

## JUS SEMPER NEWSLETTER

In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm

## Our Latest Publications on Building the New Paradigm of People and Planet

## HIGHLIGHTS

JUS SEMPER Newsletter – Summer-Fall 2024

**From Imperialism to Green Imperialism: Tools of World-Systems Analysis in the Face of the Great Ecosocial Crisis** — (Alejandro Pedregal & Nemanja Lukić) — By means of the "green" label, global capitalism has managed to actualise its planetary and human plunder in a highly efficient manner. [Page 2](#)

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## FROM IMPERIALISM TO GREEN IMPERIALISM: TOOLS OF WORLD-SYSTEMS ANALYSIS IN THE FACE OF THE GREAT ECOSOCIAL CRISIS — Alejandro Pedregal and Nemanja Lukić



From Imperialism to Green Imperialism: Tools of World-Systems Analysis in the Face of the Great Ecosocial Crisis

Alejandro Pedregal and Nemanja Lukić

Humanity is at the most challenging crossroads in its history. Anthropogenic productive activity, framed within the capitalist mode of production, has caused most planetary boundaries to be exceeded and others to be strained. This has caused, among other things, temperatures to reach maximums never before experienced by our civilisation, species to become extinct at an unprecedented rate, the loss of soil fertility to become the norm, and the oceans to boil to the point of leaving the poles on the brink of their disappearance while acidifying and suffocating life in them. At the same time, civilisation does not lose sight of an increasingly threatening war horizon in which a



Photo by Nemanja Lukić

There is a growing sense that modern environmentalism suffers from excessive naiveté. Thus, by means of the "green" label, global capitalism has managed to actualise its planetary and human plunder in a highly efficient manner.

shadow over the future accessibility of our societies' livelihoods and their very survival as we know them.

nuclear outbreak cannot be entirely ruled out. And against this backdrop, a galloping decline of materials and energy sources is unfolding, putting pressure on every vector of the eco-social apparatus to the point of casting a shadow over the future accessibility of our societies' livelihoods and their very survival as we know them.

Amid this panorama of ecological devastation and military escalation, there is a growing impression, both justified and worrying, that mainstream geopolitical analyses are often too lazy to address the role of the planet's biophysical limits in shaping the global hierarchy between states and their regimes of dependency. On the flip side of this impression, but equally justified and worrying, there is also a growing sense that modern environmentalism suffers from excessive naiveté (and often ambiguity) in understanding the global political-economic dynamics that condition eco-social conflicts.

This combination of "oversights" has allowed capitalist elites, among many other things, to adopt many expressions of a supposedly environmentalist character to protect and perpetuate their domination. Thus, by means of the "green" label, global capitalism has managed to actualise its planetary and human plunder in a highly efficient manner. Greenwashing camouflages the interests of exploitation and appropriation of life and natural goods on which capitalism itself is based to adapt them to a terminology that paves the way for its expansion. It is the continuation of business as usual by other means: a new mode of accumulation that tunes business to the fashion of the times of ecological emergency. The "creative destruction" of capitalism sees business everywhere, even in disaster.

The dangerousness of this handling of reality, even more so in an era marked by a

combination of eco-social crises, makes it essential to identify and unmask those central aspects of the green narratives of global capitalism in order to understand its conjuncture and the projections it allows us to glimpse. This paper aims to contribute to studying the relationship between imperialism and political ecology, the characteristics that identify the historical development of ecological imperialism and the eco-social implications of its cosmetic adaptation in a context of growing threat and biophysical concern. In order to do so, it is essential, first of all, to offer an updated, if succinct, definition of the notion of imperialism.

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## THE MOST DANGEROUS CLIMATE CATASTROPHE DELUSIONS – Ornela De Gasperin

Human activities have unequivocally overheated our planet (Lee et al., 2023). According to the sixth and latest report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), without radical changes, the current global trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions will lead to an average global temperature increase of 3.2°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the 21st century (Lee et al., 2023). If this occurs, the lives of almost half of the human population would be threatened (Lee et al., 2023), as large areas of the planet would become uninhabitable. Even though we have had a solid scientific consensus for decades on the causes and consequences of the climate crisis, the increase in emissions has not been slowed, and in fact they are now 60% higher than in the 1990s (Stoddard et al., 2021). Every year, emissions and temperature records are broken, and increasingly extreme weather events hit us. In order to change the trajectory we are on, it is

Humanity is at the most challenging crossroads in its history. Anthropogenic productive activity, framed within the capitalist mode of production, has caused most planetary boundaries to be exceeded and others to be strained. This has caused, among other things, temperatures to reach maximums never before experienced by our civilisation, species to become extinct at an unprecedented rate, the loss of soil fertility to become the norm, and the oceans to boil to the point of leaving the poles on the brink of their disappearance while acidifying and suffocating life in them. At the same time, civilisation does not lose sight of an increasingly threatening war horizon in which a



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## The Most Dangerous Climate Catastrophe Delusions

Ornela De Gasperin Quintero

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1. "The crisis can be stopped at any time"

Several climate and biological systems have tipping points, points of no return, or breakpoints. These points are thresholds that, once crossed, would lead to irreversible changes in these systems on human time scales, even if global warming were slowed (Wunderling et al., 2021; Wunderling et al., 2024) (Figure 1). Among the systems with breakpoints

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**RAVAGING PAN-AMAZONIA – Nubia Barrera Silva** — *Deforestation, socio-economic contradictions and eco-environmental conflicts of hegemonic capitalism with global impact.*

The Pan-Amazon region occupies 4.9% of the world's continental area. It has three shared characteristics: (a) its borders extend to the frontiers of eight countries in South-Central America;<sup>1</sup> (b) it has been hijacked by hegemonic agri-food, mining and energy capitalism, transnational drug trafficking crime, chemical precursors, arms, munitions and explosives; (c) it unleashes promiscuous relations with Colombian guerrillas, legal armies, paramilitaries, politicians, state agents and corrupt national elites; and (d) it is subject to the most humiliating slavery regime of migrants, indigenous peoples and peasants previously expelled from rural territories and properties. The corporate enclave subjects migrants, indigenous peoples and peasants previously expelled from rural territories and properties to the most humiliating slavery regime.

Under the slogan of anything goes, the imposition of the extractive model of deforestation advances unstopably in remote areas of the rainforest, a refuge for uncontacted indigenous peoples. Behind it, ecocide and human tragedies are left behind through contradictions between capital, nature and the owners of indigenous and peasant reserves.

Ultimately, all destructive natural impacts deepen the advance of climate collapse on Earth.



## Ravaging Pan-Amazonia

*Deforestation, socio-economic contradictions and eco-environmental conflicts of hegemonic capitalism with global impact*

Nubia Barrera Silva

Abstract

The Pan-Amazon region occupies 4.9% of the world's continental area. It has three shared characteristics: (a) its borders extend to the frontiers of eight countries in South-Central America;<sup>1</sup> (b) it has been hijacked by hegemonic agri-food, mining and energy capitalism, transnational drug trafficking crime, chemical precursors, arms, munitions and explosives; (c) it unleashes promiscuous relations with Colombian guerrillas, legal armies, paramilitaries, politicians, state agents and corrupt national elites; and (d) it is subject to the most humiliating slavery regime of migrants, indigenous peoples and peasants previously expelled from rural territories and properties. The corporate enclave subjects migrants, indigenous peoples and peasants previously expelled from rural territories and properties to the most humiliating slavery regime.



Photo by J. Schreder on Unsplash

Under the slogan of anything goes, the imposition of the extractive model of deforestation advances unstopably in remote areas of the rainforest, a refuge for uncontacted indigenous peoples. Behind it, ecocide and human tragedies are left behind through contradictions between capital, nature and the owners of indigenous and peasant reserves. Ultimately, all destructive natural impacts deepen the advance of climate collapse on Earth.

<sup>1</sup> of the Pan-Amazon occupies 4.9% of the total geographical area, followed by Peru and Colombia, which have 17% and 10% respectively, without ignoring other ecological and environmental factors in the rest of the countries.

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**NO SUSTAINABLE PARADIGM IS ATTAINABLE WITHOUT GRADUAL POPULATION REDUCTION – Álvaro J. De Regil** — *People must become aware that having fewer or no children is a crucial element to achieving sustainability.*



## No sustainable paradigm is attainable without gradual population reduction

*People must become aware that having fewer or no children is a crucial element to achieving sustainability*

Álvaro J. de Regil

The purpose of a truly democratic ethos is to imagine a successful transition to a new, truly sustainable paradigm for humans and non-humans to end a system consuming unsustainable amounts of energy and the planet's resources and producing unsustainable quantities of CO<sub>2</sub>. This system also generates gross worldwide inequality, producing tremendous social injustice by exploiting and destroying thousands of communities and their habitats. This is why, in geological terms, according to the latest stratigraphic evidence, we endured the unsustainable Anthropocene Epoch, driven by our capitalistic system of unrelenting consumption.<sup>1</sup>



Image by Carl Abbott on Pixabay

Consequently, a successful transition means we must reverse, if it is still possible, or limit the damage we have already inflicted on the planet and end global inequality. Scientists consistently report that to accomplish this, we must not transgress the nine planetary boundaries, which requires radically veering away from our current trajectory. In the last three years, the IPCC Report on Mitigation of Climate Change confirmed that the strongest drivers of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

<sup>1</sup> John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, *The Capitalocene: The First Ecological Age of the Anthropocene* — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, October 2021.

TBCA/ISSUE/2024/07/2024/Álvaro de Regil

The IPCC's mitigation report repeatedly establishes in several chapters that the two drivers of carbon dioxide are economic and population growth. Indeed, scientists' warnings point to population, economic growth, and affluence as drivers of planetary unsustainability. It follows that population size is inextricably linked to the ideal of achieving a sustainable and dignified ethos for all living beings. Consequently, the very complex and ethical issue of population must be addressed by asking people to consider that for a successful trajectory of degrowth in energy consumption, decreasing the world's human population is paramount. Unquestionably, in a genuinely democratic ethos people will always have the right to decide if they want to contribute to our effort of saving our home by having fewer or no children, but they must become aware that reducing population size is a crucial element in our effort.

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**WORLD SCIENTISTS' WARNING: THE BEHAVIOURAL CRISIS DRIVING ECOLOGICAL OVERSHOOT — Joseph J. Merz et al**



## World scientists' warning: The behavioural crisis driving ecological overshoot

Joseph J. Merz, Phoebe Barnard, William E. Rees, Dane Smith, Mat Maroni, Christopher J. Rhodes, Julia H. Dederer, Nandini Bajaj, Michael K. Joy, Thomas Wiedmann and Rory Sutherland

Abstract

Previously, anthropogenic ecological overshoot has been identified as a fundamental cause of the myriad symptoms we see around the globe today from biodiversity loss and ocean acidification to the disturbing rise in novel entities and climate change. In the present paper, we have examined this more deeply, and explore the behavioural drivers of overshoot, providing evidence that overshoot is itself a symptom of a deeper, more subversive modern crisis of human behaviour. We work to name and frame this crisis as 'the Human Behavioural Crisis' and propose the crisis be recognized globally as a critical intervention point for tackling ecological overshoot. We demonstrate how current interventions are largely physical, resource-intensive, slow-moving and focused on addressing the symptoms of ecological overshoot (such as climate change) rather than the distal cause (maladaptive behaviour). We argue that even in the best-case scenarios, symptoms level interventions are unlikely to avoid catastrophe or achieve more than ephemeral progress. We explore three drivers of the behavioural crisis in depth: economic growth, marketing and persuasion. We explore how these three drivers directly impact the three 'levers' of overshoot: consumption, waste and population. We demonstrate how the maladaptive behaviours of overshoot stem from these three drivers have been catalysed and perpetuated by the intentional exploitation of previously adaptive human impulses. In the final sections of this paper, we propose an interdisciplinary emergency response to the behavioural crisis by, amongst other things, the



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TBCA/ISSUE/2024/04/2024/Joseph J. Merz et al

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This paper clarifies physical notions such as entropy and the second principle of thermodynamics and their relevance for analysing the economic system and sustainability. It also provides a structured overview of some relevant sustainability issues. It is an exploratory work intended to be useful as a starting point for further research. From the clarification of basic concepts and the review of relevant issues and dilemmas, one main idea emerges: the interrelationship between energy, materials and waste is inherent in the nature of the economic system as an entropic system that organises the satisfaction of human needs. However, this interrelationship is not always taken into account in sustainability analyses, which may limit the scope and usefulness of the conclusions drawn and the recommendations derived from them.

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**A NEW EARTH CULTURE — Milena Radovich / Diego Astiz** — *Decrease the material and energetic scales and fight against the unfair accumulation of wealth to build a fairer reality for all living species and the planet.*



## A New Earth Culture

*Decrease the material and energetic scales and fight against the unfair accumulation of wealth to build a fairer reality for all living species and the planet*

Milena Radovich / Diego Astiz

Summers with historic temperatures, droughts and torrential storms, escalating armed conflicts in different parts of the planet; the Mar Menor is dying, hundreds of people arrive in cayuco boats to the Canary Islands while others die on the way; the Sixth Mass Extinction... How we can tackle or even manage to understand the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves is not a simple political task.

The bombardment of information is enormous. Cell phones are filled with flashy headlines searching for clickbait, enveloping us in a sense of constant alarm. We live in times of exceptionality, but when exceptionality becomes the norm, it loses its political potential. It is impossible to react and oppose every event happening to us today with the same intensity and indignation and to build desirable alternatives.

The environmental movement has long been explaining the scientific causes of the decline processes and ecological alarm in which we find ourselves today, but also proposing initiatives and alternatives that allow us to think that there is a way out. However, the multiplicity of processes and symptoms in which we find ourselves today can generate a feeling of overwhelm and despair. It is, therefore, vital to understand but also summarise and order the events currently causing our lives to be traversed in different ways by the multisystemic crisis in which we find ourselves. To dismantle and rethink the cultural assumptions that sustain them. Putting ideas in order is also necessary for building alternatives, exits, and solutions.



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ideas in order is also necessary for building alternatives, exits, and solutions.

This reordering of ideas must aim at a cultural change, a new way of looking at the planet, not as an inexhaustible source of resources but as a political subject on which our survival depends. We need a New Earth Culture. This New Earth Culture dares to summarise in seven ideas the paradigmatic shift we need to build a more just reality with the whole of life and the planet.

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## UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SERVICES: THE POWER OF DECOMMODIFYING SURVIVAL — Jason Hickel



### Universal public services: The power of decommodifying survival

Jason Hickel

One of the central insights emerging from research on degrowth and climate mitigation is that universal public services are crucial to a just and effective transition.

Capitalism relies on maintaining an artificial scarcity of essential goods and services (like housing, healthcare, transport, etc), through processes of enclosure and commodification. We know that enclosure enables monopolists to raise prices and maximise their profits (consider the rental market, the U.S. healthcare system, or the British rail system). But it also has another effect. When essential goods are privatised and expensive, people



"Public services are a common good," reads a placard on the March 27 protest in Paris over rent, labour rights and privatisation. Photo: Reuters/Contrasto

Under capitalism, people are forced to work producing unnecessary things (using more energy, resources and ecological pressure) in order to buy things they really need.

need more income than they would otherwise require to access them. To get it they are compelled to increase their labour in capitalist markets, working to produce new things that may not be needed (with increased energy use, resource use, and ecological pressure) simply to access things that clearly are needed, and which are quite often already there.

Take housing, for example. If your rent goes up, you suddenly have to work more just to keep the same roof over your head. At an economy-wide level, this dynamic means we need more aggregate production—more growth—in order to meet basic needs. From the perspective of capital, this ensures a steady flow of labour for private firms, and maintains downward pressure on wages to facilitate capital accumulation. For the rest of us it means needless exploitation.

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We know from empirical studies that public services are a powerful driver of improvements in life expectancy, well-being, and other key social indicators (here, here and here). Universal services would also end the current cost-of-living crisis, by directly reducing the cost of living.

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## UNDERESTIMATING THE CHALLENGES OF AVOIDING A GHOSTLY FUTURE — Corey J. A. Bradshaw et al



### Underestimating the Challenges of Avoiding a Ghostly Future

Corey J. A. Bradshaw et al<sup>1</sup>

Abstract

We report three major and confronting environmental issues that have received little attention and require urgent action. First, we review the evidence that future environmental conditions will be far more dangerous than currently believed. The scale of the threats to the biosphere and all its lifeforms—including humanity—is in fact so great that it is difficult to grasp for even well-informed experts. Second, we ask what political or economic system, or leadership, is prepared to handle the predicted disasters, or even capable of such action. Third, this dire situation places an extraordinary responsibility on scientists to speak out candidly and accurately when engaging with government, business, and the public. We especially draw attention to the lack of appreciation of the enormous challenges to creating a sustainable future. The added stresses to human health, wealth, and well-being will pervasively diminish our political capacity to mitigate the erosion of ecosystem services on which society depends. The science underlying these issues is strong, but awareness is weak. Without fully appreciating and broadcasting the scale of the problems and the enormity of the solutions required, society will fail to achieve even modest sustainability goals.



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<sup>1</sup> See all authors and their contributions and affiliations at end of article.  
TJCA/Issue/SD 03104 June 2024/Coray J. A. Bradshaw et al

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## THE CASE FOR SOCIALIST VEGANISM — Benjamin Selwyn and Charis Davis



### The Case for Socialist Veganism

Benjamin Selwyn and Charis Davis

A paradox exists in the United States, United Kingdom, and other rich countries. Increasing numbers of people realise that the current food system is environmentally damaging. They are attempting to transform it by changing their diets, which they hope will influence corporate investment strategies. They are encouraged to do so by claims that shifting to plant-based diets represents the "single biggest way" to reduce our environmental impact.<sup>1</sup>

The paradox is that many of the corporations that are expanding the plant-based food market have an enormous, immensely damaging environmental impact. Expansion into these markets does not portend a

Corporate veganism is a strategy of market expansion combined with, and based on, attempts at corporate brand greenwashing. It exacerbates animal suffering, human exploitation and environmental destruction within and outside the food system.

environmentally damaging mass production of meat, dairy, and other environmentally ruinous activities. Rather, it represents a market expansion strategy combined with, and based upon, attempts at corporate brand greenwashing.

Such strategies reflect and reinforce market dominance by a few corporations. In the United States, for example, less than four companies control more than 75 percent of the market across a range of popular groceries.<sup>2</sup> We call this strategy corporate veganism.



<sup>1</sup> + Olivia Pines, "Vegans in 'Single Biggest Way' to Reduce Our Environmental Impact, Study Finds," *Independent*, September 24, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> + Nina Lalouni, Alya Ureana, and Abin Chang, "Revealed: The True Extent of America's Food Monopolies and Who Pays the Price," *Courier*, July 14, 2021.

TSCA/ISS/SD 80191 August 2024/8, Selwyn/C Davis

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**LITHIUM FEVER DEHYDRATES ANDEAN WETLANDS — Leonardo Rossi / Aimée Martínez Vega** — A ruling in Catamarca, Argentina, recognises for the first time that this type of mining has a direct impact on the environment.



### Lithium fever dehydrates Andean wetlands

A ruling in Catamarca, Argentina, recognises for the first time that this type of mining has a direct impact on the environment

Leonardo Rossi / Aimée Martínez Vega

The recent ruling of the Supreme Court of Catamarca on lithium mining in the Salar del Hombre Muerto in Argentina takes on board the repeated warnings that various communities and people in different areas of research have been making: this new extractive advance is based on the collapse of bodies of water and is a threat to entire hydro-social basins. The ruling is only a very elementary acknowledgement from a high level of the state of the impending catastrophe in the salt flats and high Andean lagoons of Argentina and South America in the name of a false energy transition. While alarms are being raised in corporate and governmental sectors about the possible impacts on existing investments and those under negotiation, the underlying issue - the ecological crisis and the truly sustainable alternatives for life embodied by the plaintiff communities - are left out of the main debates.

The lawsuit filed by the Atacameños del Altiplano community has gone through various instances since 2020. It is based on the observation that the Tapiche River valley had dried up due to the activity of the Livent mining company (now merged with Allkem) in the region. Faced with the attempt to build a new aqueduct over the Los Patos River and the growing advance of various projects in the area (it is estimated that there are currently seven companies with interests there), the community members, represented by their authority, Román Gutiérrez, and the support of the PUCRA Assembly, which brings together collective resistance extraction in the province, filed an injunction. After going back and forth between the federal and provincial courts, on 13 March, the highest court in

TSCA/Commentary/SD 0309/ August 2024/, Rossi/A, Martínez V



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## THE U.S. QUEST FOR NUCLEAR PRIMACY: THE COUNTERFORCE DOCTRINE AND THE IDEOLOGY OF MORAL ASYMMETRY — John Bellamy Foster

*When I come to study in detail some of the arguments of these new military writers about nuclear war, I will necessarily have to adopt many aspects of their own methods and terminology, that is, I will have to meet them on the methodological ground of their own choosing. I want therefore to apologise in advance for the nauseating inhumanity of much of what I have to say.* —P. M. S. Blackett

The demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 resulted in Washington declaring at that very moment that a new unipolar world order was being ushered

in, with the United States now the sole superpower. The United States, supported by its NATO allies, immediately initiated a grand strategy of regime change or "naked imperialism" in the Balkans, the Middle East, northern Africa, and along the entire perimeter of the former Soviet Union. This was accompanied by the rapid expansion of NATO itself eastward into the former Warsaw Pact countries and regions previously part of the USSR. The pivotal goal in this expansion, as explained by former U.S. National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Grand Chessboard*, was to incorporate Ukraine into NATO, which would create the geopolitical and geostrategic conditions for the final overpowering and forced breakup of the Russian Federation.



### The U.S. Quest for Nuclear Primacy: The Counterforce Doctrine and the Ideology of Moral Asymmetry

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The "Baker" explosion, part of Operation Crossroads, a nuclear weapon test by the United States military at Bikini Atoll, Bikini, on 23 July 1946. Source: United States Department of Defense either the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Navy's Public Domain Link.

<sup>1</sup> + P. M. S. Blackett, *Studies of War: Nuclear and Conventional* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 130.

<sup>2</sup> + "Excerpts from the Pentagon Plan: Preventing the Emergence of a New Rival," *New York Times*, March 6, 1992; Wesley K. Clark, *Don't Wait for the Next War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014), 37-40; John Bellamy Foster, *Naked Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006). "Notes from the Editors of *Critique* Review on 'Ukraine'." — *Jus Semper*, 7 March 2022.

<sup>3</sup> + Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 46, 92-96, 103; Grey Anderson, "Weapons of Power: Matrix of Management, NATO's Hegemonic Formula," *Left Review*, 1801/18 (March-June 2020), 18, 21-22.

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## DEGROWTH UNDER DISCUSSION IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST — Juan Borda

*An analysis of the main positions and interventions at the recent 'post-growth Woodstock' in the European Parliament*

For three days, from 15 to 17 May, the European Parliament hosted a historic event. Some have called it the Woodstock of post-growth. In the Beyond Growth conference series, organised by 18 MEPs of different colours, many of the world's best minds on the issue of degrowth/ post-growth debated with some of the continent's leading politicians.

The first plenary was a taste of what was to come, of the fracture that is increasingly opening up between science and politics, a fracture between the irrefutable evidence of scientific urgency and the limits of the Union's



realpolitik to achieve transformations that are not patches or, even worse, disguises. If you follow the story of what has happened, you will see that, despite everything and everyone, there is a way out for Europe and the rest of the world.



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Parliament President Roberta Metsola and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were not cast as the bad guys in the film. They chose to play it. In front of a packed audience, and very much in favour of abandoning euphemisms – at least for three days – they decided to open the event with a big splash of cold water.

TJSCACommentarySD (C372) September 2024; Bordera



El antipolítico Juan Bordera, durante su intervención, / Santi Aguado

important, they remain incomplete, since they tend to focus on the proximate causes while missing the deeper systemic elements. In what follows, we provide a more comprehensive narrative that looks at the systemic cause of the different crises: the accumulation and circulation of capital on an ever-increasing scale.



## The Necessity of System Change: An Ecological and Marxian Synthesis

M. Graziano Ceddia and Jacopo Nicola Bergamo

Over the last few decades, we have witnessed both an intensification and a convergence of a number of crises: from the 2008 global financial crisis to the emergence of new infectious diseases the SARS outbreak of 2003 and the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, to mention two, to the acceleration of climate change and biodiversity loss, to the persistence of various forms of malnutrition. Such crises have offered the opportunity to reflect on the most important drivers. For example, we know that the encroachment of human activities related to the expansion of farming, logging, and mining into previously remote wild habitats is an important driver for biodiversity loss and the emergence of new infectious diseases, while also accelerating climate change (for example, through deforestation). We know that the continuous extraction and use of fossil fuels in transport and production is the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, we also know that the deregulation of the financial markets has encouraged speculative behaviours, which can wreak havoc on economic and social systems.

In all of these cases, we have heard experts, regulators, and members of civil society calling for radical changes to financial, food, and energy systems. But while such outlooks are important, they remain incomplete, since they tend to focus on the proximate causes while missing the deeper systemic elements. In what follows, we provide a more comprehensive narrative that looks at the systemic cause of the different crises: the accumulation and circulation of capital on an ever-increasing scale.

TJSCAEssaySD (D193) September 2024M, C. Ceddia - J. N. Bergamo



Demonstrators hold placards during a protest by young people calling for action on climate change, in London, Britain, on April 12, 2019. (Photo/Verbalis)

autonomy should ever be called desirable. It is urgent to recognise that the capitalist mode of living is not really contributing to the quality of human life, but rather the opposite, as it fosters a materialistic and consumerist notion of well-being at the root of the current ecological and social crisis.



## The toxicity of the capitalist mode of living

*More than ten million people die each year worldwide from air pollution, a figure equivalent to deaths caused by war, terrorism, AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and drugs.*

Mateo Aguado

Although over the last half-century, capitalism has achieved unparalleled success in terms of material opulence, there is growing evidence to question its real contribution to people's quality of life, particularly in terms of the more immaterial aspects of well-being, such as social cohesion, personal autonomy, physical and mental health, the good use of time, the enjoyment of rewarding interpersonal relationships, or the availability of safe and healthy natural environments.

As the 1st Ecological Report on Quality of Life in Spain, recently published by FUHEM's Ecological Area, has shown, it is far from clear that the mode of living of industrial societies is leading us to a life of greater quality and well-being. When we rigorously analyse all the edges and implications linked to the capitalist proposal, we see how this, in addition to eroding many facets of social life (increasing poverty and inequality, increasing job insecurity, persistent social exclusion), is seriously compromising the ecological and environmental foundations on which every society rests (and on which, ultimately, our own subsistence and well-being depend).

The capitalist mode of living, characterised among other things by being highly consumerist and polluting, is not only deteriorating the Earth's ecosystems and biodiversity at an unprecedented rate but is also inducing profound alterations in many essential processes related to the overall functioning of the planet, such as the chemical composition of the atmosphere, the climate system or the biogeochemical cycles of the elements.

According to a recent report by Ecologistas en Acción, one in six people in Spain breathe air of poor quality that does not meet legal standards. The main source of this pollution comes from burning fossil fuels linked to

TJSCACommentarySD (C391) April 2024Mateo Aguado



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Over the last few decades, we have witnessed both an intensification and a convergence of a number of crises: from the 2008 global financial crisis to the emergence of new infectious diseases (the SARS outbreak of 2003 and the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, to mention two), to the acceleration of climate change and biodiversity loss, to the persistence of various forms of malnutrition. Such crises have offered the opportunity to reflect on the most important drivers. For example, we know that the encroachment of human activities related to the expansion of farming, logging, and mining into previously remote wild habitats is an important driver for biodiversity loss and the emergence of new infectious diseases, while also accelerating climate change (for example, through deforestation). We know that the continuous extraction and use of fossil fuels in transport and production is the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, we also know that the deregulation of the financial markets has encouraged speculative behaviours, which can wreak havoc on economic and social systems.

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All the sources of insecurity that flow from the capitalist proposal, and to which should be added - of course - those derived from climate change (heat waves, droughts, cyclones, hurricanes, explosive storms, floods, extreme cold episodes, rising sea levels, forest fires, etc.), draw a disturbing scenario of environmental unsustainability under which it becomes increasingly difficult to build and guarantee dignified, healthy and safe lives for all people on the planet. No way of life that undermines the integrity and functioning of ecosystems and hinders people's health and

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## CHINA'S GLOBAL CIVILISATION INITIATIVE — The Editors of Monthly Review



### China's Global Civilisation Initiative

The Editors of Monthly Review

Last spring, China introduced its Global Civilisation Initiative, meant to accompany its earlier Global Development Initiative and its Global Security Initiative (on the latter two initiatives, see "Notes from the Editors," *The U.S. is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia but also on China*, October 2023). The Global Civilisation Initiative was presented by Xi Jinping at the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting in Beijing on March 15, 2023. In his speech, Xi articulated four cardinal principles underlying the Global Civilisation Initiative:



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- (1) We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilisations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilisations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.
- (2) We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilisations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.
- (3) We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilisations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.
- (4) We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilisation dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and

TJSCACommentarySD (C361) May 2024Editors MR

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(3) We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilisations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

(4) We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilisation dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilisations. ("Full Text of Xi Jinping's Keynote Address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting," March 16, 2023, [english.scio.gov.cn](http://english.scio.gov.cn)).

It might be thought that such a declaration, emphasising the diversity of civilisations, principles of equality, mutual cultural exchange, and peaceful coexistence would have been met with universal acclaim by all countries. Instead, the response in the major foreign policy and media organs of the United States and Europe was one of outrage, followed by blistering attacks.

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## AN ANGRY AND PAINFUL WARNING —

**Yayo Herrero** — Prologue to 'El final de las estaciones? (The end of Seasons?)', by Juan Borda, Antonio Turiel and Fernando Valladares

We inhabit a strange world where the convictions and beliefs on which politics, economies and everyday lives have been built for centuries are in tatters. In a culture such as the West, supposedly emancipated from the Earth and the rest of the living world, the

treatment of "ecological problems" has been approached as an ethical and even aesthetic issue that did not concern the social order.



## An angry and painful warning

Prologue to 'El final de las estaciones? (The end of Seasons?)', by Juan Borda, Antonio Turiel and Fernando Valladares

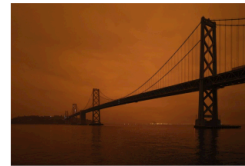
Yayo Herrero

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In a culture such as the West, supposedly emancipated from the Earth and the rest of the living world, the treatment of "ecological problems" has been approached as an ethical and even aesthetic issue that did not concern the social order. In recent years, a large part of society has begun to realise, with incredulity, that what we call nature is an economic and political agent that cannot be negotiated with, and that what is at stake is how to survive with dignity in threatened territories. A new eco-social order is beginning to organise all political and social affiliations. Even those who deny climate mutation or limits reject the concepts but cannot stop talking about water, heat, epizootic haemorrhagic fever, fires, crop failures, rising prices of fertilisers, building materials or minerals, and supply instabilities.

We are part of a web of life in which everything is interconnected and, in so doing, generates the very conditions of life for all. It is not magic or mysticism. It is chemistry, thermal signals, interdependent relationships, and symbiosis, the result of a process of trial and error that began almost 4 billion years ago and whose main purpose is the maintenance of life.

TSCA/Commentary/SD (2023) May 2024 Yayo Herrero



La ciudad de San Francisco cubierta de humo debido a la incendio de California del 2017, en septiembre de 2020. — Christopher Michel / Flickr

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## DEGROWTH - UNSUITED FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH? — Miriam Lang

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Hegemonic common sense suggests that a project as exotic as controlled economic degrowth is at its best applicable only in the geopolitical Global North while for the South, economic growth would be a requirement. Despite this, more and more voices are questioning the arguments that give economic growth a central place in political discussions, suggesting that this type of criticism could be

liberating for many parts of the world (Max-Neef 1995; Latouche 2010; Altvater 2013; Muraca 2014; Gudynas y Acosta 2014; Lang 2016). The fifth international conference on degrowth that took place in Budapest, revealed that reflections around degrowth are also a place of convergence for multiple transformatory narratives: from political ecology to ecological economics, considering also feminist perspectives that suggest the organisation of society around a logic of care; from ideas of environmental and climate justice pole ideas of universal and unconditional basic income. In this way, degrowth constitutes an additional contribution from a new internationalism, a contribution that seems necessary for interventions firm the plural left over the globalised world. This internationalism is not limited to solidarity practices in struggles that take place in faraway places, but instead, it looks for convergence, as well as complementarity and reciprocity between tranformatory struggles that are contextualised and diverse.



## Degrowth - Unsited for the Global South?

Miriam Lang

This article offers an in-depth overview of the major discussions developed in the Fifth international conference on Degrowth that took place in Budapest in September 2016. The conference gathered activists and academics committed to social transformation.

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TSCA/Book/SD (2008) MAY 2024 Miriam Lang

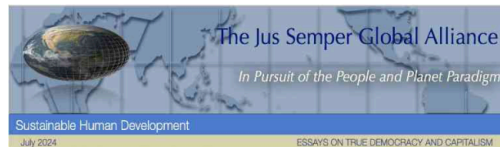
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## MARXIAN ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT — JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER AND MAHESH MASKEY ... (an interview)

...It would be wrong to see ecosocialism as displacing socialism. Rather, ecosocialism stands for a particular set of concerns, emphases, paths of inquiry, and movement development within the larger realm of socialism. It is linked to issues of social reproduction, particularly emphasised in feminist struggles. It is thus all about a rediscovery of the full breadth of the struggle for socialism and human freedom. Ultimately, the



struggle for socialism, now understood more comprehensively in line with Marx and Engels's classical perspective, will be seen as necessarily encompassing both substantive equality and ecological sustainability. If humanity is to survive and prosper in the Anthropocene Epoch, it will be through the development of an environmental proletariat engaging simultaneously with the domains of production/social reproduction and the environment, bringing together the exploited and marginalised populations within every realm. This will be driven by a common concern for the future of what Marx called "the chain of human generations."



## Marxian Ecology and Sustainable Human Development

John Bellamy Foster and Mahesh Maskey

Mahesh Maskey: You have been a pioneer scholar in highlighting and expanding on the original Marxist perspective on ecological issues and the critique of the capitalist system. Countries in the Global South apparently have to make a difficult choice between development and the environment. Can you explain in simple terms why and how ecofriendly development is possible and achievable in economically poor countries?

John Bellamy Foster: The growing recognition that the ecological question is crucial alongside that of the economic, and that the two are inextricably related, only serves to clarify the conditions currently facing poor countries. The real choice is not one of development versus the environment, but rather between peripheral capitalist development of underdevelopment determined by conditions of imperialist domination or a revolutionary break with the system that implements a socialist model of sustainable human development. Hence, once we add the ecological factor, it becomes clearer than ever that the world is divided between overdeveloped nations within the capitalist core and underdeveloped countries within the periphery. Per capita energy consumption in the United States is more than sixty times that of Nepal, while an equilibrium level for the world as a whole from an ecological standpoint is somewhere around a third of the current U.S. level. What this means is that the United States is grossly overdeveloped in terms of what the earth can support, as well as in relation to the world's population as a whole, while Nepal has been no less grossly underdeveloped by the system. Behind this unequal reality



Image of the Harry Magdoff Memorial Library, Nepal.

TSCA/ISSN/00187/July 2024/John Bellamy Foster

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## ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OR COLLAPSE? MORE THAN A TERMINOLOGICAL NUANCE — Luis Lloredo Alix —

*We are facing an irreversible situation in which numerous ecosystems are rapidly becoming unbalanced. But there is still room to mitigate the damage and readapt. There is hope for a more just and beautiful future.*

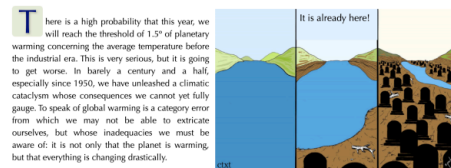
There is a high probability that this year, we will reach the threshold of 1.5° of planetary warming concerning the average temperature before the industrial era. This is very serious, but it is going to get worse. In barely a century and a half, especially since 1950, we have unleashed a climatic cataclysm whose consequences we cannot yet fully gauge. To speak of global warming is a category error from which we may not be able to extricate ourselves, but whose inadequacies we must be aware of: it is not only that the planet is warming, but that everything is changing drastically.



## Ecological crisis or collapse? More than a terminological nuance

*We are facing an irreversible situation in which numerous ecosystems are rapidly becoming unbalanced. But there is still room to mitigate the damage and readapt. There is hope for a more just and beautiful future.*

Luis Lloredo Alix



The fact that the climate is warming means that the polar ice caps are melting, that sea levels are rising, that islands and archipelagos - some of them sovereign states - are in danger of disappearing underwater, that thousands of species are becoming extinct at a dizzying rate, that the food chains that were sustained by these species are becoming unbalanced at a faster rate than their capacity to adapt, that numerous ecosystems dependent on such chains are collapsing, that lands are becoming desertified, that the absence of water makes life impossible in such territories, that extreme climatic phenomena are becoming increasingly violent and unexpected, that the instability of the seasons is interfering with agriculture as we have known it for the last 20,000 years, that food prices are skyrocketing because harvests fail in the face of unpredictable weather phenomena...

TSCA/Commentary/SD 0307/July 2024/Luis Lloredo Alix

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## EXTRACTIVISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE — John Bellamy Foster



## Extractivism in the Anthropocene

John Bellamy Foster

Over the last decade and a half, the concept of extractivism has emerged as a key element in our understanding of the planetary ecological crisis. Although the development of extractive industries on a global scale has been integral to the capitalist mode of production since its onset, commencing with the colonial expansion of the long sixteenth century, this took on a much larger worldwide significance with the advent of the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, marking the beginning of the age of fossil capital. Nevertheless, it was only with the Great Acceleration, beginning in the mid-twentieth century and extending to the present, that the quantitative expansion of global production and of resource extraction in particular led to a qualitative transformation in the human relation to the Earth System as a whole. This has given rise to the Anthropocene Epoch in geological history, in which anthropogenic (as opposed to non-anthropogenic) factors for the first time in Earth history constitute the major determinants of Earth System change.<sup>1</sup> In the Anthropocene, extractivism has become a core symptom of the planetary disease of late capitalism/imperialism, threatening humanity and the inhabitants of the earth in general.

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The Great Acceleration is dramatically depicted by the Anthropocene Working Group of the International Commission on Stratigraphy in the form of a series of twenty-four charts, each showing a hockey stick-shaped curve of economic expansion, resource depletion, and overloading planetary sinks, representing a sudden speeding-up and scaling-up of the human impact on the earth, similar to the famous hockey stick chart on increases in global average temperature

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> On the Anthropocene, see Jan Zalasiewicz, Colin N. Waters, Mark Williams, and Colin P. Summerhayes, *The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jan Zalasiewicz, *Facing the Anthropocene* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016).

TSCA/ISSN/00191/August 2024/John Bellamy Foster

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## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MIGRATION — Torkil Lauesen

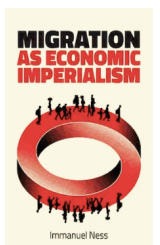


## The Political Economy of Migration

Torkil Lauesen

Patterns of migrations have shifted during the history of capitalism through the changing international divisions of labour. Poverty and the longing for a better life have driven immigration in a polarised world-system. This process has been facilitated by the development of transportation and communication, and hampered by the existence of borders. It has drawn in peasants, skilled and unskilled workers, and a brain drain of educated experts, all with the purpose of optimising capital accumulation. The modern growth of international labour migration coincided with the emergence of neoliberalism in the mid-1970s and the globalisation of production. As Immanuel Ness writes in his new book, *Migration as Economic Imperialism*, with

the emergence of the United States as the indisputable dominant economic and military power...capitalist development strategists began to shift their focus to low-wage southern labour, precisely as the northern economies were shifting from manufacturing to service industries. Thus international labour migration expanded dramatically in the 1990s to reduce shortages in the Global North of low-wage workers willing to work in tedious jobs in agriculture, construction, urban services, manufacturing and home care. (3)



Migration as Economic Imperialism: How International Labour Mobility Undermines Economic Development in Poor Countries (July 2023) by Immanuel Ness.

Neoliberal policy drove workers and peasants to migrate to urban regions within countries and to international destinations in search of work. Global migration increased by 45 percent over two decades, from 150 million in 2000 to 281 million in 2020, according to the World Migration Report 2022. As the title suggests, Ness's book frames the migration of labour in the political economy

TSCA/ISSN/00079/September 2024/Torkil Lauesen

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**THE FERTILITY OF DEATH — Gustavo Duch** — *From compost we come, and in compost we shall turn.*



## The fertility of death

*From compost we come, and in compost we shall turn*

Gustavo Duch

We call it planet Earth, but it should be called planet Life. This is the thesis of Catalan ecologist Jordi Miralles Ferrer because "the real peculiarity of our planet is not the land, nor the oceans, but this thin layer that covers everything called the biosphere". It is unique in that, so far, no life has been found to exist anywhere else in the universe. Thin because, although we can find a few birds flying ten kilometres above sea level or deep-sea fish at a depth of eight kilometres, the space where life takes place is equivalent, if the planet were the size of an apple, to the skin that covers it.

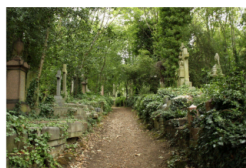


Image of Highgate Cemetery, London / Pinyol

What if we were to call it planet Death? Again, it would describe a peculiarity of the planet because, until proven otherwise, there is no death anywhere else in the universe. Indeed, without life, there is no death, and vice versa. We call it the biosphere, but we might as well call that thin layer where organic matter dances a dance without choreography the thanatosphere.

In any case, the heartbeats that agitate this bio-thanato-sphere are catapulted by life-feeding death and death bringing life to life. A sudden systolic life: a starkton diastolic death: of a single heart, a single vital organ that, as Deborah Bird Rose expresses in her approach to the Australian Aboriginal cosmology in the book *The Dream of the Wild Dog*, "for some four billion years, life and death have gone hand in hand, have each found its own spectral level in relation to the other and, together, have sustained a family of life on Earth".

TSCACommentary/SD (E137) September 2024/Gustavo Duch

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In any case, it is clear that we die as we live or vice versa, that the same ways of inhabiting the world are found in the ways of abandoning it. While urban macro-cemeteries of niches are a clear expression of how most lives materialise on the margins of nature, chain cremation in mortuaries is a faithful reflection of the level of industrialisation and urbanisation we have reached. As is already happening in other places, and looking for inspiration in past cultures or cultures different from the capitalist

Western one, hopefully, we can free ourselves from fears and prejudices to review not only how we face death but also because it has a lot to do with it, how we face life, to propose and demand alternatives of natural funerals such as green cemeteries or humusation to facilitate our metamorphosis. We come from compost and we will turn into compost.

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**FILOPONÌA, FROM CUBA TO THE WORLD - WITHOUT DEBT: EQUALITY AND FREEDOM — Andrea Surbone** — *A paradigmatic utopia proposed in Cuba*



**Filoponia, from Cuba to the world - without debt: equality and freedom**  
- *A paradigmatic utopia proposed in Cuba*

*Thanks to the diffused capital, Filoponia is an egalitarian society even without being a socialist economy. Filoponia is a society of entrepreneurship even without being a capitalist economy. Filoponia is the society of sustainable humanisation, environmentally and socially. Andrea Surbone - Filoponia*



Anonymous, 'The Ideal City', second half of the 15th century.

Andrea Surbone

The earth needs a new Copernican revolution: it must stop revolving around accumulation and embark on a new orbit. The environmental and the social are under ferocious attack by anthropisation, led by financialisation, the current point of the relentless advance of accumulation. The ecological and the social, accordingly, show how close and exacerbated the collapse of our world is.

TSCAessay/SD (E178) April 2024/Andrea Surbone

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**A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF SOCIALIST STATES — Andy Bruno**

For a long time, discussion of the environmental legacy of the Soviet Union on the left was characterised by hasty dismissals of the irrelevance of the experience for contemporary struggles or suspicion of anyone raising the question as a mouthpiece for capitalism. The recent openness to rethinking non-capitalist environmental efforts of the past has been a welcome development. In a spirited 2015 article on Soviet ecology, John Bellamy Foster argues that "the USSR can be seen as a society that generated some of the worst

ecological catastrophes in history but that also gave birth to some of the most profound ecological ideas and practices, based on materialist, dialectical, and socialist intellectual foundations." He focuses primarily on ecological thinking in the late Soviet era to highlight the fresh, innovative, and under-appreciated contributions of Marxist scientists and philosophers, who were grappling intellectually with environmental problems. While seeing positive trends in environmental performance at the very end of the Soviet period, he also echoes a claim of historians that the ecological revolution in environmental consciousness came to an abrupt and tragic end with the collapse of the country in 1991.



**A New Environmental History of Socialist States**

Andy Bruno

Starting in the late 1970s, a narrative emerged about the extreme levels of environmental damage in the Soviet Union and, by implication, most state-socialist countries. The explosion and initial cover-up at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986 did much to crystallise this image of the environmental record of socialist states as being worse than those of their capitalist counterparts. One of the best-known statements of this position declared that historians "autopsy on the Soviet Union and Soviet Communism...may reach the verdict of death by ecocide". Instead, over the past twenty years, environmental historians of the Soviet Union have largely come to the opposite conclusion. As severe as the environmental problems were and as much as the efforts at environmental management proved ineffective, the world's first socialist state mostly resembled industrialised capitalist countries on this front. This move to re-evaluate strictly



View on River Angara with the Shamon Stone and on Lake Baikal from Chersky Stone. There is a lake in a cinderwell (natural hole) in a lava at L. gneiss. By [RuslanChernyshev](#) - Own work, Public Domain, [Wikis](#)

<sup>1</sup> ↑ Murray Feshbach and Alfred Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature Under Siege* (New York: Basic, 1982), 1.  
<sup>2</sup> ↑ Books that have tended to stress Soviet distinctiveness, include Douglas Weiner, *Models of Nature: Ecology, Conservation, and Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Swamland: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Boulder: University of California Press, 1990); Brian Bortomeo, *Peasants, Poets, and Revolutionaries: Forest Conservation and Organization in Soviet Russia, 1917-1929* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2005); Paul Josephson et al., *An Environmental History of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Cynthia Ruder, *Building Stalinism: The Mexican Canal and the Creation of Soviet Space* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018). Books that emphasize comparative connections between the Soviet Union and other parts of the world include Jonathan Oldfield, *Russian Nature: Exploring the Environmental Consequences of Social Change* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005); Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Andy Bruno, *The Nature of Soviet Power: An Arctic Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Nicholas Brejnolds, ed., *Russian Environmentalism: Nature and Ecology in Imperial Russian and Soviet History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018); Barteldus Drenth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019); Maria Frey, *On Russian Soil: Myth and Intimacy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2021); David Abbot, Nicholas Brejnolds, and Alexandra Baklanov, eds., *Peace and Nature: Essays in Russian Environmental History* (Cambridge: White Horse, 2021); Ryan Taylor Jones, *Red Leviathan: The Soviet Union and the Secret Destruction of the World's Whales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

TSCAessay/SD (B0090) June 2024/Andy Bruno

Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro advances this interpretative thread even further in his revelatory new book, *Socialist States and the Environment: Lessons for Ecosocialist Futures*. By expanding the study to all known efforts to establish socialism in modern states, he comes to an even more recuperative conclusion. Not only "were some disastrous environmental impacts of state socialism...neither pervasive nor intrinsic," but the net effects of socialist states were "environmentally constructive." The "accomplishments within state-socialist countries" are "practicable examples from which ecosocialist futures can be built."

An additional lesson from the environmental history of state socialism for ecosocialist efforts today concerns the imperative for economic growth. Where socialist states mirrored the logic of unending economic expansion in the capitalist world (following a fair, or at least widespread, reading of Marxism that views history as unfolding in a series of stages), they tended to dramatically despoil the environment. Where socialist states followed more sustainable practices, such as nature conservation, recycling, ecological monitoring,



strict regulations, and aiming for sufficient conditions for living well (instead of ever-increasing and evermore intensive consumption of material resources), they offered possible environmental paths for the future. The fraught struggles within the left in Ecuador over extractivism in the twenty-first century portend the continued salience of the problem of growth economies for ecosocialist efforts. While ecosocialists and current advocates of degrowth have not always seen eye-to-eye, Engel-Di Mauro has played a significant role in helping bridge these divides by hosting two discussion forums on degrowth ideas in Capitalism Nature Socialism in 2012 and 2019. Judging from his editorials, he became more open to the possibility for a unification of these two approaches over the interim. Though degrowth perspectives barely feature in the analysis of Socialist States.

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## CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE CRISIS, EXTRACTIVISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES — Miriam Lang, Fernando Larrea and Denisse Rodríguez



### Conceptual approaches to the crisis, extractivism and its alternatives

Miriam Lang, Fernando Larrea and Denisse Rodríguez

**T**his article discusses in depth the conceptual and reflective elements shared by the various works that form part of this dossier of Ecuador Debate. We introduce our reflection by critiquing capitalist modernity and its relentless pursuit of unlimited economic growth. This allows us to analyse the extractivist drift produced in Latin America as part of the global capitalist reconfiguration. We conclude by discussing

*The predominant way of life in our societies today is based on unlimited economic growth, even though it takes place in the finite sphere of planet Earth.*

various alternative approaches - post-growth, Sumak Kawsay and food sovereignty - that are capable of guiding and inspiring transformative options for Ecuador, such as those presented here.



Image by Chris in Unsplash

The illusion of unlimited growth and the global civilisational crisis

The predominant way of life in our societies today is based on unlimited economic growth, even though it takes place in the finite sphere of planet Earth. The Club of Rome's 'Limits to Growth' report warned of this paradox and its consequences for global ecosystems, the logic of unlimited growth being an intrinsic part of capitalist rationality aimed at capital accumulation (Meadows et al., 1972). Today, ample scientific information is available on the multiple environmental problems resulting from the prevailing logic of capitalist production and consumption, including climate change - which has not been reversed or even significantly slowed down despite all the efforts made since 1992.

TJCSA049502 (01/10/24) June 2024/04, Lang et al.

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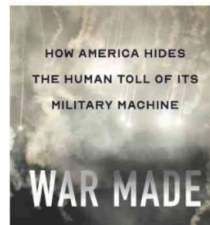
## CORPORATE MEDIA, POLITICAL AND PERPETUAL WAR — David Michael Smith



### Corporate Media, Political Elites, and Perpetual War

David Michael Smith

**L**ong recognised as one of this country's most incisive journalists and media critics, Norman Solomon has written a new book that deserves to be widely read. In less than three hundred pages, he marshals a remarkable amount of information to document the contours of the so-called war on terror waged by the United States since 9/11, the terrible human costs incurred abroad and at home, and the ways in which corporate media and political elites strive to make this perpetual war and its catastrophic consequences almost entirely invisible to the public. The book is replete with important insights into how the media establishment and government officials from both major political parties promote the interests of the military-industrial complex. In *War Made Invisible*, readers will also find an eloquent moral call to end this state of affairs. All things considered, this volume is a valuable contribution to the literature on the role of corporate media and political elites in sustaining the war on terror.



Twenty-six days after the 9/11 attack on the United States, President George W. Bush ordered the bombing of al Qaeda training camps and Taliban military targets in Afghanistan. Although the Taliban regime fell within two months, Solomon explains that the war on terror was "just getting started" (2). He notes that this rubric "became—for the White House, Pentagon, and Congress—a political license to kill and displace people on a large scale" (3). Thousands of U.S. military personnel, allied troops, and military contractors fought a resurgent Taliban for the next two decades and inflicted enormous casualties, but were eventually forced to withdraw. The Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in March 2003 led to an even more calamitous loss of life, destabilised the entire region, and "fostered the formation of terrorism."

TJCSA049502 (00/01/24) June 2024/02, M. Smith

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## THE DIALECTICS OF ECOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION — John Bellamy Foster

*All nature is in a perpetual state of flux.... There is nothing clearly defined in nature.... Everything is bound up with everything else.*  
— Denis Diderot

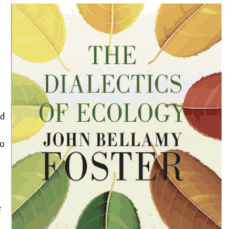


### The Dialectics of Ecology: An Introduction

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John Bellamy Foster

**A**s Harvard ecologist and Marxian theorist Richard Levins observed, "perhaps the first investigation of a complex object as a system was the masterwork of Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*," which explored both the economic and ecological bases of capitalism as a social-metabolic system.<sup>2</sup> The premise of the dialectics of ecology, as it is addressed in this article, is that it is above all in classical historical materialism/dialectical naturalism that we find the method and analysis that allows us to connect "the history of labor and capitalism" to that of the "Earth and the planet," enabling us to investigate from a materialist standpoint the Anthropocene crisis of our times.<sup>3</sup> In Marx's words, humanity is both "a part of nature" and itself "a force of nature."<sup>4</sup> There was, in his conception, no rigid division between natural history and social history. Rather, "The history of nature and the history of men [humanity]" were seen as "dependent on each other as long as men exist."<sup>5</sup>



This is the introduction to John Bellamy Foster, *The Dialectics of Ecology: Society and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2024).

<sup>1</sup> Denis Diderot, *Ramach's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream* (London: Penguin, 1966), 181.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Levins and Richard Levins, *Biology Under the Influence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2007), 185–86, at 110.

<sup>3</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 173, 205.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 283; Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 2; Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1974), 328.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 28.

TJCSA049502 (01/10/24) August 2024/3, Foster

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In this view, the relation of labor and capitalism to the earth's metabolism is at the center of the critique of the existing order. "Labour," Marx wrote, "is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature." However, with the advent of "capitalist production," a systematic disturbance and displacement occurs in "the metabolic interaction between man and the earth," creating a metabolic rift, or ecological crisis, severing essential natural relations and not only "robbing the worker but...robbing the soil."

Today, this ecological rift in the metabolism of society and nature can be seen as having reached an Earth System level, creating what

scientists have called an “anthropogenic rift” in the biogeochemical cycles of the entire planet, resulting in what Frederick Engels referred to metaphorically as the “revenge” of nature. In the classical historical-materialist perspective, this contradiction can only be resolved by reconciling humanity and nature. Such a reconciliation requires overcoming not simply the alienation of nature, but the self-alienation of humanity itself, manifested most fully in today’s destructive, commodified society. What is necessary in such an analysis is recognition from the start of the “corporeal” nature of human existence itself, which is tied to production. Hence, if a “new universal history of the human” is necessary in our time, it is here, within the historical-materialist tradition, that the necessary materialist, dialectical, and ecological method is to be found. For Marx, “Universally developed individuals, whose social relations, as their own communal relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are no product of nature, but of history.” However, human history is never detached from “the universal metabolism of nature,” of which the social metabolism based in the labor and production process is an emergent part.

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## ECOSOCIALISM AND DEGROWTH — John Bellamy Foster and Arman Spéth (An interview...)



### Ecosocialism and Degrowth

John Bellamy Foster and Arman Spéth

#### The Degrowth Approach

Arman Spéth: Degrowth is on the rise. In recent years, several internationally recognised publications have appeared that speak out in favour of the ecosocialist degrowth approach. The journal *Monthly Review*, of which you are editor, has adapted this approach recently in your “Planned Degrowth: Ecosocialism and Sustainable Human Development.” What are the motives behind this and how do you explain the popularity of left-wing degrowth approaches?

John Bellamy Foster: Although “degrowth” as a term has caught on only recently, the idea is not new. Since at least May 1974, *Monthly Review*, beginning with Harry Magdoff and Paul M. Sweezy, has explicitly insisted on the reality of the limits of growth, the need to rein in exponential accumulation, and the necessity of establishing a steady-state economy overall (which does not obviate the need for growth in the poorer economies). As Magdoff and Sweezy stated at that time, “instead of a universal panacea, it turns out that growth is itself a cause of disease.” To “stop growth,” they argued, what was necessary was the “restructuring [of] existing production” through “social planning.” This was associated with a systematic critique of the economic and ecological waste under monopoly capitalism and the squandering of the social surplus.

Magdoff and Sweezy’s analysis gave a strong impetus to Marxian ecology in the United States, particularly in the fields of environmental sociology and ecological economics, for example in Charles H. Anderson’s *The Sociology of Survival: Social Problems of Growth* (1976) and Allan Schnaiberg’s *The Environment: From Scarcity to Scarcity* (1980). So, “degrowth” in that sense is not new to us and is part of a long tradition, stretching over a half-century. Our “Planned Degrowth” issue merely sought to develop this argument further under the deepening contradictions of our time.

TSCA/ISS/SD 001546 September 2024/3; Foster & Spéth



The Melbourne incarnation of the Global Climate Strike called by Greta Thunberg and Fridays for Future March 10, 2019. By Scott Silliman from Georgetown/Melbourne, Australia - Fridays for Future - Global Climate Strike 2019/2020 CC-BY 2.0, Wiki

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## TOTALITY: DECADES OF DEBATE AND THE RETURN OF NATURE — Helena Sheehan — *On how Marxism is the only intellectual tradition on the scene capable of embracing in an integrated and grounded way the whole of what needs to be comprehended to understand and cope with our world.*



### Totality: Decades of Debate and the Return of Nature

*On how Marxism is the only intellectual tradition on the scene capable of embracing in an integrated and grounded way the whole of what needs to be comprehended to understand and cope with our world*

Helena Sheehan

How is it that classical Marxist authors were able to address such a stunning array of issues? In the call for a recent conference on Frederick Engels, organisers suggested possible themes in exploring the legacy of Engels, suggesting class, gender, nature, science, religion, colonialism, capitalism, and socialism.<sup>1</sup> Many more could have been added. The same could be said of Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin, and many more authors. What made it possible for them to encompass such a wide range of themes?

Of course, many people discuss many things, but do they encompass them in a coherent perspective? Quite often, they do not. There is a difference between scatty and systemic thinking, between eclecticism and synthesis, between pluralism and holism, between a ragbag of assorted notions and a coherent and comprehensive worldview.

It is systemic thinking, synthesis, totality that characterised the approach of the above theorists and continues to set apart the best of what has come to be called Marxism.

<sup>1</sup> “This article is a revised version of a keynote address to the Engels in Eastbourne conference on June 2, 2023.

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Phuket.albino

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It is systemic thinking, synthesis, totality that characterised the approach of the above theorists and continues to set apart the best of what has come to be called Marxism.

Totality is an ongoing process, not a static or finished thing. The verb totalising, rather than the noun totality, better captures its open-ended, always striving, process. It is an activity rather than an object. It is an orientation toward the whole, not a finalised conception of the whole. It is a way of thinking that endeavours always to understand each phenomenon within the pulsing whole and the complex nexus of its interactions.

We live in a time of deep decadence, evident everywhere, from paralysis in the face of ecological crisis, to the capitulation of governments, universities, and mainstream media to power, to many manifestations of massive mental illness, to the empty noise of computer gaming, reality television, and the Eurovision song contest. The morbid symptoms and monsters multiply. Capitalism is decadent and yet still dominant.

What to do about it? The first priority is to see the shape of the whole clearly. The next is to speak and write about it clearly. The next is to organise around it. Marxists, from the beginning, have been doing this, and there is more than ever a need to do that now. We may be marginal in relation to the overwhelming forces of confusion and destruction ranged against us, but the margins are not nowhere. We need to inhabit them and reach out from there. Otherwise, the confusion and destruction go uncontested. There must have been times when Marx and Engels felt marginal to their times and all that was happening beyond their control. They had no idea what an enduring intellectual tradition and what a mighty movement would spring from their efforts. We need to keep this going, whatever future might spring from it.

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## The Degrowth Approach:

Arman Spéth: Degrowth is on the rise. In recent years, several internationally recognised publications have appeared that speak out in favour of the ecosocialist degrowth approach. The journal *Monthly Review*, of which you are

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## "THE FUTURE IS IN THE PAST" - ADRIANA GONZÁLEZ BURGOS, INDIGENOUS ACTIVIST — *María González Reyes*



### "The future is in the past"

Adriana González Burgos, indigenous activist

María González Reyes

**Y**ou would really like to meet her. Her name is Adriana González Burgos, I was told. "It's not the same reading an interview with her as listening to her live."

We arranged to meet at a venue in the city centre. A few hours later, in the early morning hours, her flight back to Argentina was leaving. "Thank you for taking the time to meet us. If you feel like it, we'd better go to a café," I suggested, and she smiled. She smiled, "Yes, much better. I'm in the mood for coffee."

Her straight hair and fringes are escaping from under her hat. Nobody wears a hat like that here. It's cold. As if by arrangement, we head for the most intimate corner of the café. There are four of us women sitting around a table.

She begins by saying that her voice is that of a Kolla activist, a community member, a peasant, and a popular feminist. She comes from a family originally from the aboriginal community of Rodero-Humahuaca. The land to which she is intimately linked is in the north of Argentina, in the province of Jujuy.

When I contacted her, I told her that I didn't want to do an interview and that the idea was to get together for a chat. She was fine with that. Afterwards, writing and reviewing the notes, I realised that some words were central to what Adriana was telling us and that those words gave meaning to everything else.



Adriana González Burgos, indigenous activist from Jujuy, during her visit to Madrid.

territory that has to do with our way of being as daughters and women".

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## HEROES, VILLAINS AND OPPORTUNISTS AT DUBAI CLIMATE SUMMIT – *Javier Andaluz Prieto* – *For small countries, these meetings are the only way to confront the major global powers face to face and have their opinions considered.*



### Heroes, villains and opportunists at Dubai climate summit

*For small countries, these meetings are the only way to confront the major global powers face to face and have their opinions considered.*

Javier Andaluz Prieto

**L**ast December, COP28 concluded in Dubai, yet another summit in which the meagre progress is still far from addressing the real climate emergency we are experiencing. Although the need to get rid of fossil fuels has finally been recognised after 28 years of negotiations, the result is still bitter, especially because of the inclusion of false solutions such as nuclear energy, carbon capture, or gas as an alternative fuel, all of which are too expensive and dangerous technologies.

The best recap of this summit is probably in the last movements of the final plenary, when Al-Jaber, president of COP28 and CEO of the oil company ADNOC, ruled to approve the final document without all the countries being present. Among the absentees were the representatives of the small island states,

*Small island states have been stressing that, for these peoples, the climate struggle is a matter of survival.*

The role of these small States has always been relevant. Their positions have always underlined that, for these peoples, the climate struggle is a matter of survival. Thus, they have always stated that they cannot return to their



COP28 / Pictorial

## 'MONTHLY REVIEW' AND THE ENVIRONMENT – *John Bellamy Foster and Batuhan Sarican* – ... (an interview)



### 'Monthly Review' and the Environment

John Bellamy Foster and Batuhan Sarican

**Batuhan Sarican:** John, how did your relationship with nature begin? What do you remember about it from your childhood?

**John Bellamy Foster:** I grew up in the Pacific Northwest in the United States, which is famous for its forests and general environment. I was born in Seattle, but when I was between the ages of 1 and 5, we lived in a timber town, Raymond, Washington, where my father was a teacher. Some of the sawmills in Raymond, one owned by the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, made shingles from Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*). The sawdust from Western Red Cedar is a major known cause of asthma, containing a chemical called plicatic acid, though this was not widely recognised at the time. All three kids in my family had chronic asthma from a very young age, though there was no prior history of it in my family. I ended up with one of the most serious cases of asthma in the country.



Forest in high northwest according to Flickr shared, Oregon/Natural Park, Washington, U.S. By Oregon/Natural Park - various, 2010, 2015, Photo: Public Domain, U.S.

When I was 5 years old, we moved to a suburb outside of Tacoma, Washington, called Fircrest basically a planned community on the Levittown model. I became very conscious of the environment because when we went into Tacoma the smell of the pulp and paper mills was overpowering, and my mother was always concerned about how the pollution was affecting my asthma. The city also seemed to me to be congested though not by today's standards. Thus, at an early age, I developed a dislike for pollution, congestion, and certain aspects of industrialization. The contrast between the relatively pristine natural environment in the Northwest and the pollution caused in those days mainly by the timber and wood processing industry and pulp and paper mills was stark.

TBCACommentarySD (01/03) May 2024(0) B.Foster & Sarican

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## ON THE UNITED STATES POLICY TO DESTROY THE WTO BECAUSE IT COULD NO LONGER CONTROL IT — *The Editors of Monthly Review*

What the Joe Biden administration has called the "rules-based international order" stands for those institutions of world governance that were created under the control of the United States during its period of undisputed economic hegemony after the Second World War and during the subsequent unipolar order following the demise of the USSR in 1991. The rapid

**You would really like to meet her. Her name is Adriana González Burgos, I was told. "It's not the same reading an interview with her as listening to her live."**

She begins by saying that her voice is that of a Kolla activist, a community member, a peasant, and a popular feminist. She comes from a family originally from the aboriginal community of Rodero-Humahuaca. The land to which she is intimately linked is in the north of Argentina, in the province of Jujuy.

She talks about things she has told us many times before. You can tell when you talk about something you have repeated on other occasions. But her words are full of conviction and enthusiasm. As if orally transmitting the message she brings is essential for our skin to feel the convulsion of what is happening in her land, thousands of kilometres away.

"I defend the oral tradition that the word be respected," she says. Adriana is also a professor at a university in Jujuy. She says that the academy does not take up her oral tradition and that the university has a Western hegemony, a white episteme. She says that when they name indigenous peoples, it is to appropriate their words that it is often other people who speak for them. That is why she carries the voice of her people wherever she goes. They defend their territories, cosmovision, and sense of the world so that their voice is respected. "We work to defend the body and the territory from a political spirituality. This way of standing in the world is embraced by many women and dissidents. An activism in defence of life and

It is worthwhile to unite to denounce the systematic violation of human rights through actions, slogans, applause and tears. Especially this year, it is showing the pain of the world's social movements in the face of the genocide in Palestine and demanding in front of the whole world and on the front page of the leading international media the immediate ceasefire.

The timid climatic advances make clear all that remains to be done at all levels. To continue resisting and weaving ties in an increasingly hostile world is how to fight for the planet we want.

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decline of U.S. power in the twenty-first century, associated both with the economic stagnation of the core capitalist countries and the rise of China and other emerging economies, is now calling into question the entire U.S.-dominated rules-based international order. Seeing the writing on the wall, Washington launched its New Cold War on China in 2018, aimed at regaining undisputed U.S. hegemony and unipolarity. At the center of the New Cold War is the World Trade Organization (WTO), often seen as the crown jewel of the liberal international order.



On the United States Policy to destroy the WTO because it could no longer control it

The Editors of Monthly Review

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At the center of the New Cold War is the World Trade Organization (WTO), often seen as the crown jewel of the liberal international order. The WTO, established in 1995, was based on the earlier General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. It was created largely under U.S. auspices and conceived from the beginning in terms of permanent U.S. and Western dominance of world trade. Washington's support of China's membership in the WTO in 2001 was rooted in a deeply held belief that China's further integration into the capitalist world economy would lead to the internal breakdown of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the country's incorporation in a subordinate role within the U.S.-dominated capitalist system. Instead, Beijing not only retained a state-driven market economy under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, but underwent a meteoric economic development never before seen in world history, compressing what had taken centuries in other countries into a single generation. Between 1978 and 2015 alone, China saw a thirty-fold increase in its GDP ("What Happened When China Joined the WTO?," Council on Foreign Relations, May 16, 2023, world101.cfr.org; Yi Wen, "The Making of an Economic Superpower," Working Paper 2015-008, Economic Research Division, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, August 2015, 21).

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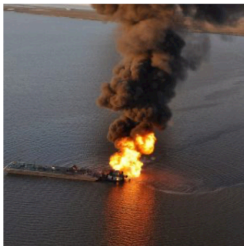
## THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND HUMAN SURVIVAL—Harry Magdoff and Paul M. Sweezy



### The Ecological Crisis of Capitalism and Human Survival

Harry Magdoff and Paul M. Sweezy

There are few well informed people nowadays who do not know that from an ecological point of view the human species is in deep trouble. If things continue to develop as they have over the past fifty years for another century or two—a very short time by historical standards—it is virtually certain that civilised life as we know it today will no longer be possible in large parts of the planet and its survival elsewhere will be problematic at best. A few years ago views of this kind would have been generally dismissed as the ravings of ecological extremists. No longer. Statements like the following from an impeccably mainstream source are no longer exceptional: "We cannot continue in our present methods of using energy, managing forests, farming, protecting plant and animal species, managing urban growth, and producing industrial goods. We certainly cannot continue to reproduce our own species at the present rate." This comes from the prestigious Business Council for Sustainable Development whose members include a representative sample of the top officers of the world's biggest multinational corporations: Chevron



Oil, Mitsubishi, Ciba-Geigy, Dow Chemical, and DuPont, to name a few (Stephen Schneider and the Business Council for Sustainable Development, Changing Course: A Global Business Perspective on Development and the Environment, MIT Press, 1992).

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## THE SPECTRE OF 'KNOWLEDGE AS COMMONS' — Sam Popovich



### The Spectre of 'Knowledge as Commons'

Sam Popovich

On October 3, 2023, in an egregious violation of press freedom, the founder of the progressive Indian media company NewsClick, Prabir Purkayastha, was arrested on trumped up charges of accepting foreign donations in exchange for spreading Chinese propaganda. Purkayastha is a Monthly Review author, political commentator, analyst, proponent of open science and technology, and, perhaps most significantly, critic of the Indian government. Purkayastha's arrest must be understood in the broader context of a crackdown on press freedom in India as a means of shoring up the hegemony of Narendra Modi and the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), an issue that Purkayastha himself has analysed in both his book on Indian politics, science, and technology, Knowledge as Commons, as well as in his fascinating new memoir, Keeping Up the Good Fight (both published by LeftWord Press, 2023). Knowledge as Commons in particular lays out a vision of an inclusive, secular nation based on the open sharing of knowledge that is directly at odds with the political reality in India today.

Purkayastha's account of the progressive politics that technology and open knowledge make possible, his vision of knowledge as the "common heritage of humankind," and his opposition to the enclosure and privatisation of that knowledge have made him an oppositional figure in Modi's India. In a political conjuncture predicated on division, differentiation, hierarchy, and the oppression and silencing of minorities, Purkayastha's vision of science and technology



Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

<sup>1</sup> <sup>47</sup> For some clue as to the agencies involved in his arrest, see Prabir Purkayastha and Rishabh Raju, "U.S. Control of the Internet," Monthly Review 66, no. 3 (July-August 2014): 103-27.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>48</sup> Prabir Purkayastha, Knowledge as Commons: Towards Inclusive Science and Technology (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2023); Prabir Purkayastha, Keeping Up the Good Fight: From the Emergency to the Present Day (Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2023).

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## "ENVIRONMENTALISM HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO COUNTERACT THE NEOLIBERAL ERA'S CANCELLATION OF THE FUTURE" — Aurora Fernández Polanco (an interview...)



"Environmentalism has not been able to counteract the neoliberal era's cancellation of the future"

JAIME VINDEL GAMONAL / RESEARCHER

Aurora Fernández Polanco

Fossil Culture. Art, culture and politics between the Industrial Revolution and global warming (Akal, 2023) is an essential book for anyone who wants to approach the imaginaries of progress in the temporal arc indicated in the title. We land in images that take us on a journey from the "stormy clouds" of which John Ruskin spoke in the 19th century to the verses of Pasolini, "we shall see patched trousers/ red sunsets in suburbs empty of engines". We don't need to cross borders to find transversal works, books that unite cultural criticism and ecology, something still very rare in our country, so given to the narrow (and blind) channels through which disciplines pass and which this extensive study undertakes with passion. What is politically active is that the book is written on the urgency of the embers that all intellectuals must tread on without remedy, those of the climate, ecological and energy crisis that is ravaging us. We will have the pleasure of talking to its author, Jaime Vindel (1981), a researcher at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC).

There are so many issues dealt with in this wonderful overview that I would like to focus on those that have to do with the current (and urgent) need to reconnect with certain moments in which things could have been otherwise, what you call resistance in the face of fatality. Beyond the work of an academic researcher, has this been part of the political and social spirit that invited you to write the book?

Yes, of course. My impression is that environmentalism, despite its undoubted achievements, has been unable to counteract the cancellation of the future that we associate with the neoliberal era. In fact, it sometimes tends to

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## IMPERIALIST PROPAGANDA AND THE IDEOLOGY OF THE WESTERN LEFT INTELLIGENTSIA: FROM ANTICOMMUNISM AND IDENTITY POLITICS TO DEMOCRATIC ILLUSIONS AND FASCISM — *Gabriel Rockhill and Zhao Dingqi (an interview...)*



Imperialist Propaganda and the Ideology of the Western Left Intelligentsia: From Anticommunism and Identity Politics to Democratic Illusions and Fascism

Gabriel Rockhill and Zhao Dingqi

Zhao Dingqi: During the Cold War, how did the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conduct the "Cultural Cold War"? What activities did the CIA's Congress for Cultural Freedom carry out, and what impact did it have?

Gabriel Rockhill: The CIA undertook, along with other state agencies and the foundations of major capitalist enterprises, a multifaceted cultural cold war aimed at containing—and ultimately rolling back and destroying—communism. This propaganda war was international in scope and had many different aspects, only a few of which I touch on below. It is important to note that in spite of its extensive reach and the ample resources dedicated to it, many battles have been lost throughout this war. To take but one recent example that demonstrates how this conflict continues today, Raúl Antonio Capote revealed in his 2015 book that he worked for the CIA for years in its destabilisation campaigns in Cuba targeting intellectuals, writers, artists, and students.

Unbeknownst to the governmental agency known as "the Company," however, the Cuban university professor it had slyly honey-potted into promoting its dirty tricks was actually pulling one over on the cocksure master spies: he was working undercover for Cuban intelligence.<sup>1</sup> This is but one sign among many others that the CIA, in spite of its various



Portal of the Bourgeoisie (1930) by David Alfaro Siqueiros

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## DISCREDITING CARBON CREDITS — *Nathaniel Rugh / Marcel Llaveró Pasquina* — Critics charge that carbon offsets are nothing more than a paper trail to allow the fossil fuel industry to sell its product without a sense of guilt.



### Discrediting carbon credits

Critics charge that carbon offsets are nothing more than a paper trail to allow the fossil fuel industry to sell its product without a sense of guilt.

Nathaniel Rugh / Marcel Llaveró Pasquina

Fossil fuel companies are increasingly using carbon offsets to claim they are going carbon neutral. Oil and gas giants like BP, Shell, Total Energies and Eni have all used carbon credits to deliver so-called "carbon neutral" fossil fuels.

Additionally, Eni, Shell, Total Energies, Chevron and ExxonMobil long term net zero strategies include substantial amounts of carbon offsetting. According to a report released by Shell, by 2030 up to 1.5 million tonnes of CO2 will be offset globally with a value of \$10-40 billion, up from \$2 billion in 2021.

Now, four recent case studies registered in the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice (EJAtlas) reveal that indigenous peoples rights are being systematically violated through land dispossession, violence, militarization of their ancestral territories, loss of access to vital natural resources, and disenfranchisement. At the same time, all the projects studied sell hot-air carbon credits, and in three of them the revenues are subject to opaque financial arrangements that marginalise and exclude local communities.

TSGA/CommentarySD (C360) April 2024N. Rugh-M. Llaveró



Imagen de rescate de un colado contaminado. / Polanco

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For anyone striving for a safer climate and global justice, it is imperative to oppose voluntary carbon markets and their use to make fraudulent carbon neutral claims by fossil fuel companies. In parallel, the worst climate offenders must be required to pay local communities defending the forest, not as a quid pro quo, not as a carbon offset, but as a climate and ecological debt.

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## A final thought



Mexico City policeman chains himself to the main doors of the City Assembly in protest because his salary does not make a living wage (19 December 2006).

A living wage is, universally, the most important element in the achievement of everyone's right to a dignified life and the eradication of poverty. Relative to the social responsibility of business, a corporation or organisational entity employing people, regardless of size or trade, public or private, cannot be considered to behave in a socially responsible manner if it does not pay a living wage, regardless of how responsibly it behaves in all other areas of activity.

Just as the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Agenda states, *the decent work concept has led to an international consensus that productive employment and decent work are key elements to achieving poverty reduction*. Yet, everything remains in the realm of rhetoric and hypocrisy, and the system, imbued in the most perverse human instincts, remains.

Zhao Dingqi: During the Cold War, how did the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conduct the "Cultural Cold War"? What activities did the CIA's Congress for Cultural Freedom carry out, and what impact did it have? Gabriel Rockhill: The CIA undertook, along with other state agencies and the foundations of major capitalist enterprises, a multifaceted cultural cold war aimed at containing—and ultimately rolling back and destroying—communism. This propaganda war was international in scope and had many different aspects, only a few of which I touch on below. It is important to note at the outset, however, that in spite of its extensive reach and the ample resources dedicated to it,

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