatively impacted women within both the labor market and the family.
- A sustainable society must also be a society of care work, as caring for each other should be considered a principle of sustainability within a society that prioritizes its citizens' everyday needs.

Diagram 4: Changes to Consumption Practices



SOURCE: Compiled by author.

## Learning to Transform

Creating the conditions necessary to promote true knowledge-based societies and economies is one of the greatest challenges facing social-ecological transformation. Increasing levels of well-being depends on creating structures and institutions that improve the learning capacities of the population as a whole and increase subsequent multiplier effects in order to reduce productivity gaps between companies and between workers, as well as to optimize production processes in terms of performance and environmental sustainability.

- Economic sectors (industrial, services, energy, etc.), must respond as quickly as possible to societal and environmental challenges, as well as incorporate innovations that emerge from the technological revolution.
- Steps must be taken to address the negative effects of using patents to appropriate and profit from technical and scientific advances, as well as the path dependence of companies, research centers, and countries. This includes, among other activities, the urgent need to establish and connect open and inclusive systems of knowledge creation. Considering that the unregulated market tends to widen the technological gap rather than close it, it is necessary to establish effective connections between private entities, public institutions, and government science and technology systems.

## Moving Towards Energy Democracy and Sustainability

Latin America and the Caribbean has an energy surplus thanks to the abundance of natural resources present in the region. Despite this, the region faces serious challenges in terms of achieving equitable access to energy and democratically managing the social conflict that often emerges as a result of price fixing, tariffs, and hydroelectric and hydrocarbon projects that have significant social and environmental impacts. Additionally, the region is still struggling to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita, which are above the levels necessary to minimize the global temperature increase.

Technological developments offer a range of clean energy and renewable alternatives—including fuels with zero net emissions such as hydrogen and synthetic fluids and more traditional sources such as wind or solar. However, social-ecological transformation requires understanding that energy is not an end in itself, but rather a tool to improve quality of life within a rights framework that is aligned with the rights of nature.

It is necessary to understand that the energy matrix (source-generation-transmission-consumption) is part of the energy system, which includes different agents and processes (companies, oligopolies, and oligopsonies; sectoral conflicts, federal governments, public policies, and citizen demands; the production matrix; large- and small-scale consumers, etc.) that are involved in complex interactions in which what is ultimately at stake is the well-being of humanity and of nature.

Three strategic actions are clearly necessary:

- Establish deadlines to close the carbon cycle and move towards an energy matrix based on the sustainable use of renewable sources. This includes setting goals to effectively reduce energy extraction and use.
- Take strong action against energy inequality and eliminate energy poverty, which requires overcoming the unsuitable, insecure, and insufficient conditions in which low-income sectors access energy in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Energy should be considered a fundamental tool necessary to strengthen mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth.
- Democratize energy policies, separating them from federal governments and circles of so-called “experts,” and open them to public discussion. It is both possible and necessary to expand and deepen the technical and social assessment of energy policies in order to bring them in line with the relevant contexts and ensure that they incorporate the best available alternatives.

## Moving Beyond Neo-Extractivism

Putting a stop to the extractive frontier, particularly mining, oil, and gas, is one of the most fundamental steps required as part of social-ecological transformation. Latin America’s historical dependence on natural resources has resulted in a “race to the bottom,” in which countries continue to loosen regulations, to the severe detriment of social and environmental interests, allowing extractive activities to expand to the most remote regions or into areas that, until recently,

were restricted or protected. This expansion then results in increased violations of the rights of local communities.

In terms of hydrocarbons alone, Latin America and the Caribbean increased its oil extraction from 493 to 525 million tons per year (a 6.4% increase in production) and increased its gas production by 22% from 2008 to 2016.

Although these extractive sectors—independently of the governments in power and their political affiliations—will continue to hold a central place in the region’s productive matrix due to the underdevelopment of other sectors, they cannot be allowed to continue to expand as they have over the past few decades.

In order to emerge from the current predatory extractivism towards a more reasonable system of extraction, we propose a progressive transition to implement a series of public policies that contribute to the creation of an environmental, social, economic, and cultural balance that ensures that investments respond to public interests. These policies must focus on creating a diversified and sustainable production matrix where extractive sectors play a complementary role until the system gradually reaches a point where only absolutely necessary extractive activities are permitted.

Among other things, this transition will require the following:

- Greater density and presence of the State outside of capital cities to promote decentralization and increase the role of subnational institutions in decision-making.
- A strong, cross-sector environmental authority that has autonomy and political influence.
- A discussion regarding the need for economic, environmental, and social criteria that go beyond the current focus on extracting as much as possible in the least possible amount of time and are used to guide extractive investments.
- Guarantee of the citizen participation and right to prior consultation of rural and indigenous communities.

Additionally, these transitions must identify and establish protected or exclusion zones that are off limits to extractive activities,

particularly large-scale and intensive activities, in order to protect threatened ecosystems.

## Sustainable Agriculture

More than any other region, Latin America and the Caribbean continues to depend on two competing agricultural models: large-scale cultivation of export crops—primarily grains, oilseeds, and beef—and a system of small-scale farmers and campesinos that produce diversified crops for personal consumption and the internal market. The first model was implemented as part of the “Green Revolution,” which increased agricultural production and food availability (although not necessarily high-quality food) worldwide, but was unable to eradicate world hunger or address the issue of unequal food distribution and resulted in massive environmental consequences. The second model—which is based on family agriculture and incorporates traditional indigenous and campesino knowledge—represents an alternative that includes sustainable agricultural practices while also improving the lives of farmers and their communities.

It is necessary to prioritize the creation of a new paradigm that makes obtaining food—in terms of quantity, quality, and safety—as well as other goods and services, compatible with maintaining the productive capacity of agroecosystems and the integrity of the environment at the local, regional, and global levels.

The agro-exportation model creates dependency on external technology and inputs that compromise a nation’s autonomy and food sovereignty. Additionally, this system is based on the concentrated production of just a handful of crops and utilizes wide swaths of land, which negatively impacts biodiversity and ecological functions, including biotic regulation, which then causes a spiral in which the increased use of pesticides and fertilizers negatively impacts biodiversity, leads to soil degradation, pollutes the availability and quality of water, causes negative health outcomes due to toxic residue present in foodstuffs, and increases deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. The system’s focus on maximizing the interests of

shareholders without considering the environmental damage that it causes justifies the recognition of this model as a form of “extractive agriculture.” The transformation of agricultural systems in the region requires the following:

- Support for smallholder and family farms, as they have the potential to provide sufficient food to meet existing needs in terms of quality and quantity and contribute to “cooling down the planet” (decreasing global warming).
- Moving past an input-dependent model based on monocultures towards one that is based on increased biodiversity and respect for ecosystem functions. This requires the active participation of the State, including adequate legislation, support and guidance, availability of credit, and access to the appropriate technologies, as well as knowledge creation and access.

This transition will decrease the use of inputs, energy demand—particularly energy produced using fossil fuels—and provide a better standard of living for farmers. This will subsequently decrease pressure on cities by addressing many of the causes of rural-urban migration. It will also result in improved nutrition, as this system supports the varied diet produced by family farming systems, which is low in cost and high in nutritional content.

## Decreasing Industry’s Ecological Footprint and Increasing Integrated Production

Latin America must abandon its current focus on the reprimarization of its economies—defined by low industrial growth, low density, limited integrated production, technological backwardness, and limited integration into global value chains. The region must instead promote a robust and clean reindustrialization process with a limited ecological



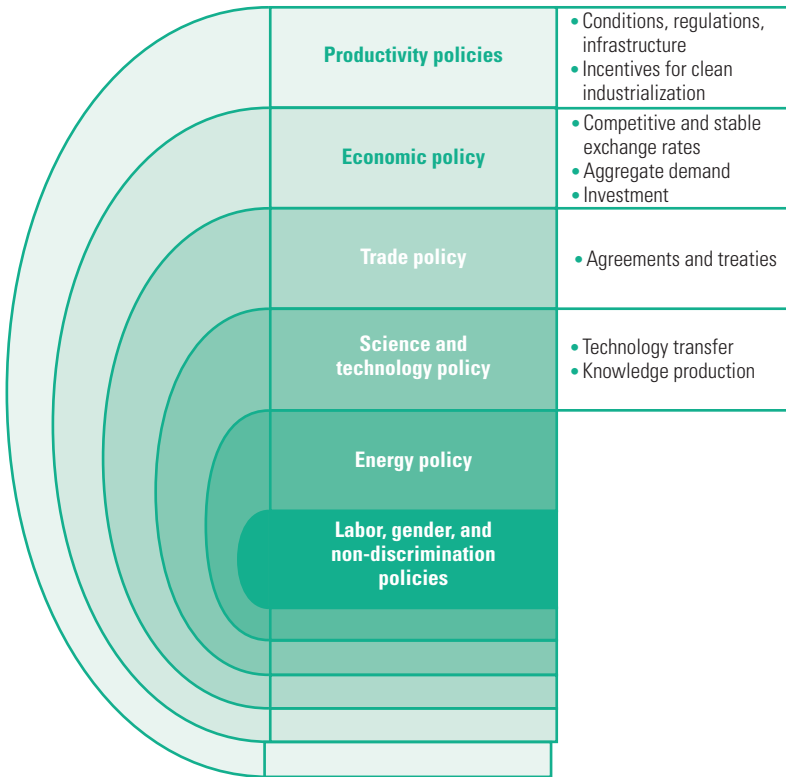
footprint to energize and diversify the productive matrix, expand and improve the quality of jobs, and eventually allow the region to overcome its dependence on the extractive and primary industry model.

As a result of the new global production system, low levels of industrialization and diversification in the region have not only continued, they've gotten worse. Over the past few years, Latin America has had the lowest annual industrial production growth rate in the world: 1.4% versus the 3% global average. This represents a decrease in the region's participation in global manufacturing value added. In general terms, this highlights the tendency towards deindustrialization within the region, a result of its dependence on commodities, natural-resource based manufacturing, and low-productivity service offerings (ECLAC, 2016).

- Moving toward a new, diversified, and decentralized production matrix that is environmentally responsible and features high levels of linkages between sectors and knowledge-intensive activities would provide greater advantages and opportunities.
- This requires countries to reindustrialize and establish local, national, and regional production chains that include robust state-owned companies and production cooperatives.
- The active role played by the State must include the guarantee of the conditions, norms, and infrastructure necessary to reduce industry's ecological footprint, including productive development policies that support the emergence of new, clean industrial sectors, as well as the range of companies that offer services to these sectors, all supported by a sustainable and inclusive energy model.
- In order to develop self-reliant value chains in Latin America, it is necessary to expand the purchasing power of national and regional internal markets, as well as use public procurement to encourage innovative, small businesses.
- Improving the productive structure is necessary in order to encourage social development, but it isn't enough, and the impacts of these improvements are not guaranteed (Caetano, De Armas & Torres, 2014). These actions must be supported

by a labor policy that guarantees the redistribution of benefits for workers and offers alternatives for the jobs lost as a result of the decline of industries and sectors impacted by new technologies and the additional qualifications that will be required by new positions.

Diagram 5: Policy Complementarities for Reindustrialization



SOURCE: Compiled by author.

## Rethinking the Service Sector

Latin American societies are complex urban societies whose organization and management depend on an effective service infrastructure. These services are essential for the construction of more equal societies. The social, political, and institutional progress of each society is defined by the quality of public and private services, as well as the existence of institutions that ensure the public's access to these services.

In Latin America, the service sector represents close to 70% of regional GDP and approximately 6 out of 10 jobs. The service sector represents the primary source of employment in urban areas in all Latin American countries. Despite the importance of this sector, it is defined by precariousness and informality. The situation within care work services is even worse, as this labor is often invisible, and the burden often falls to women.

In order to understand the evolution of the service sector in Latin America, primarily within advanced business services, it is important to keep in mind the incomplete industrialization of the region and its role in the international division of labor. Despite the extreme heterogeneity of growth in Latin America, none of the region's economies—including the more diversified ones—have been capable of reproducing the virtuous cycles of investment, innovation, skills, and cooperation among different-sized businesses, development of new processes and projects, and increased labor productivity that are representative of high-income, industrialized countries and some emerging economies.

The qualitative improvement of the service sector is key in order to promote productive diversification and create virtuous cycles with other economic activities. The intelligent expansion of the service sector is crucial in order to create added value and quality jobs, improve social conditions, and build more productive and egalitarian societies characterized by increased well-being and environmental sustainability.

In Latin America, changes must be made to the way public policies approach the service sector. First of all, policies and institutions must strengthen public services, as well as companies and self-employed

workers that provide services to production activities and individuals (primarily care services).

Creating more egalitarian societies requires institutions that are committed to offering quality public services, including education, nutrition and public health, social integration services, and childcare and care for dependent elders, the physically disabled, and members of society who suffer chronic addictions.

- Special efforts must be made to strengthen and expand public services (health, education, and utilities) in order to develop knowledge-intensive business services, as well as formalize home and personal care services.
- Universal access to quality care services is essential, not only from an economic/productive and job creation perspective, but also because these services are fundamental for sustaining human life.
- In terms of production services, the objective is to expand knowledge-based economies across an integrated set of industries and services that efficiently take advantage of digital technologies, biotechnology, materials science, data science, and related technologies to support their integration into industry, agriculture, and mining and create local employment. There should also be a focus on promoting technological innovation that uses engineering and product design services to manufacture more resistant products that include replacement parts in order to increase product lifetimes and the use of materials that reduce natural resources used per unit produced.
- Across sectors (mining, agriculture, manufacturing, etc.), efforts to improve the quality of services should focus on intercompany relations of production and internal, subregional, and regional supply chains in an effort to improve the quality of the final product for export. Policies should focus on increasing the density of intercompany and inter-industry relations among companies of all sizes and across all sectors of the economy, rather than on generating foreign currency export revenues.

## Organizing Land Management

Land and territory represent more than just a place—they represent the social construction where lives are lived, a space that is transformed by the networks of human connection that create meaning, establish identity, and create and recognize symbolic references. They are the place where history, tradition, and everyday life connects with the surroundings: the landscapes, the soil, the geology, the vegetation, the fauna, and the climate.

However, there exists a reductionist concept of territory that considers it to be a static and inert geographic space with no rights that is susceptible to appropriation and subsequent transformation into a factor of production. Additionally, a biased dichotomy positions the urban/modern/developed against the rural/traditional/wild. This has led to the authorization and justification of the aggressive invasion of the countryside by the uncontrolled expansion of urban areas and the development of water, forestry, mining, or waste disposal projects.

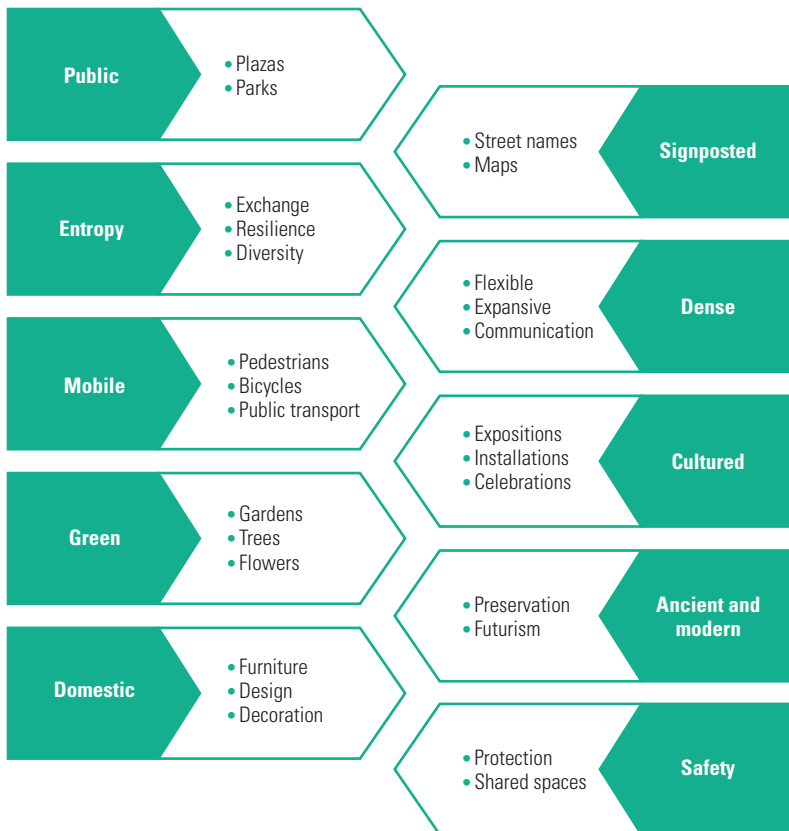
From our perspective, the concept of territory represents a complex and interdependent totality that includes urban and rural contexts, environmental and social issues, and economic and cultural matters. To the extent that it is political, territorial organization is, above all, an issue of the State: all territorial organization processes are political processes, as they define land use and values using mechanisms such as negotiation and debate, or impose them through the use of force.

Latin America has been characterized by rapid, chaotic, segregated, and unsustainable urbanization that benefits and protects the interests of capital and is dominated by speculative excess, a reflection of governments' abdication of their responsibilities in terms of organization and planning.

Dysfunctional physical structures complicate mobility, increase social and economic costs, and decrease productivity within cities. Socio-spatial segregation of the poor has led to an explosion of precarious and informal settlements in increasingly remote and dangerous areas. Speculative processes result in feuds among developers, banks, builders, and landowners, which distort and block access to

housing solutions. Housing policies have become so twisted within the context of economic liberalism that they've reached the point of total nonsense, including the overproduction of housing, constructions built in terrible locations, and/or a lack of basic essentials. Movements protesting the lack of housing have found themselves joining together with movements protesting the poor quality of the housing that does exist.

Diagram 6: Conditions for a Habitable City According to Hugo Macdonald



SOURCE: Macdonald, H. (2019).

This urban crisis is associated with the disintegration of the social fabric, a lack of shared gathering spaces, and the intensification of conflict and social unrest. It is also important to consider cities' key role as major contributors to the environmental crisis, including pollution (air, water, soil, noise, visual, etc.), high greenhouse gas emissions, and an ever-expanding ecological footprint.

States and governments must establish the legal, political, and economic conditions and the infrastructure necessary to support territorial transformations, including capturing the added value from these projects. This transformation should include the following:

- Rebuilding the foundations of politics and public administration to effectively encourage citizen participation in land management planning (territorial governance).
- Fighting against socio-spatial inequality in rural and urban areas, including recognizing social, cultural, and spatial diversity while respecting communities' land rights and complying with free, prior, and informed consultation.
- Prioritizing public policies focused on urban renewal, with a particular focus on the most decayed and precarious neighborhoods and settlements.
- Requiring the inclusion of low-income housing in all housing development projects.
- Decarbonizing territories, particularly cities, and prioritizing public transportation and non-motorized transportation in public policies and budgets, as well as mixed-use developments.
- “Decommercializing” urban spaces by developing policies and instruments focused on land registries and real estate taxes (value capture, subsidies for improvements, property taxes) to reduce corruption within real estate development and effectively recover the increased value of urban properties. These benefits should then be reinvested to support programs to improve low-income housing and environments, infrastructure, social facilities, and public spaces.
- Recovering the essence of the public within territorial governance requires strengthening territorial policies and develop-

ping accountability and transparency mechanisms for planning decisions and land use and urban development projects.

- Working to prevent the privatization of basic services and social facilities based on the principle that these are civil rights, rather than market goods. Prioritizing the renewal and development of quality public spaces in urban neighborhoods and rural communities.
- Positioning the recovery of biodiversity and the respect for natural resources, especially water, as a top priority within public policies, including passing legislation to establish participatory plans to manage wetlands, forests, jungles, and mangroves and potentially even subsidizing rural and indigenous communities to ensure their care.

### 3.4 Cultural Transformation

Culture is the way through which we build and establish meaning that provides the basis for our identity and our social, economic, and political practices. Through contact with each other and with our immediate natural environment, we define multiple “we’s” (inside, imagined community, security, understanding) and infinite “others” (outside, uncertainty, fear, lack of understanding) and we understand and confer value to our activities, as well as interpret and reformulate the indicators of difference.

In Latin America, the history and heritage of its native peoples have mixed with influences from Europe and the United States, and now, with the ideas and content that is available through communication technologies and globalization. The cultural wealth and diversity of the Latin American continent, in certain ways magnified within the current contexts of easy and intense connections, is nevertheless threatened by capitalism, which imposes certain thought patterns and behaviors and dissolves and marginalizes social and cultural identities.

From this perspective, culture is political: each society—independent of the role of the State—creates a political culture that is defined and strengthened by the evolution of the processes that make up that



society's cultural policy. The objectives of a cultural policy within the framework of social-ecological transformation include preserving and promoting cultural spaces that allow people to recognize and define both themselves and others, and, in general, that serve to create and identify meaning within conditions of autonomy, respect, and integration. Defending cultural democracy includes defending local values and conceptions, as well as ancestral knowledge, while also supporting increased access to information, knowledge, education, and the arts as universal public goods, along with freedom of expression and creativity.

We propose the integration of the local into the global: global participation that incorporates the traditions and particularities associated with specific territories in such a way as to enable new technologies; connections between the immediate, day-to-day activities and political life and the virtual world of the internet; shaping new sensibilities and new social movements through exchanges that encourage reciprocal cross-pollination and dialogue.

We need to recognize and understand other ways of life, as well as other ways of interacting with each other and with nature, in order to identify comprehensive strategies that recognize the sacred unity between body and mind, culture and nature. In other words, we must create a culture that allows us to exercise the right to autonomy while living with and respecting others and complying with the agreements and rules established to offer equal access to the potential for self-determination and governance. We must build a democratic culture that encourages seeking consensus amid difference and strengthens the right to dissent.

- The opportunity exists to renew our understanding of the meaning of life by approaching the exercise of ordinary virtues as the field where “we” and the “other” converge (Ignatieff, 2018). All types of cultures consider solidarity, reciprocity, and justice as objectives necessary to protect and care for their members. Defending these virtues as objectives necessary to support the survival of life on Earth and creating conditions for their full exercise in all communities is an extremely powerful political platform.

- Cultural and creative industries, today subordinated to capital and its transformation of cultural products into commodities, can support the creation and implementation of alternative systems to counter the ideational systems that currently hold symbolic power (Banet-Weiser & Castells, 2017).
- Many Latin American social movements have cultural undertones: the struggles of indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Romani communities, of campesinos, fishing communities, miners, and the urban poor, as well as feminist and student movements, all seek to transform the cognitive structures that legitimize domination and control, limit the development of diversity, refuse to recognize these communities, and deny them the autonomy to design their own futures. These voices are crying out for a different way of life and they must be respected and given the opportunity to enrich society.
- Experts and scholars, employees and professionals, creators and producers, all recognize, now more than ever, the need to create a social and political agreement that supports and protects culture. This requires policies that value the arts and ensure a dignified life for artists, creators, and teachers.
- Using education to address the deep inequality of opportunities facing young adults in Latin America will require enormous institutional efforts and the mobilization of human and material resources on a massive scale. Additionally, if the goal is to establish better forms of social interaction and coexistence and improve humanity's relationship with nature, it is clear that education systems must be fundamentally overhauled in order to create a space that supports socialization and the transmission of shared values and responsible behaviors.

## 3.5 New Metrics for Social-Ecological Transformation

Social-ecological transformation requires a general rethinking of the various dimensions of well-being, as well as the creation of a new set of ways to measure the goals and achievements associated with well-being. The economic, social, distributive, and environmental situation in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot and should not be reduced to a set of indicators. However, gathering data regarding the primary dimensions of well-being, combined with the careful use of this data, can help assess and interpret different situations and inequalities, support their recognition, encourage public discussion, and contribute to the creation and implementation of effective follow up.

Our proposal seeks to take advantage of the work already done to create indices that support more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative measurement of the processes of social-ecological transformation.

Traditional indicators that tend to equate economic growth with development ignore important dimensions of the economy—especially the care economy—and do not consider the social or environmental externalities of productive processes. Transition indicators include synthetic, multidimensional indicators that incorporate different dimensions beyond the monetary value of production or revenue and serve as initial benchmarks for the development of alternative indicators. The most well-known of these synthetic, multidimensional indicators is the basic version of the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index, which assigns equal weight to three different dimensions: standard of living (gross national income per capita), education (mean of years of schooling for adults and expected years of schooling for children), and health (life expectancy at birth). Other efforts, such as the Social Progress Index, expand the synthetic indicators included to consider social and institutional outcomes that go beyond a sole focus on economic indicators.

Alternative indicators, meanwhile, combine anthropocentric and ecocentric approaches and focus on mainstreaming; they seek to

measure correlations between different aspects of economic growth and well-being. Universities, civil society organizations, and international organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, have developed a wide variety of these types of indicators. The global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals is an important example. Since 2016, this framework has used a set of 39 indicators to measure compliance with the goals established by the United Nations.

We believe that social-ecological transformation requires this type of metrics, as they combine monetary aspects (e.g., cash flows and physical stocks) with the perceptions of members of society regarding their living conditions.

*Enough! The Urgent Need for Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America*, provides a reference indicator matrix, as well as an analysis framework that establishes the dimensions of social-ecological transformation, the principles that guide this transformation, the gaps used to demonstrate inequality, and the existing indicators (traditional, transitional, and alternative). Below, we've included a basic matrix with generally available data that can be used to establish an initial evaluation of the economic, social, and environmental realities of the region.

**Table 2. Indicators to Evaluate Social-Ecological Transformation**

Scope	Indicators
Economic reality	GDP per capita, unemployment rate, tax controls, R&D spending as a percentage of GDP, export concentration
Social reality	Life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, expected years of schooling for children and young adults, young adults that are neither employed nor in education or training, Gini coefficient and Palma ratio, composite index of gender inequality
Environmental reality	Percentage of final energy generated using renewable sources, carbon dioxide emissions per capita, total forest area and rate of change, biocapacity in global hectares, ecological footprint

SOURCE: Compiled by author.



## **CONCLUSIONS**

A long-term perspective facilitates the identification of key factors that contribute to the serious social and environmental problems that are now impacting humanity's peaceful coexistence and compromising living conditions on a planetary scale.

The current world-system, dominated by globalized capitalism, encourages and reproduces uncontrolled patterns of violence and predation that increase and exacerbate global crises.

Latin America and the Caribbean faces enormous challenges in order to confer legitimacy to its political systems, counteract inequality and exclusion, overcome its dependence on natural resource extractivism, and curb the deterioration of the environment.

An understanding of the systemic interrelation of societies with nature and of the need for dynamic balance clearly shows that social-ecological transformation is urgently needed, and it must incorporate a fundamental focus on life.

The history of the Latin American continent, the culture of its peoples, the lessons learned, and advances made in modern scientific thought all contribute to creating an understanding of well-being as equitable and sustainable good living based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility, which offers hope for the region's societies.

The proposals presented in *Enough!: The urgent need for Social-Ecological transformation in Latin America*, require strengthening the social and democratic State and rule of law to encourage collective participation and decision-making in order to establish

social-ecological agreements, increase the institutional capacity required for effective planning and administration, advocate for the redistribution of wealth, provide equal access to opportunities, and ensure the protection of basic universal rights within a context of environmental sustainability.

From an economic perspective, these proposals focus on productive diversification, decentralizing productive activities, and increasing the participation of certain agents within the framework of a mixed economy in which a competitive private sector coexists synergistically with the public sector in certain strategic areas, as well as ensuring a social and care economy that is protected and promoted by the State.

The ultimate objective is the creation of a sustainable economic democracy that is:

- **Inclusive:** Offers dignified employment;
- **Diverse:** Incentivizes alternatives to natural resource exploitation;
- **Circular:** Supports the production and consumption of functional and durable goods, including recycling;
- **Dynamic:** Incorporates technological innovation into productive processes; and based on values of
- **Solidarity:** Values everyday protection and care work.

Across various productive sectors, our proposals include the following:

- Harmonizing the consumption of goods with a fuller conception of good living.
- Increasing learning abilities in order to increase productivity.
- Expanding the service sector to create value added and quality employment and improve social conditions.
- Promoting a reindustrialization process with a low ecological footprint that stimulates and diversifies the productive matrix.
- Facilitating access to energy—both quantity and quality—while shifting to clean and renewable energy sources.
- Reducing extractive activities to the bare minimum while maintaining environmental, social, and cultural balance.

- Moving towards sustainable agriculture models that protect biodiversity and incorporate farming families, including incorporating their knowledge and practices.

In terms of territory, on the problems created by the chaotic growth of cities. In order to recover socio-spatial equity, habitability, mobility, security, coexistence, and environmental sustainability, governments need to take responsibility for organizing this growth, including encouraging wide-scale citizen participation.

In terms of culture, we propose preserving and promoting spaces for the creation and production of culture, as well as defending culture and the free access to universal cultural goods in order to create meaning within societies and search for alternative ways of living.





## **EPILOGUE**

**A call to action\***





Based on the considerations and priorities mentioned here, we propose certain fundamental actions informed by a new approach that will transform our understanding and impact our collective decision-making and mindsets.

1. **Place equitable and sustainable well-being at the center of political action in order to transform the structures of social inequality and environmental destruction caused by the system of unlimited accumulation that currently prevails in Latin America:** The objective is to move towards a social-ecological democracy where the goal is not maximizing GDP per capita or commodifying every possible aspect of society,

but rather supporting equitable and responsible quality of life. In other words, the goal is allowing all people to live well, with equal respect and consideration, and to live a good life that is free from unfair inequalities, violence, and discrimination and that preserves the earth for future generations. To achieve this, material, spiritual, individual, and social needs must be met in conditions of respect for the diversity, creativity, and autonomy of each human being, and within conditions of effective equality of opportunities and a focus on restoring ecological resilience. This requires access to a universal basic income, protection against social risks, access to common goods and public goods that allow the effective exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights, and systematic protection of the biosphere and life on Earth. Political action must be used to institutionalize and respect these rights and stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable, as well as establish systemic responsibility for future generations and all other living beings. Democratic institutionalization must be transformed in order to guarantee that the economy is subjected to these guiding principles, as well as the allocation of public and private resources across the diversity of human territories and habitats.

2. **Reaffirm values of coexistence:** Humans' capacity to coexist with other humans, as well as with nature, depends on a shared culture. Components of this culture include respect for human dignity, diversity, and individual freedom, the greater or lesser importance of hegemonic masculinity, and tolerance to inequalities and discrimination, as well as the type of social-ecological system used to supply goods and services to meet human needs. In order to achieve social cohesion and reproduce equitable and sustainable well-being through long-term, collective action, society must value equal respect and consideration for all its members, solidarity, and a commitment to protect life on Earth and future generations. This requires a systemic critique of greed and the pursuit of profit as the supposed primary drivers of

individual behavior, as well as a parallel understanding of the human condition as one that is invariably based in community: it does not only encompass legitimate individual autonomy, but also the act of belonging to a group. As a result, we must assume responsibility for the fate of current and future generations at the community, local, national, and global sphere.

3. **Recognize humanity's ecodpendence:** Human beings live and coexist in both interdependence and ecodpendence, based on the social division of work and the fact that we are physical beings that are subject to needs and their periodic satisfaction. The urgent recognition of this ecodpendence, and of the planetary boundaries that are increasingly and rapidly being exceeded, requires adopting social practices of production and consumption that are congruent with this reality. Recognizing our ecodpendence should lead to a culture of functional sufficiency and sustainable consumption, including decarbonizing, decentralizing, and relocating the economy; establishing short production-distribution-consumption cycles; decreasing transport times; and placing sustainable sociability at the center of urban policy and land management.
4. **Accept the inevitable reduction of unsustainable economic activities:** Social-ecological transformation means the end of the unlimited accumulation of capital and predatory extractivism, as well as the decline of economic sectors that negatively impact our ecological footprint and push planetary boundaries. The process of transformation also requires reducing the consumption of non-functional goods and the concept of planned obsolescence, as well as reducing waste generation and encouraging systematic reuse or rapid biodegradation. All this must be supported by increasing renewable energy, electromobility, public transport, and sustainable housing; agroecology and healthy eating; and clean industry and sustainable personal services, among other activities, along with expanding access to collective goods and common goods. This should facilitate a net increase in employment

levels and paid activity despite the inevitable restructuring of the impacted sectors.

5. **Change the understanding of wealth and poverty:** The way we currently conceptualize and measure both wealth and poverty determines the approaches and timelines of related policies. Wealth or poverty are not the result of individual trajectories or efforts but of existing economic structures, income distribution, and productive and cultural capital, as well as the interactions between the various social positions that result from these factors. Well-being should not be understood only in terms of access to material wealth (goods, resources, financial assets, things, or relations between things) but also in terms of access to, among other things, the **time wealth** needed to exercise freedom and creativity, and to the **relational wealth** needed to support good living and social-democratic behavior.
6. **Support the constant renewal of institutions:** It will be impossible to accomplish any of the outcomes included here without establishing functional institutions that accept, permit, and support progress. Top-down institutional renewal is not enough. In order to guarantee the life in conditions of equity and sustainability, it is essential for institutions to expand rather than limit freedoms or democracy in decision-making, avoid becoming self-referential or bureaucratic, and be subject to strict standards of professionalism, integrity, and citizen control.
7. **Deploy the best values of civilization and the best intellectual weapons to overthrow the existing cultural hegemony and establish a new democratic commitment:** It will be impossible to avoid conflict with the existing cultural hegemony as we shift our worldview away from the negative, productivist, short-term individualism that is currently dominant. This process must be channeled through democracy in order to create a **new, legitimate democratic commitment** in which decisions that influence organizations or institutions endowed with the power to impact society are made through a

process that is defined by transparent dialogue, the fullest possible participation of those impacted, and the greatest possible equality in terms of the conditions of said participation. This new democratic agreement must privilege rationality and deliberation over any form of manipulation of power, violence, or fear of violence, and it must assume responsibility when these decisions result in unexpected and negative effects—whether by action or by omission—on people, groups, communities, and territories.

## **Political Commitment to Social-Ecological Transformation**

We believe that social-ecological transformation is a political project that requires creating and implementing public policies that will, in the short, medium, and long term, modify the capitalist economic model that is devastating the natural world and exacerbating inequalities within our nations. This does not include eliminating markets or paid work—which have historically been a part of all economies throughout history—but rather uses the State to redistribute the economic surplus that results from production and wealth creation, either partially or in full, in an effort to address the unlimited accumulation of capital. Examples of this can be seen around the world, from collective bargaining systems to the emergence of the social and solidarity economy or the care and reciprocity economy. Multiple relationships exist that are not fundamentally capitalist, as seen in the care economy and the social and solidarity economy. Strengthening these relationships presents the possibility to create societies that are not governed by the accumulation of capital. We are calling for the support of market-State-society approaches in order to identify economic and trade patterns that are not focused on the accumulation of wealth among the few, but rather on the distribution of wealth among the many, in harmony with nature and the systems that support life



on Earth—not just in terms of limiting their destruction, but as an intrinsic principle of our way of life.

In order for social-ecological transformation to be more than just a proposal of profound change, a regional group of allies must mobilize to endorse this approach, challenge current socio-political structures, and promote concrete alternatives within their specific contexts and territories. These allies will need to take radical and immediate action in order to curb the destruction of nature and the excesses of production and consumption. Additionally, it will be necessary to implement medium and long-term actions that profoundly reshape humanity's relationship with the planet.

Our call to action includes all public and private actors across Latin America. We are sharing this proposal for social-ecological transformation with the general public, universities, civil society organizations, trade unions, and political parties; campesino, indigenous, business, and professional organizations; traditional and digital media; and, especially, with the different levels of government in our countries in an effort to raise awareness and influence the public agenda. We are dedicated to looking beyond the government to include productive social actors, educators and researchers, leaders, and everyone who, from their diverse and equally vital perspectives, understands that the global crisis has reached a breaking point—a result of the ongoing exploitation of nature and the exclusion of large parts of the population across Latin America—and recognizes that we must fight together to make change. Our call for social-ecological transformation is particularly focused on influencing education systems, as the process of social-ecological transformation will produce better results if the ideas that support it are actively disseminated among future generations, whose members will have to endure the most severe effects of the socio-environmental crisis if current patterns are not fundamentally adjusted.

All of these actors and subjects must become politically engaged—both formally and informally—and work to deepen participatory democracy through organized, peaceful, and informed mobilization. Social participation in political decisions should be focused on reducing the inequities and inequalities that characterize our nations by

prioritizing and balancing lower-income social groups' access to the benefits of the democratic welfare state. Given that public policies to reduce social, economic, and environmental tensions and inequalities are primarily a function of governments, it is essential to transform both the State and the government so that they take responsibility for addressing and solving these problems and commit to social and environmental responsibility.

The call for policies and actions that respond to social and environmental needs, not just the needs of the capitalist market, faces bigger challenges in local governments and communities. This is due to the fact that each social actor in these territories can become aware of the consequences of climate change, extractivism, and the worsening of inequality and social segregation and can then take responsibility for their actions while also demanding and supporting the appropriate response from public authorities. Education and knowledge should be used to support mobilization and direct political action—both in cities and in rural communities—to trigger bottom-up processes that offer greater potential for transformation. Supporting these processes requires an assessment of the local social actors' capacity for action and an analysis of the main conflicts related to the appropriation of territorial resources. This will facilitate an understanding of the underlying interests that inform their practices and the identification of the role that each actor should or could play within the process of social-ecological transformation. We recognize the enormous potential of social participation to ensure the respect and enjoyment of individual and collective rights, and we firmly believe that effective community participation is important in order to achieve balance between market actions and State interventions. Citizens and citizen organizations must be involved in the discussions and decision-making processes regarding the present and future of their territories. Within this context, the concept of territorial governance recognizes communities' abilities to address the problems that they face due to an increasingly diminished State and a more empowered capitalist market, incorporates shared responsibility among communities and authorities, emphasizes the relational role of local government and networks, and promotes collaborative institutional structures.

The push for social-ecological transformation begins on the subnational and national levels, although it must extend beyond these levels. Although Latin America is currently experiencing a period of uncertainty regarding the scope of multilateral cooperation, the various crises that are impacting the region should serve as an incentive to overcome short-term disagreements and refocus regional and sub-regional integration on strategic objectives that address shared risks and threats. A Latin America focused on social and environmental justice would be a strong voice in the global arena, able to propose initiatives that would support transformation on the global scale, overcoming and replacing both voluntary, non-binding declarations and exclusively market-based approaches.

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## TRANSFORMATION LIBRARY

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Project on Social-Ecological Transformation in Latin America has convened a working group that brings together various Latin American experts to encourage dialogue regarding actionable proposals and facilitate an exchange of ideas and experiences regarding common challenges facing the region. The Transformation Library is a collaborative effort among this network that seeks to contribute analyses and proposals to the debate regarding ways to promote development trajectories that are socially just and environmentally sustainable.