

# JUS SEMPER NEWSLETTER

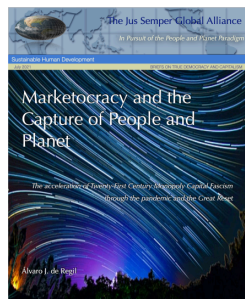
*In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm*

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

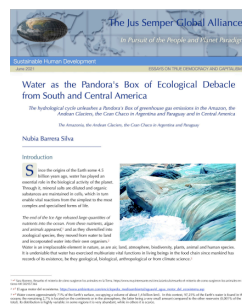
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JUS SEMPER Newsletter – Summer-Autumn 2021

**Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet — (Álvaro J. de Regil) —** *The acceleration of Twenty-First Century Monopoly Capital Fascism through the pandemic and the Great Reset — Stopping it and Saving our Planet is the only way to save us and the our planet!* **Page 2**



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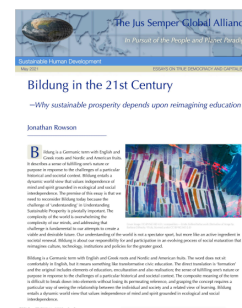
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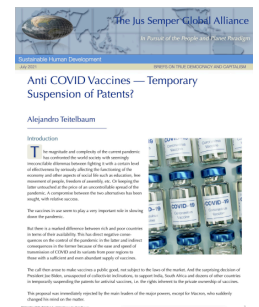
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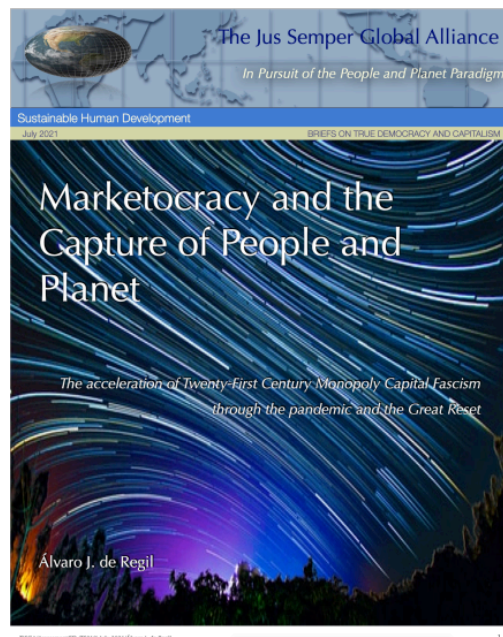
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## MARKETOCRACY AND THE CAPTURE OF PEOPLE AND PLANET — *The acceleration of Twenty-First Century Monopoly Capital Fascism through the pandemic and the Great Reset* — **Álvaro J. de Regil**



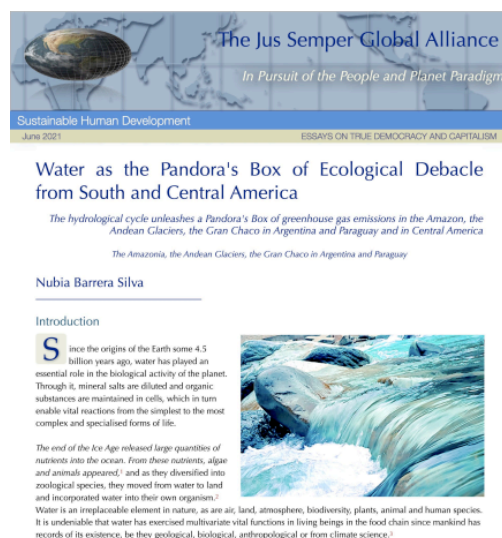
The purpose of this study is to examine the trajectory that the world has been following since neoliberalism was imposed on humanity half a century ago. Its specific aim is assessing the ulterior motivations—and their consequences on humanity and the planet as a whole—of key groups and individuals of the global elite with powerful influence on the world's governments and multilateral institutions. Among these are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and, last but not least, the World Economic Forum (from now on WEF), and the purpose of its proclaimed "Fourth Industrial Revolution" through "The Great Reset". On the one hand, we are enduring perilous times for life on our planet, as the direct result of the capitalistic-driven Anthropocene that has put the planet on the brink of crossing a tipping point with dramatic transformations that can become cataclysmic and that threaten the future of all living things. On the other hand, we have a dangerous global elite that has captured our governments and unilaterally pretends to impose their agenda, which true intentions are a future they deliberately keep opaque but are advancing in the most undemocratic manner. It should be extremely evident that the common citizenry is never asked to participate in the discussions and decisions that the elite pretends to advance and implement on behalf of humanity.

Hence, this is the author's contribution to raising the questions and finding the answers to critical events that we are witnessing today. This should help the common citizenry gain

knowledge, take consciousness, and empower themselves to make well-informed decisions that can contribute in turn to organise and put in check the agenda pursued by the global elite of the less than one per cent. The current events must make saving our species and our planet the fundamental issue and the overarching and quintessential cornerstone of our effort to transition to a new sustainable paradigm. It cannot be one of many vital issues, but the single element that drives our vision to achieve sustainability that fundamentally determines how we draft our new paradigm. It is in our self-interest to become cognisant about the damning catastrophe that we are facing, stop our numbness and individualism and coalesce to change the current doomed trajectory and veer to what Paul Burkett calls an eco-revolutionary tipping point. This is the cross-sectoral defensive struggles of ecological, communitarian and urban movements coalescing as an ecological socialist movement against "this system of monopoly-finance capital and its state functionaries," the tiny elite who thinks it owns our planet.

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## WATER AS THE PANDORA'S BOX OF ECOLOGICAL DEBACLE FROM SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA — *The hydrological cycle unleashes a Pandora's Box of greenhouse gas emissions in the Amazon, the Andean Glaciers, the Gran Chaco in Argentina and Paraguay and in Central America* — **Nubia Barrera Silva**



<sup>1</sup> "San Barro: Resulto de cientos de cientos de animales en la Tierra. <https://www.museoantropologico.com.ar/antropologia/resultado-de-cientos-de-cientos-de-animales-en-la-tierra-410307346>

<sup>2</sup> "El agua motor del ecosistema. <https://www.ambiente.com.ar/medio-ambiente/agua-motor-del-ecosistema>

<sup>3</sup> "Water covers approximately 71% of the Earth's surface, occupying a volume of about 1.4 billion km<sup>3</sup>. In this context, 97.2% of the Earth's water is found in the oceans. The remaining 2.8% is located on the continents or in the atmosphere, the latter being a very small amount compared to the other reservoirs (0.005 % of the total). Its distribution is highly variable: in some regions it is very abundant, while in others it is scarce.

Since the origins of the Earth some 4.5 billion years ago, water has played an essential role in the biological activity of the planet. Through it, mineral salts are diluted and organic substances are maintained in cells, which in turn enable vital reactions from the simplest to the most complex and specialised forms of life.

The water cycle has been and will be an essential component in agriculture, conservation and the exchange of native seeds between farmers. Consequently, it is directly involved in the production of basic foodstuffs in each culture. Furthermore, it makes possible the sedentarisation or human permanence in territories favourable to economic and market activities. Such sedentarisation is in response to the solution of historical needs and satisfactions of peoples and countries with asymmetrical models of development and well-being.

Despite the technological development since the Industrial Age, people are hardly aware of how the laws governing the movement of nature, independent of human will and consciousness, work. Perhaps because of this ignorance, in less than two centuries of capitalist hegemony—more than any other species or creature—humans have managed to alter and fracture the metabolism of the planet in the name of civilisation, technology, economic growth and the well-being of the countries of the global North

South and Central America (SACA) is the second most disaster-prone region in the world. Since 2000, 152 million Iberian Americans and Caribbeans have been affected by 1205 disasters, including floods, hurricanes and storms, earthquakes, droughts, landslides, fires, extreme temperatures and volcanic events..

Finally, in the SACA countries, climate collapse is on the rise, with each environmental and ecological tragedy bringing sporadic humanitarian aid from international NGOs, FAO or other UN organisations. However, this aid is limited to the count of natural disasters at record highs due to the intensity and frequency of fires, droughts, floods, earthquakes, storms, thunderstorms and volcanic eruptions. There is no mention of the causes, even though they respond to nature's reactions to the fractures and damage inflicted both above and below ground in the name of the green economy and the welfare of the global North.

Natural disasters have different causes: fires, deforestation and subsequent land conversion of tropical rainforests, wastelands with a common purpose: the accelerated expansion of oil palm and cereal monocultures for animal and human consumption over the exploitation of nature's finite resources either tropical rainforests in successive generations by ruptures and diversions of surface and underground currents; because they have always been on Earth. retreat of glaciers, etc. All of the above are underlying irreversible alterations of the





ingredient in societal renewal. Bildung is about our responsibility for and participation in an evolving process of social maturation that reimagines culture, technology, institutions and policies for the greater good.

My focus is therefore not on education as it is currently conceived, but on how a cultural ethos and educational praxis, Bildung, could refashion the institutions and purposes of society. In academic terms, the underlying question is characterised by interdisciplinary ambition: how might a psychologically informed philosophy of education enrich new economic thinking? In more applied terms, the aim is generative synthesis: how might the cultivation of our inner lives help initiate and sustain an ecologically sane societal transformation in a world of accelerating technological change? And to put it more plainly, as a *cri de cœur*, what's the point of life in a world that's on fire?

In his 2014 essay, *Spirituality and Intellectual Honesty*, German philosopher Thomas Metzinger offers the following dark prognosis: Conceived of as an intellectual challenge for humankind, the increasing threat arising from self-induced global warming clearly seems to exceed the present cognitive and emotional abilities of our species. This is the first truly global crisis, experienced by all human beings at the same time and in a single media space, and as we watch it unfold, it will also gradually change our image of ourselves, the conception humankind has of itself as a whole. I predict that during the next decades, we will increasingly experience ourselves as failing beings.

As a species we are defined by our failure to perceive, appreciate, understand and emotionally engage with an economically globalised world in a way that allows us to make the decisions we would take if we were wise. Many people think, for instance, that the climate crisis was born in the scientific naivety of the industrial revolution, but more than half of all industrial CO2 emissions have been released much more recently, since 1988, the year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was created. As the Neo-Confucian Philosopher Wang-Ming put it: 'To know and not to act, is not to know. To restore ecological sanity with the commensurate speed, scale and discernment, we have to learn how to know in a new way, and that way should give us some sense of direction and hope.'

The kinds of Bildung we seem to need to survive and thrive today will relate not merely to subject knowledge, but also, for instance, how we relate to nature, technology, and our emotions at a time when our capacity to direct and control our attention is the front line. Building that coherent educational programme in theory and practice is part of the intellectual, design, networking, and implementation challenge of sustainable prosperity. The

challenge amounts to asking: what is the optimal form of the relationship between education, technology and culture today that will allow people to develop the kinds of capabilities that are fundamental for ecological sanity and human welfare?

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## ANTI COVID VACCINES — TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF PATENTS? — Alejandro Teitelbaum



### Anti COVID Vaccines — Temporary Suspension of Patents?

Alejandro Teitelbaum

#### Introduction

The magnitude and complexity of the current pandemic has confronted the world society with seemingly irreconcilable dilemmas between fighting it with a certain level of effectiveness by seriously affecting the functioning of the economy and other aspects of social life such as education, free movement of people, freedom of assembly, etc. Or keeping the latter untouched at the price of an uncontrollable spread of the pandemic. A compromise between the two alternatives has been sought, with relative success.

The vaccines in use seem to play a very important role in slowing down the pandemic.

But there is a marked difference between rich and poor countries in terms of their availability. This has direct negative consequences on the control of the pandemic in the latter and indirect consequences in the former because of the ease and speed of transmission of COVID and its variants from poor regions to those with a sufficient and even abundant supply of vaccines.

The call then arose to make vaccines a public good, not subject to the laws of the market. And the surprising decision of President Joe Biden, unsuspected of collectivist inclinations, to support India, South Africa and dozens of other countries in temporarily suspending the patents for antiviral vaccines, i.e. the rights inherent to the private ownership of vaccines.

This proposal was immediately rejected by the main leaders of the major powers, except for Macron, who suddenly changed his mind on the matter.

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## MARXISM AND THE DIALECTICS OF ECOLOGY — John Bellamy Foster

*Does Critical Criticism believe that it has reached even the beginning of a knowledge of historical reality so long as it excludes from the historical movement the theoretical and practical relation of man to nature, i.e. natural science and industry? — Karl Marx and Frederick Engel*



### Marxism and the Dialectics of Ecology

John Bellamy Foster

*Does Critical Criticism believe that it has reached even the beginning of a knowledge of historical reality so long as it excludes from the historical movement the theoretical and practical relation of man to nature, i.e. natural science and industry? — Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*

The recovery of the ecological-materialist foundations of Karl Marx's thought, as embodied in his theory of metabolic rift, is redefining both Marxism and ecology in our time, reintegrating the critique of capital with critical natural science. This may seem astonishing to those who were reared on the view that Marx's ideas were simply a synthesis of German idealism, French utopian socialism, and British political economy. However, such perspectives on classical historical materialism, which prevailed during the previous century, are now giving way to a broader recognition that Marx's materialist conception of history is inextricably connected to the materialist conception of nature, encompassing not only the critique of political economy, but also the critical appropriation of the natural-scientific revolutions occurring in his day.

What Georg Lukács called Marx's "ontology of social being" was rooted in a conception of labor as the metabolism of society and nature. In this view, human-material existence is simultaneously social-historical and natural-ecological. Moreover, any realistic historical understanding required a focus on the complex interconnections

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What Georg Lukács called Marx's "ontology of social being" was rooted in a conception of labor as the metabolism of society and nature. In this view, human-material existence is simultaneously social-historical and natural-ecological. Moreover, any realistic historical understanding required a focus on the complex interconnections and interdependencies associated with human-natural conditions. It was this overall integrated approach that led Marx to define socialism in terms of a process of sustainable human development—understood as the necessity of maintaining the earth for future generations, coupled with the greatest development of human freedom and potential. Socialism thus required that the associated producers rationally regulate the metabolism of nature and society. It is in this context that Marx's central concepts of the "universal metabolism of nature," "social metabolism," and the metabolic "rift" have come to define his critical-ecological worldview.

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## LIFE BEYOND CAPITAL — John O'Neill



### Life Beyond Capital

John O'Neill

People's relations with each other and with the environments in which they live have been increasingly articulated in the language of capital. Social relations are described as various forms of social capital. Relations to the environments that matter to people are described in terms of natural capital. This essay challenges this growing dominance of the language of capital. The appeal to natural capital is premised on a misunderstanding of prosperity that fails to properly grasp the place that relationships to people, places and living beings have within a good life. It is in life beyond capital that we are able to fully prosper.



People's relations with each other and with the environments in which they live have been increasingly articulated in the language of capital. Social relations to family, friends and community are described as various forms of social capital. Our relations to the environments around us, be it woodlands, forests, wetlands, gardens, lowland sites, or urban parks are described in terms of natural capital. The language of capital is often used to define the very project of sustainability. In the economic literature, sustainability is taken to require that each generation leaves the following generation a stock of capital that is at least as good as that it received, and if possible, improves on that stock of capital. The standard arguments between weak and strong varieties of sustainability concern the mix of capital assets. Proponents of "weak sustainability" are taken to claim that all that matters for sustainability is that the total aggregate level of capital, human-made and natural, must be maintained. Proponents of "strong sustainability" are

environments that matter to people are described in terms of natural capital. This essay challenges this growing dominance of the language of capital. The appeal to natural capital is premised on a misunderstanding of prosperity that fails to properly grasp the place that relationships to people, places and living beings have within a good life. It is in life beyond capital that we are able to fully prosper.

My central purpose in this paper has been to articulate and defend a particular line of argument against the increasing use of 'natural capital' as a way of understanding our relations to the environmental goods that matter to people. My central argument has been that it fails to recognise the sources of non-substitutability of different goods and places. In particular it fails to recognise the importance of relations to particulars in the lives of people and communities.

People's everyday lives are lived among the particular people and places that matter to them. They still live lives outside the ever expanding domains of capital. Our environmental and social crises require not the expansion of the worlds of capital, but resistance to that expansion and the growth of spheres of life beyond capital.

What this 'prosperity ecology', like prosperity theology, gets wrong is an understanding of what it is to live a good human life. Both fail to grasp the nature of prosperity properly understood and the place of relationships to people, places and living beings within those lives. It is in a life beyond capital that we are able to fully prosper.

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## THE POLITICS OF FOOD IN VENEZUELA — Ana Felicien, Christina Schiavoni and Licia Romero

Few countries and political processes have been subject to such scrutiny, yet so generally misunderstood, as Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. This is particularly true today, as the international media paints an image of absolute devastation in the country, wrought by failed policies and government mismanagement. At the same time, the three national elections of 2017 demonstrated a strong show of support for the continuation of the revolution under its current leadership. This seeming paradox, we are told, can only be attributed to government tendencies of co-optation and clientelism, along with a closing of democratic space. Such messages are reproduced many times over, both in the media and in certain intellectual circles.

A benefit of the intense attention paid to Venezuela is that a recurring narrative can be

identified, which goes basically as follows. The central character is Hugo Chávez Frías, a strong-armed political leader who enjoyed the double advantage of personal charisma and high oil prices over the course of his presidency from 1999 through 2012. In 2013, Chávez died, and the following year global oil prices plunged. Amid the perfect storm of the loss of Chávez, the collapse in oil prices, and the government's misguided policies, Venezuela has steadily slid into a state of economic and political disintegration, with food and other necessities growing scarce, in turn sparking social unrest as people take to the streets. The government, headed by Chávez's less charismatic successor, Nicolás Maduro, is going to desperate lengths to hang onto power, becoming increasingly authoritarian in the process, while maintaining the populist rhetoric of Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution.



### The Politics of Food in Venezuela

Ana Felicien, Christina Schiavoni and Licia Romero

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\* This article is adapted from a paper presented at the first international conference of the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI), held at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, March 17-18, 2018. The authors wish to thank the ERPI team, as well as Fred Magdoff, William Canessa, and the many others, particularly grassroots movements in Venezuela, who have contributed to this work.

\*\* For an example of the limited debate on Venezuela in academic circles, see "Debates on Venezuela" in the fall 2017 issue of ASA Forum.

†©CASA/ERPI 2018 April 2018 Ana Felicien, Christina Schiavoni and Licia Romero

However, this dominant narrative does not capture the complexities of what is happening in Venezuela today. There are significant holes in the account, which raise important questions: who are "the people" at the center of this analysis? What, if any, are the different impacts of present challenges on various sectors of society? How should the Venezuelan state be understood, and where and how does the role of capital figure? By focusing on the politics of food as a key area in which the country's broader politics are playing out—particularly by looking at recent shortages and food lines, as well as what have been presented as "food riots"—a multitude of issues can be better understood. Often-ignored matters of race, class, gender, and geography demand special attention.

We will begin by looking to the past to situate present trends in their proper context. By

homing in on the dynamics around Venezuela's most highly consumed staple foods, we can gain insight into the current conjuncture, particularly the recent food shortages. Some of the main drivers of the shortages come from forces opposing the Bolivarian Revolution, which are increasingly gaining ground within the state. We will then discuss responses to the shortages by the government and popular forces.

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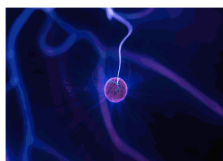
## THE PHYSICS OF CAPITALISM — *Erald Kolasi*



### The Physics of Capitalism

Erald Kolasi

People tend to think of capitalism in economic terms. Karl Marx argued that capitalism is a political and economic system that transforms the productivity of human labor into large profits and returns for those who own the means of production.<sup>1</sup> Its proponents contend that capitalism is an economic system that promotes free markets and individual liberty. And opponents and advocates alike most often measure capitalism's impact in terms of wealth and income, wages and prices, and supply and demand.



*Photo: iStockphoto.com*

However, human economies are complex biophysical systems that interact with the wider natural world, and none can be fully examined apart from their underlying material conditions. By exploring some fundamental concepts in physics, we can develop a better understanding of how all economic systems work, including the ways that the energy-intensive activities of capitalism are changing humanity and the planet.

This article will explain how the fundamental features of both our natural and economic existence depend on the principles of thermodynamics, which studies the relationships between quantities such as energy, work, and heat.<sup>2</sup> A firm grasp of how capitalism works at a physical level can help us understand why our next economic system should be more ecological, prioritising long-run stability and compatibility with the global ecosphere that sustains humanity.

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 929–30.

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Young, *Capitalism and Commerce* (New York: Lexington, 2002), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Atkins, *Four Laws That Drive the Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), preface.

TSCA/Essay/SD (2021) April 2021/Erald Kolasi

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Such an understanding requires a glance at some central concepts in physics. These include energy, entropy, dissipation, and the various rules of nature that bind them together. The central features of our natural existence, as living organisms and as human beings, emerge from the collective interactions described by these core physical realities. Although these concepts can be difficult to define without reference to specific models and theories, their general features can be outlined and analysed to reveal the powerful intersection between physics and economics.

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## MORAL ECONOMIES OF THE FUTURE – *The Utopian Impulse of Sustainable Prosperity— Will Davies*



### Moral Economies of the Future

—*The Utopian Impulse of Sustainable Prosperity*

Will Davies

#### Abstract

The field of 'moral economy' explores the ways in which seemingly amoral economic institutions are normatively and politically instituted. However it has tended to neglect the question of how economic actors make commitments to the long-term future, of the sort that are implied by the idea of 'sustainable prosperity'. Work by Jens Beckert and Elena Esposito has brought a dynamic, perspective to economic sociology, and helps pinpoint the precise problem posed by neoliberalism, namely that it seeks to channel all forms of futurity, hope and promise into market-based mechanisms, such as credit, risk, derivatives, business models and so on. This way of instituting 'the future' presents a blockage to all alternative forms of planning, design or imagination, where the latter seek non-economic, potentially incalculable forms of long-term commitment (for instance to future generations). Challenging the neoliberal framing of 'the future' requires a rediscovery of the forms of futurity, utopianism and hope that were present in modernism, but now need reinstating in ways that are not predicated on environmental degradation. Anthropocenic utopias are urgently required.

#### Introduction

Since the birth of sociology in the late 19th century, economic sociologists have highlighted the various ways in which seemingly amoral, technical and mathematical dimensions of capitalism are tacitly derived from moral commitments and norms. Hence, key commercial institutions such as contract and property are derivative of religious metaphysics (Durkheim, 1991); the work ethic that drives economic accumulation is a legacy of Protestant ethics (Weber, 2002);

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The field of 'moral economy' explores the ways in which seemingly amoral economic institutions are normatively and politically instituted. However it has tended to neglect the question of how economic actors make commitments to the long-term future, of the sort

that are implied by the idea of 'sustainable prosperity'. Work by Jens Beckert and Elena Esposito has brought a dynamic perspective to economic sociology, and helps pinpoint the precise problem posed by neoliberalism, namely that it seeks to channel all forms of futurity, hope and promise into market-based mechanisms, such as credit, risk, derivatives, business models and so on. This way of instituting 'the future' presents a blockage to all alternative forms of planning, design or imagination, where the latter seek non-economic, potentially incalculable forms of long-term commitment (for instance to future generations). Challenging the neoliberal framing of 'the future' requires a rediscovery of the forms of futurity, utopianism and hope that were present in modernism, but now need reinstating in ways that are not predicated on environmental degradation. Anthropocenic utopias are urgently required.

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## THE PANDEMIC AS A MANIFESTO OF A GENERAL AND PROLONGED CRISIS OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM – THE CASE OF FRANCE — *The Case of France — Alejandro Teitelbaum*



### The Pandemic as a Manifesto of a General and Prolonged Crisis of the Capitalist System

—*The Case of France*

Alejandro Teitelbaum

#### Introduction

The COVID pandemic constitutes a significant health crisis on a global scale. Additionally, it exposes a general and prolonged crisis of the current capitalist system in its multiple aspects: economic, social, political and cultural, with its specificities in each country. We will attempt to analyse the case of France by considering these different aspects. When articulated together, they can give us a coherent and objective picture of the current state of French society.

As almost everywhere else in the world, the dominant problem in France is the pandemic and its physical and psychological consequences. This is followed, in order of importance, because the second-largest population group in France—ten per cent of the total—is of Arab-Muslim origin and Islamic confession, whether practising or not.

#### The Economic-Social Framework

Several variables interlink and determine France's socio-economic framework in terms of wages, unemployment, poverty, inequalities, qualifications of the working population (graduate or otherwise), content and quality of education,

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The COVID pandemic constitutes a significant health crisis on a global scale. Additionally, it exposes a general and prolonged crisis of the current capitalist system in its multiple aspects: economic, social, political and cultural, with its specificities in each country. We will attempt to analyse the case of France by considering these



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## THE ECOLOGICAL STATE — *Erald Kolasi*



### The Ecological State

Erald Kolasi

The central problem of economics is scarcity, or at least that is how the story is told. The basic argument is that we have infinite desires but limited resources, and because we cannot have everything we want, we must necessarily devise a system to distribute goods and resources. Enter the efficient market economy, with its prices and wages set by the magical forces of supply and demand, the supposed gatekeepers of the warehouse of economic nirvana. There is a kernel of inadvertent truth behind this narrative. Natural limits certainly impose absolute scarcities that are impossible to overcome. There is only so much uranium in the solar system, for example. And even if we synthesise certain substances by using other substances, the total amount we can produce will still be limited by the availability of the raw materials going into the production process. We cannot beat energy conservation.



Although natural constraints on supply are important, most economic scarcities that rule our lives are actually social and artificial. Supply and demand are not natural forces drifting through the air; they are contrived realities established by an interactive social environment involving governments, corporations, institutions, and classes. Supply and demand cycles are social constructs designed to answer a basic question: Who gets what? Those with social and institutional power decide how they want to distribute money, labor, and resources, and those without must navigate the resulting constraints and roadblocks that have been thrown in front of them, or they can challenge the system and remove some, if not all, of the roadblocks.

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> For a typical version of this argument, see William A. McEachern, *Microeconomics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2006), 3–4. One of the many false assumptions here is the idea that all people have unlimited desires. It is a purely ideological construct that has no support in historical and anthropological studies. Capitalism needs people to keep consuming without end, and thus capitalists want people to believe that every level of consumption is a barrier that must be surpassed. Needless to say, this is not how most people throughout history understood their world.

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decide how they want to distribute money, labor, and resources, and those without must navigate the resulting constraints and roadblocks that have been thrown in front of them, or they can challenge the system and remove some, if not all, of the roadblocks. Especially under capitalism, artificial scarcity is an important social reality that torments the lives of billions around the world, but scarcity as a natural limiting factor in economic activity is not as fundamental as we might like to think. In that case, what is?

The central problem of economics is not scarcity, but stability in the flow of goods and resources, and especially the stability of the ecozones that act as an economy's primary energy reservoir. The primary goal of any economic system should be to ensure stability and sustainability in the face of nature's external perturbations, which have always played a dominant role in the development of human history.

The ecological crisis is largely a product of very wealthy people, countries, and corporations exploiting the planet's resources for their economic gain.<sup>4</sup> Capitalism depends on ecological degradation because it needs to rapidly extract vast quantities of natural resources, manufacture the corresponding products, and then commodify the resulting surplus in global exchange markets.<sup>5</sup> Capitalists cannot quickly dial back their energy-intensive methods of production and distribution without threatening their profit rates. Because this nexus of corruption cannot be expected to clean its own filth, we must turn toward something that can. The state is the only social institution powerful enough to curb and constrain the energy-intensive economic modes of capitalism. But it is not immediately obvious how it should go about achieving this. Setting up the wrong framework could still produce additional ecological disasters. This is the central question addressed in this article: What should the role of the state be in an ecological society?

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## THE DICTATORSHIP OF FINANCIAL CAPITALISM — *Capitalism, in its current configuration as the global dictatorship of finance capital, is committing crimes against humanity and devastating the planet — Alejandro Teitelbaum*

*What is the robbing of a bank compared to the founding of a bank? - Bertold Brecht*

In 1968, a Minnesota court decision highlighted the nature of financial capital. The litigation pitted a private individual, Mr Daly,

against a bank, the First National Bank of Montgomery, his mortgagee. When Mr Daly fell behind in his payments to the Bank, it wanted to collect on the house. Daly argued that in the mortgage there was no reciprocity from the Bank, as the Bank did not possess the mortgage money, since the loan amount had been created out of thin air at the time the credit was authorised. By crediting in its accounts that 14,000 dollars were granted to Daly, the bank had created money and had not taken it out of a pre-existing asset. In other words, the bank did not go into its vault to withdraw that sum in banknotes to lend to Daly. The court in its ruling upheld Daly's claim that the mortgage contract was void because it lacked a legitimate consideration by the bank. As a result, the bank's claim to Mr Daly's house had no legal basis.



### The Dictatorship of Financial Capitalism

Capitalism, in its current configuration as the global dictatorship of finance capital, is committing crimes against humanity and devastating the planet

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#### Overview

In 1968, a Minnesota court decision highlighted the nature of financial capital.<sup>1</sup> The litigation pitted a private individual, Mr Daly, against a bank, the First National Bank of Montgomery, his mortgagee. When Mr Daly fell behind in his payments to the Bank, it wanted to collect on the house. Daly argued that in the mortgage there was no reciprocity from the Bank, as the Bank did not possess the mortgage money, since the loan amount had been created out of thin air at the time the credit was authorised. By crediting in its accounts that 14,000 dollars were granted to Daly, the bank had created money and had not taken it out of a pre-existing asset. In other words, the bank did not go into its vault to withdraw that sum in banknotes to lend to Daly. The court in its ruling upheld Daly's claim that the mortgage contract was void because it lacked a legitimate consideration by the bank. As a result, the bank's claim to Mr Daly's house had no legal basis.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> I am grateful to the Argentinean lawyer, Dr. Pablo Pineda, for bringing this ruling to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> Alejandro Teitelbaum, 'Jus Semper Global Alliance', 14 June 2012, <https://www.jussemper.org/2012/07/27/teitelbaum001a.html>

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## ENERGY, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS — *Erald kolasi*

Can economic growth continue forever? This relatively simple question has posed some intellectual headaches for modern capitalism. In the Grundrisse, Karl Marx argued that capital cannot tolerate any limits, by which he meant that the drive for growth and the search for new markets are both necessary for the political and economic survival of capitalism. Viewed in this light, the implications of the question present something of an existential challenge to the current order. Capitalism cannot acknowledge any natural limits to economic growth, for that would mean acknowledging its ultimate

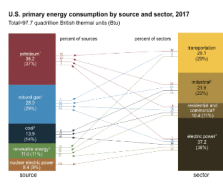
demise. To keep up the pretence that capitalism represents a quasi-eternal and invincible system, most political leaders and economists who support the current order have begun reciting a series of elaborate narratives about the relationship between human economies and the natural world.



## Energy, Economic Growth, and Ecological Crisis

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These narratives all revolve around the central idea that we can decouple economic growth from the material needs of human civilisation. Until the late twentieth century, economists generally understood that more economic growth required the use of more energy and materials. But as the postwar compromises between labour and capital began

should organise them around the principle of sustainable human development, which requires the metabolic stability of the wider ecosphere. By tightly constraining the levels of production and consumption around some dynamic equilibrium and emphasising qualitative human-social relations, as opposed to the cash nexus, we can avoid the periodic bubbles and crises of capitalism while also prolonging the duration of human civilisation. And by distributing more wealth and resources to workers and common people, we can build a fair society untroubled by recurring spasms of political and economic instability. The social and the ecological are inseparable, and together they represent the intensifying political battleground of this millennium. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to seize this exceptional moment in history. The impending convergence of crises, from the economic to the ecological, demands nothing less than a new vision for our social order.

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## RACIAL CAPITALISM AND COVID-19 – How racial capitalism, and not just capitalism, shapes exploitation and solidarities — Zophia Edwards

In June 2020, while the Americas were deep in the throes of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, 116 farmworkers left Jamaica for the United States under a seasonal work program. They were destined for Gebbers Farm in Washington, where they would be reaping apples. The Jamaican Minister of Labor and Social Security praised the program as an excellent example of the strength of the U.S.-Jamaica bond and a lifeline for both Jamaican workers and the national economy. The U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica said the program was a win-win for everyone, a powerful partnership. In an interview with one of the departing farmers, a journalist for Loop Jamaica asked, “How does your family feel about you leaving them at this time?” The farmer replied, “If I stay in Jamaica, probably they wouldn’t get a school book in September to go back to high school, so I talk to them and the risk factor is there but I still have to take a chance.”

In the midst of this global pandemic, hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, South Africans, and other people from colonised and formerly colonised countries in the global periphery are labouring on farms across North America and Europe to keep food on the grocery shelves. Long before COVID-19, they were forced to live in unsanitary, overcrowded, and unsafe conditions. On top of not receiving sufficient personal protective equipment, workers’ conditions further exacerbate the spread of the virus. In Canada, at least six hundred migrant

farmworkers have contracted the virus since they arrived in the country and at least two have died, both from Mexico. These Black and Latinx workers, as well as other nonwhite racialised workers, have now been deemed essential, so they still have to report to work despite stay-at-home orders. While viewed as essential, they are also treated as expendable, as many do not get paid sick leave or have access to health care or health insurance, and those who are undocumented still face the threat of deportation.



## Racial Capitalism and COVID-19

*How racial capitalism, and not just capitalism, shapes exploitation and solidarities*

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<sup>1</sup> “Marx writes that ‘the tendency to create the world market is directly given in the concept of capital itself. Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome.’” See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin, 1973), 344.

<sup>2</sup> “Migrant Farm Workers Leave for the United States,” *Loop News*, June 13, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Harriet Grant, “No Food, Water, Masks, or Gloves: Migrant Farm Workers in Spain at Crisis Point,” *Guardian*, May 1, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> TBCA Report SDI 00711 August 2021 Zophia Edwards

These narratives all revolve around the central idea that we can decouple economic growth from the material needs of human civilisation. Until the late twentieth century, economists generally understood that more economic growth required the use of more energy and materials. But as the postwar compromises between labour and capital began collapsing in the 1970s and ‘80s, economic theories started to shift in emphasis and direction. Inspired by neoclassical theories, a new generation of economists began to argue that economic growth could continue without the consumption of additional resources from the environment. They claimed that we could reach this economic nirvana by doing more with less, investing in clean energy, and developing energy-efficient technologies. In short, they were arguing for nothing less than the long-term sustainability of capitalism, ignoring all the science and evidence piling up along the way.

Our political and business leaders, indoctrinated by capitalist propaganda throughout their lives, have come to believe that economic growth is like a magical elixir capable of curing all evils. For most people in the modern world, it does not seem like an alternative to economic growth, as currently calculated under capitalism, is even conceivable. But imagining and realising these important alternatives may be the only way to spare human civilisation from a looming disaster. Instead of organising our societies and economies around the principle of growth, we

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MARX, VALUE AND NATURE — *John Bellamy Foster*

Raoul Peck's 2017 film *The Young Karl Marx* opens with a quiet scene of poor "peasant proletarians," men, women, and children, dirty and in rags, gathering dead wood in a forest. Suddenly they are attacked by a troop of mounted police armed with clubs and swords. Some of the gatherers are killed; the rest are captured. The scene then cuts to Karl Marx, age twenty-four, in the Cologne offices of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, where he was editor, writing an article on "The Debates on the Law on the Theft Wood." He penned five instalments under this title from October to November 1842, and it was this more than anything else that brought the Prussian censors down on the newspaper and its talented young editor and writers. In the film, we see the young Marx and his associates debating the course that had led them to defy both the Prussian state and their own liberal industrialist paymasters. Marx was intransigent; there was no other possible path. As he later explained in his famous 1859 Preface to a Critique of Political Economy, it was his attempt to address the expropriation of the customary forest rights of the poor that first drove him to the systematic study of political economy. word to apply to the message of Marx.



## Marx, Value and Nature

John Bellamy Foster

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The criminalisation of forest usufruct was a major issue in Germany at the time. In 1836, at least 150,000 of the 207,478 total prosecutions in Prussia were for "wood pillaging" and related offences. In the Rhineland, the proportion was even higher. These prosecutions led to heavy fines and imprisonment. In Baden in 1842, one in every four inhabitants had been convicted of wood stealing. Central to Marx's argument was the application of "the category of theft where it ought not to be applied": not only the gathering of dead wood, but also the gathering of dead leaves and the picking of berries



As Marx explained in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and in the *Grundrisse*, all human society rests on free appropriation from nature, which is the material basis of labour and production. This is another way of saying that all society depends on property. There can be no human existence without the appropriation of nature, without production, and without property in some form.

In the classical Marxian perspective, it is precisely because human history has created a mode of production (capitalism) that alienates the metabolic relations between human beings and nature, thereby creating a metabolic rift and rupturing the conditions of ecological reproduction, that we can hope to restore that essential metabolism—through a revolutionary overturning of the capitalist integument and the creation of a new, coevolutionary material reality. This is Marx's core ecological message.

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CAPITAL AND THE ECOLOGY OF DISEASE — *John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman*

## Capital and the Ecology of Disease

John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman

The old Greek philosophers," Frederick Engels wrote in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, "were all born natural dialecticians." Nowhere was this more apparent than in ancient Greek medical thought, which was distinguished by its strong materialist and ecological basis. This dialectical, materialist, and ecological approach to epidemiology (from the ancient Greek *epi*, meaning on or upon, and *demos*, the people) was exemplified by the classic Hippocratic text *Airs Waters Places* (c. 400 BCE), which commenced:



Whoever wishes to investigate medicine properly, should proceed thus: in the first place to consider the seasons of the year, and what effects each of them produces, for they are not all alike, but differ from themselves in regard to their changes. Then the winds, the hot and cold, especially such as are common to all countries, and then such as are peculiar to each locality. We must also consider the qualities of the waters, for as they differ from another in taste and weight, so also do they differ much in their qualities. In the same manner, when one comes into a city to which he is a stranger, he ought to consider its situation, how it lies as to the winds and the rising of the sun.... These things one ought to consider most attentively, and concerning the waters which the inhabitants use, whether they be marshy and soft, or hard, and running from elevated rocky situations, and then if saltish and unfit for cooking, and the ground, whether it be naked and deficient in water, or wooded and well-watered, and whether it lies in a hollow or confined situation, or is elevated and cold; and the mode in which the inhabitants live, and what are their pursuits, whether they are fond of drinking and eating to excess, and given to indolence, or are fond of exercise and labor....

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), 45.  
<sup>2</sup> TBCA/ISS/SD 12066 July 2021 Bellamy Foster, Clark and Holleman

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 224-63. On the term "peasant proletarian," see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 20 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 132-33.  
<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 59-20.

TBCA/ISS/SD 12066 July 2021 John Bellamy Foster

The criminalisation of forest usufruct was a major issue in Germany at the time. Questions regarding the expropriation of land/nature and of human beings never ceased to occupy Marx in his subsequent works, appearing in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and in his two great discussions of "so-called primitive accumulation" in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*.

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"Whoever wishes to investigate medicine properly, should proceed thus: in the first place to consider the seasons of the year, and what effects each of them produces, for they are not all alike, but differ from themselves in regard to their changes. Then the winds, the hot and cold, especially such as are common to all countries, and then such as are peculiar to each locality. We must also consider the qualities of the waters, for as they differ from another in taste and weight, so also do they differ much in their qualities. In the same manner, when one comes into a city to which he is a stranger, he ought to consider its situation, how it lies as to the winds and the rising of the sun.... These things one ought to consider most attentively, and concerning the waters which the inhabitants use, whether they be marshy and soft, or hard, and running from elevated rocky situations, and then if saltish and unfit for cooking, and the ground, whether it be naked and deficient in water, or wooded and well-watered, and whether it lies in a hollow or confined situation, or is elevated and cold; and the mode in which the inhabitants live, and what are their pursuits, whether they are fond of drinking and eating to excess, and given to indolence, or are fond of exercise and labor.... "

"For if one knows all these things well, or at least the greater part of them, he cannot miss knowing, when he comes into a strange city, either the diseases peculiar to the place, or the particular nature of common diseases, so that he will not be in doubt as to the treatment of the diseases, or commit mistakes, as is likely to be the case provided one has not previously considered these matters. And in particular, as the season and the year advances, he can tell what epidemic diseases will attack the city, either in summer or in winter, and what each individual will be in danger of experiencing from the change in regimen.... For with the seasons the digestive organs of men undergo a change."

A key element of this view was the notion of a dialectical relation between the body and the environment, such that the body was situated or embodied in a particular place and specific natural conditions (air and water), producing a vision, as historian of medicine Charles E. Rosenberg has indicated, that was "holistic and integrative—one might call it both ecological and sociological."

To be sure, in ancient Greece, medicine was bifurcated. Slaves had slave doctors and citizens had citizen doctors, who performed under quite different conditions. The Hippocratic author of *Airs Waters Places* was writing specifically for citizen doctors, and thus this treatise reflected the class nature of Greek society. Nevertheless, it stood for a general approach that was to influence the later development of epidemiology for thousands of years.

The marginalisation by the mid-twentieth century of social-environmental approaches to epidemiology was justified by the triumph of modern medicine over infectious diseases. It was argued that infectious diseases were essentially phenomena of the past in developed economies, swept away by the modernisation process. While infectious diseases were still present in underdeveloped economies, it was proposed that health concerns should focus on the concomitant rise of degenerative diseases. This approach began to crumble.

“Is Capitalism a Disease?” the appearance at the end of the twentieth century of a new series of pathogens, including the return of malaria, cholera, dengue fever, tuberculosis, and other classic diseases, coupled with Ebola, AIDS (HIV), and multiple drug resistant tuberculosis—to which we could now add others such as H1N1, H5N1, MERS, SARS, and COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)—pointed to the complete failure of the epidemiological transition theory.

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## CAPITALISM AND ROBBERY – *The Expropriation of Land, Labor, and Corporeal Life...* — John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman

*The expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil constitutes the basis of the capitalist mode of production. —Karl Marx*



## Capitalism and Robbery

*The Expropriation of Land, Labor, and Corporeal Life*

John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman

*The expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil constitutes the basis of the capitalist mode of production. —Karl Marx*

The power of abstraction, Karl Marx noted, is absolutely crucial to the theoretical analysis of historical systems, as exemplified by his critique of capitalist political economy. But while the force of abstraction is indispensable to any attempt to grasp the inner character of capital, also implicit in Marx's historical materialism is the notion that capitalism can never be reduced simply to its internal logic.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it is also the product of numerous contingent historical conditions that form the empirical boundaries and limits within which the system operates and are integral to its functioning. Thus, historical capitalism cannot be understood aside from its existence as a colonial/imperialist world system in which the violent exercise of power is an ever-present reality. In order to uncover the material conditions governing concrete capitalism, including its interface with land, non-wage labor, and corporeal life, it is therefore necessary to go beyond the inner reality of exploitation, and address expropriation, or the process of appropriation without equivalent (or without reciprocity) through which capital has sought to determine its wider parameters.



Image by Shutterstock. The Redwood Forest in Northern California. Photo by Shutterstock. The US Bureau of Land Management. Public Domain. CC-BY.

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## CAPITAL, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY — *The Development of Productive Forces in Contemporary Capitalism [such as the Silicon Valley Imperial System]* — Raúl Delgado Wise and Mateo Crossa Niell



## Capital, Science, Technology

*The Development of Productive Forces in Contemporary Capitalism*

Raúl Delgado Wise and Mateo Crossa Niell

### Introduction

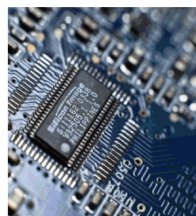
Understanding the way in which contemporary capitalism — which Samir Amin insightfully characterised as the era of generalised monopolies — organises productive forces is crucial to grasping both the forms of domination defining imperialism today and the profound metamorphoses that monopoly capital has undergone during the last three decades.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of general intellect, put forward by Karl Marx, is a

*Our analysis aims not only to reveal the deep contradictions of capitalist modernity, but also to highlight the important transmutation that today's monopoly capital is undergoing.*

*Far from acting as an engine for the development of social productive forces, it has become a parasitic entity with an essentially rentier and speculative function.*

the profound contradictions of capitalist modernity, but also to highlight the significant transmutation that today's monopoly capital is undergoing. Far from acting as a driving force for the development of social productive forces, it has become a parasitic entity with an essentially rentier and speculative function. Underlying this is an institutional framework that favours the private appropriation and the concentration of the products of general intellect.



exploration of the organisation of productive forces. Let us take the example of one of the most “advanced” innovation systems today: Silicon Valley's Imperial System. Our analysis seeks not only to reveal the profound contradictions of capitalist modernity, but also to highlight the significant transmutation that today's monopoly capital is undergoing. Far from acting as a driving force for the development of social productive forces, it has become a parasitic entity with an essentially rentier and speculative function. Underlying this is an institutional framework that favours the private appropriation and the concentration of the products of general intellect.

<sup>1</sup> Samir Amin, *The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> TSCA/ISS/SD (B&B) May 2021/Bellamy Foster, Clark and Holleman.

profound metamorphoses that monopoly capital has undergone during the last three decades.

The concept of general intellect, put forward by Karl Marx, is a useful starting point for the exploration of the organisation of productive forces. Let us take the example of one of the most “advanced” innovation systems today: Silicon Valley's Imperial System. Our analysis seeks not only to reveal the profound contradictions of capitalist modernity, but also to highlight the significant transmutation that today's monopoly capital is undergoing. Far from acting as a driving force for the development of social productive forces, it has become a parasitic entity with an essentially rentier and speculative function. Underlying this is an institutional framework that favours the private appropriation and the concentration of the products of general intellect.

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## THE ROBBERY OF NATURE — *Capitalism and the Metabolic Rift* — John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark



## The Robbery of Nature

*Capitalism and the Metabolic Rift*

John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark

The chapter on “Machinery and Large-Scale Industry” in the first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital* closes with this statement: “All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil.... Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.” “Robbing the worker” referred to the theory of exploitation, which entailed the expropriation of the worker's surplus labour by the capitalist. But what did Marx mean by “robbing the soil”? Here robbery was connected to his theory of the metabolic rift arising from the expropriation of the earth. As he stated earlier in the same paragraph, “capitalist production...disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil.”<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 637–38. On how Marx saw the exploitation process as revealing the expropriation of the surplus labour of the worker within production, which was correlated by equal exchange relations within circulation, see *Capital*, vol. 1, 728–29; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 33 (New York: International Publishers, 1993), 301, and vol. 34 (New York: International Publishers, 1994), 134; Karl Marx, *From the German Ideology* (Blackwell, 1975), 186–87.

<sup>2</sup> TSCA/ISS/SD (B&B) August 2021/John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 934.

<sup>2</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 90.

<sup>3</sup> This issue is perhaps best taken up in Kozo Uno, *Principles of Political Economy: Theory of a Purely Capitalist Society* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> TSCA/ISS/SD (B&B) May 2021/Bellamy Foster, Clark and Holleman.

The power of abstraction, Karl Marx noted, is absolutely crucial to the theoretical analysis of historical systems, as exemplified by his critique of capitalist political economy. But while the



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The same basic logic was present in the other famous passage on the metabolic rift, at the end of the chapter on “The Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent” in the third volume of Capital. There Marx referred to “the squandering of the vitality of the soil” by large-scale capitalist enterprise, generating “an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself.”

In both instances, Marx’s notion of the robbery of the soil is intrinsically connected to the rift in the metabolism between human beings and the earth. To get at the complexities of his metabolic rift theory, it is therefore useful to look separately at the issues of the robbery and the rift, seeing these as separate moments in a single development. This is best done by examining how Marx’s ecological critique in this area emerged in relation to the prior critique of industrial agriculture provided by the celebrated German chemist Justus von Liebig. Of particular importance in this context is Liebig’s notion of the “robbery system” (Raubsystem) or “robbery economy” (Raubwirtschaft), which he associated with British high farming.

For Marx, as for Liebig, this robbery was not of course confined simply to external nature, since humans as corporeal beings were themselves part of nature. The expropriation of nature in capitalist society thus had its counterpart, in Marx’s analysis, in the expropriation of human bodily existence. The robbery and the rift in nature’s metabolism was also a robbery and a rift in the human metabolism. This was visible in the many forms of bonded labour, in the conditions of social reproduction in the patriarchal household, and in the destructive physical impacts and the loss of the vital powers of individual human beings.

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## THE RETURN OF NATURE AND MARX'S ECOLOGY — John Bellamy Foster and Alejandro Pedregal (an interview)



### The Return of Nature and Marx's Ecology

an interview...

John Bellamy Foster and Alejandro Pedregal

John Bellamy Foster writes me before leaving Eugene, Oregon: “We had to evacuate. And we have to travel a long ways. But I will try to send the interview by the morning.” The massive fires on the West Coast of the United States had triggered the air quality index up to values of 450, and in some cases over the maximum of 500—an extremely dangerous health situation. Forty thousand people in Oregon had left their homes and another half a million were waiting to flee if the threat grew. “Such is the world of climate change,” Foster states. Professor of sociology at the University of Oregon and editor of Monthly Review, twenty years ago Foster revolutionised Marxist ecosocialism with Marx’s Ecology. This book, together with Marx and Nature by Paul Burkett, opened Marxism to a second wave of ecosocialist critique that confronted all kinds of entrenched assumptions about Karl Marx himself in order to elaborate an ecosocialist method and program for our time. The great development of Marxist ecological thought in recent years—which has shown how, despite writing in the nineteenth century, Marx is essential for reflecting on our contemporary ecological degradation—is in part the product of a turn carried out by Foster and others linked to Monthly Review. His current, which came to be known as the school of the metabolic rift due to the central notion Foster rescued from volume 3 of Marx’s Capital, has developed numerous ecomaterialist lines of research in the social and natural sciences—from imperialism and the study of the exploitation of the oceans, to social segregation and epidemiology. On the occasion of the release of his latest book, *The Return of Nature*, a monumental genealogy of great



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On the occasion of the release of his latest book, *The Return of Nature*, a monumental genealogy of great ecosocialist thinkers that has taken him twenty years to complete, Foster tells us about the path these key figures traveled, from the death of Marx to the emergence of environmentalism in the 1960s and ’70s, as well as about the relationship of his new book to Marx’s Ecology and the most prominent debates of current Marxist ecological thought. His reflections thus serve to help us rethink the significance of this legacy, in view of the urgent need for a project that transcends the conditions that threaten the existence of our planet today.

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## INTERROGATING THE ANTHROPOCENE: TRUTH AND FALLACY — Paul Raskin



### Interrogating the Anthropocene: Truth and Fallacy

Opening reflections for a GTI forum<sup>1</sup>

Paul Raskin

In the Anthropocene, what does your freedom mean?<sup>2</sup>

The Anthropocene concept advances the stunning proposition that human activity has catapulted Earth out of the relatively benign Holocene into a hostile new geological epoch. The recognition of our species as a planet-transforming colossus has jolted the cultural zeitgeist and sparked reconsideration of who we are, where we are going, and how we must act. What are the implications for envisioning and building a decent future? If we care about a Great Transition, how should we think about the Anthropocene?



#### Resonances

An examination of the Anthropocene idea must start with a disturbing scientific truth: human activity has altered how the Earth functions as an integral biophysical system. For decades, evidence has mounted of anthropogenic disturbance of planetary conditions and processes, notably the global climate, ocean chemistry, the cryosphere, the nitrogen cycle, and the abundance, diversity, and distribution of fauna and flora. Rippling synergistically across space and time, this multi-pronged disturbance compromises Earth’s stability and heightens risks of a disruptive state-shift of the system as a totality.

<sup>1</sup> See the forum page: <https://anthropocene.org/press/interrogating-the-anthropocene>  
<sup>2</sup> See Raskin’s earlier work on this question in his poignant lecture “In the Anthropocene,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYUQ4B8k4>.  
 TSCN/Veritas/SD 01055: June 2021 Paul Raskin

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