

## **Against Facebook's arbitrary censorship of the dissemination of academic science**

The undersigned, a broad group of scientists, philosophers, economists, engineers, and communicators about the ecological crisis and problems related to climate and energy, condemn Facebook's censorship of perspectives that have a verifiable scientific basis but which diverge from the official discourse to which the general public and professionals are generally exposed.

The British scientific writer Gaia Vince, who publishes in *Science*, *New Scientist*, and *The Guardian* has seen her web site censored by Facebook.

In Spain, this kind of censorship has begun with Facebook's blocking of links to Ferran Puig Vilar's blog on climate change and related issues, "Usted no se lo Cree", founded in 2009 and given an award by the Fundación Biodiversidad, which was presented at that time by Teresa Ribera, who is now Spain's Minister of Ecological Transition.

Since at least last August, when a user clicks on a link to one of these blogs, Facebook responds with various alerts, saying that these web sites do not meet their "community standards", or even that they generate spam, which is completely false. This causes a double harm: It discourages people from accessing the information. And it insinuates an accusation of falsehood. Indeed, it both suppresses and defames.

We affirm that the work of both of these authors is distinguished by its scientific rigor and intellectual honesty, and we condemn this attack on freedom of expression.

We, the signers of this complaint, many of whom are editors of various blogs and spaces of communication and sharing of information on the Internet (see the list at the end), share the following points of view concerning the crisis of civilization and existence that is in progress:

- The gravity of climate change is much greater than what is commonly affirmed in the mainstream media. The Paris Accords are clearly inadequate, and even counterproductive.
- The social and economic crisis that is now unfolding is a result of the ecological crisis and, in particular, the lack of responses to the energy crisis that began in the middle of the last decade and that soon will greatly and rapidly worsen, according to the best scientific studies of recent years.
- The consequences of the ecological, climate, and energy crises are existential. The irreparable damage that we are doing to the systems which support life on the Earth, and life itself, is turning back on ourselves. And the energy crisis (brought about by the end of abundant fossil energy and the inability of so-called "renewable" energy sources to supply the quantity and kinds of energy that are used, will prevent the implementation of responses that once might have been feasible.
- The current socioeconomic paradigm of industrial development, characterized by its short-term and individualistic approach, is becoming increasingly dysfunctional and is inherently incapable of addressing these problems. Along these lines, the treatment of information as a "product" discourages these questions, which are considered uncomfortable and

contrary to business objectives, from coming to the attention of the general public and becoming a subject of open debate.

- Technology is needed to facilitate certain individual and social processes, and for the progress and prosperity of Humanity. However, the dominant discourse that sees technology as the only valid or viable answer to these problems is profoundly mistaken and highly dangerous. There is no, and nor will there likely be, advanced technology that does not require the use of fossil fuels, nor can there be a greater technological complexity without an increase in net energy and availability of the materials that the systems require for their design, manufacture, operation, and disposal. And if, as we are indeed seeing, net energy is decreasing and various materials are becoming scarce, it will not be possible to develop technological systems to the necessary scale in time to avoid or even soften the damage.
- The prevailing cultural paradigm traps us behind walls of perception that limit consideration of the ecological and ethical harms that are being done, but these walls are rapidly coming down. The recent pandemic is showing us a milder example of what is to come.

Many of us who have signed below are persons known and recognized for our work in spreading awareness of these problems of sustainability. We are highly educated and occupy posts of high or very high importance and responsibility. We are not speculating. We have broad and deep knowledge of the evidence for, and the implications of, the propositions that we are articulating, and we know that the conclusions that dominate discourse in society are not supported by the best available science, as these fail to take sufficient account of physical and social limits.

Though the exact moment at which this crisis with multiple causes will be come into public awareness as the genuine global emergency that it is is difficult to predict with precision, many of us believe that we already find ourselves inexorably immersed in a crisis of civilization of cultural and moral origin without precedent in the history of humanity.

En 2015, the “Last Call” manifesto, signed, among others, by political leaders - some of whom are currently in positions of responsibility in the Spanish government - affirmed:

“Today, there is mounting evidence indicating that the path of unlimited growth is similar to a slow motion genocide. The end of cheap energy, the catastrophic scenarios of climate change, and geopolitical conflicts over natural resources illustrate that the years of seemingly unlimited progress are forever gone. To cope with this challenge, the flimsy mantra of sustainable development is not enough; nor is betting on eco-efficient technologies or a supposed transition to any “green economy”. Indeed, all these versions of friendly development disguise plans for the general commodification of natural resources and ecosystemic services.”

We who have signed this declaration and complaint share this diagnosis, even if we may have varying ideas on how to address the problems and challenges we are facing. However, one view that we maintain in common is the urgent necessity of an orderly, just, and democratic process of economic and systemic degrowth, especially in the countries and individuals of highest purchasing power, including a majority of persons of the “Western” world.

It is these who are principally responsible for the rapid worsening of the situation and who are failing to address the tremendous risks that this situation represents for human development and for present and future life on the planet. The majority of these risks continue to lack adequate coverage in the media.

In all probability it is our solidly supported positions and objections to perpetual economic growth as the pillar of human development that motivate censorship of free expressions that explore these matters rigorously. The lack of public exposure to these problems is precisely the reason why the needed degrowth, studied by ecological economists, is still not sufficiently pursued.

For this reason, as a response to this inappropriate and arbitrary behavior of Facebook, and as a means of protest and pressure, some of us who have still maintained a profile in this social media application are going to cease all activity in it.

As a collective we demand that Facebook respect freedom of expression, and particularly of the scientific community, and that it restore the integrity and good reputation of the censored blogs.

We also demand that persons and institutions of power, and the media, begin to accord these perspectives the crucial importance and relevance that the gravity of the situation in which we find ourselves demands.

Signatories