

*The Danish Emmaus Organization, "Genvej til Udvikling", has for all its lifetime been a participant in the public debate about development matters. In recent years the participation has especially taken place in form of blog posts on the website [www.ulandsnyt.dk](http://www.ulandsnyt.dk). The following post is about Emmaus as a model for necessary alternative way of life. It was published the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2011 as a follow-up and answer of a long feature article from university associate professor Mogens Buch-Hansen.*

## **A Goodbye to Growth**

**Not until the rich part of humanity confronts that attitude and that praxis that you should earn more this year than last year, only then do future generations and poor people maybe have a chance.**

The globe has at its disposal over 11, 3 billion hectare, which is biologically productive, about 1, 7 hectare for each person. But the average citizen uses 2, 3 hectare – the European uses 5 hectare, the Indian 0, 7. The point corresponds to the one associate professor Mogens Buch Hansen has in [www.u-landsnyt.dk/nyhed/07-10-10/mogens-buch-hansen-vi-maa-omdefinere-udvikling-ell](http://www.u-landsnyt.dk/nyhed/07-10-10/mogens-buch-hansen-vi-maa-omdefinere-udvikling-ell). "We use 1, 3 times this globe and eat of its nature capital, that should be handed down to future generations. "Since the big majority eats far under 1, 7 hectare, the rich therefore steal both from the poor and from future generations.

Mogens Buch-Hansen (MB-H) writes: "The many warning lights that have a tendency quickly to be forgotten (we don't want to hear about it!)...". When we don't want to hear about it, it is probably because the consequences, we should take, is unmanageable and paralyzing for most authorities and individuals. Politicians and business people talk about growth for the following years: but how can you talk about growth in the rich part of the world, when the only certain effect of it is that the pressure on the resources of the Earth increases – so seriously that 60 % of the ecological systems are on their way to be irreparably devastated?

It is encouraging, that MB-H positioned himself with this thorough post, but it is a little funny when he writes: "Haven't we heard all of this before?" and refers back to Neo-Malthusian scholars (= The Club of Rome) in the 70s. There is actually someone who has fiddled with resource awareness both before and after the 70s, maybe more in living life than in the scholarly life.

I can refer to the not so insignificant mother network of my organization, which in France is the next-biggest NGO after the Red Cross. About 15.000 men and women work regularly in Emmaus in France, in their spare time or on full-time basis, and of the last-mentioned are over 4.000 divided in 111 Emmaus communities, where you live and work together – with collection, sorting, sale and shipment of used goods – and receive food, lodging, pocket money, clothes of the collected and other necessities after concrete considerations.

Your basic needs are met in an Emmaus society, in France, Italy, England, the Netherlands, Argentina, Peru, Brazil and some other countries but if you live there for 50 years you are not richer when you leave, than when you arrived there. Emmaus communities have existed since 1949 and a lot of people stay there for long periods of time.

Emmaus communities break with a main concept in western life style: “You must earn more this year than last year, and you must earn more next year than this year.”

The Emmaus life style should give food for thought concerning how we generally arrange our lives if we want to take into our considerations the nature, the next generations, and the poor people, we live on the Earth with.

To break with the concept about earning more year after year is maybe only the first step. On the international general assembly in Cologne in 1992, Abbé Pierre, Emmaus’ founder, said: “All you young and middle-aged in this assembly are the first generations in history, who have to say to their children and grand-children. There will be less for you”. It can in other words be necessary not only to stop growth in the rich part of the World but directly turn it down. Under all circumstances it is urgent to break with the concept of growth.

It is a difficult thing to say, the thing Abbé Pierre said in 1992, and many will probably never say it. Regardless that many persons actually agree that the introductory calculation in this article makes it necessary. There should live human beings after our children and grand-children, should there not? Both in the cold and warm countries?