

Thoughts on Mars Colonization.

(by Jörg Wuttke , Technical Consultant)

I'm not a space scientist, but I am an engineer, and a person committed to our human future. I have five grandchildren, but my thoughts are not for them alone; I sincerely hope that humanity will continue to exist for a long time to come. I have my doubts about that, however.

The "god" of our capitalist society is growth. Even as a student, I was pleased when high-level scientists such as Dennis Meadows drew attention to the limits of growth within the bounds of our planet. The late Prof. Albert Bartlett has also explained quite impressively that we cannot sustain growth forever. Among other things, he stated, "It is the greatest deficiency of our human race that we have no understanding of the exponential function." It is both significant and sad that he was presenting this to merely a handful of students.

Economists in general are uninterested in this view; they refer rather to their "economic wisdom", which I deny has any wisdom in it. However, I recently came across a lone writer on economics who understands the ultimate consequences of the drive toward perpetual growth: Ulrike Herrmann. She has written a very readable book entitled *The End of Capitalism: Why Growth and Climate Protection are Incompatible* (to be published in English translation by Scribe UK this coming March).

It is already clear that our planet is too small for everyone in the world to live a rich person's lifestyle. To give everyone a roughly equal chance for that would be fair, and would require growth in the "underdeveloped countries" --but only there. The very wealthy would have to cut back! What a scandalous idea! But it is certainly the right direction, even if the wealthy do not wish it. In fact, some of them hate the idea of even relative equality so much that they look for another planet on which growth can continue without limit. However, the nature of growth means that the next stage of the product must be larger than the previous one--and Mars is smaller than Earth!

One should never say "never". It is well known that in the days of the first automobiles, it was feared that people would be unable to withstand the speed of anything faster than a horse-drawn carriage. But these prophets were not scientists. Back then, there were still alchemists who wanted to produce gold with witchcraft. Today we can make better estimates; for example, nowadays you can be sure that there will never be a perpetual motion machine, and a real basis exists for that assertion.

Science needs visionary ideas, but I think the idea of resettling humanity on Mars is a utopian fantasy, and not in a good way. People still haven't managed to live together in peace on our wonderful Earth; why would we manage that any better on Mars? People should put their energy into preserving planet Earth as a human habitat. Musk believes that money can buy anything, but human intellect is priceless and can never be replaced by AI.