

**Panel: Anders Hayden In His Own Words*****An extract from *Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet*.***

Work-time reduction can be more than a defensive response to the disappearance of jobs. It can be linked, and has been so historically, with a different vision of progress. 'Progress' is by now largely associated with the expansion of GDP and increases in material living standards. At the root of such progress is the continued increase in labour productivity, that is, hourly labour output. While technological advances, more effective forms of work organization, and improvements to worker skill levels will likely bring continued improvements in productivity, there is no inherent reason why they must also lead to increased production. WTR can instead channel productivity gains towards the non-material benefits of more free time. This argument is perhaps the most significant way in which WTR fits into an ecological vision, standing as it does at the crossroads of a utopian vision and a pragmatic recognition of what is achievable in the not-so-distant future.

This vision combines a sense of both necessity and possibility. According to French Green economist Alains Lipietz, 'Creating a society which gauges progress by the growth of free time more than by the accumulation of wealth is an imperative stemming from responsibility' - is, the responsibility of sparing the planet from the effects of an indefinite growth of mass consumption. In return for fulfilling this responsibility, the people of the North stand to benefit. If labour productivity continued to rise at a normal rate, and the resulting gains went exclusively towards increased free time rather than increased incomes, it would take only a few short decades to cut the work hours of the 'consumer class' of the North in half. Breaking out of the 'work and spend' cycle would create abundant time for a wide variety of self-directed activities. (...)

A positive vision of 'working less and living more,' a vision that aims to create 'an advanced lifestyle appropriate for a post-industrial era,' is extremely important for green politics, which has suffered from the general impression that it involves an embrace of Malthusian austerity and dour asceticism. A vision of progress centred on reducing work time gives substance to the green claim that life can be better in a less materialistic society. According to Juliet Schor, 'The centrality of growth in our political and economic culture means that moral or pragmatic environmentally-motivated appeals may not be successful. But, with widespread perceptions of cultural and economic decline, the promise of a higher 'quality of life' may be.'

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***This panel is from the first Feasta Review, a 204-page large format book. Copies of the book are available for £15 from [Green Books](#)***