

Half-Earth Socialism and the Path Beyond Capital

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Intertwined with, yet distinct from, the looming threat of climate change is an even more profound biotic crisis. This crisis is much more than a sixth (or seventh) mass extinction; it entails the decimation of life's diversity at multiple levels. This destruction extends from genetic variations within and between species to the alteration, degradation, and potential loss of entire ecosystems due to the proliferation of biologically fragile and resource-intensive cultivation (industrial monoculture and plantation-based silviculture) and animal husbandry (the worldwide dominance of a narrow range of livestock). An unprecedented degree of biological homogenisation is taking place as increasing numbers of organisms are moved between different ecosystems by trade and tourism.¹ In numerous instances, these changes have already prompted the degradation or collapse of biophysical processes on which humans rely.



Navajo Trail, Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, USA, Trees are [Pseudotsuga menziesii](#) and [Pinus ponderosa](#). By I, [Luca Galuzzi](#), [CC BY-SA 2.5](#), [Link](#).

¹ ↪ Frequent references to our current biotic crisis as a "Sixth Extinction" relate the present to five (or six) previous instances where the fossil record indicates a period in which multiple taxa rapidly disappeared over large, often global, ranges. In addition to the issues already mentioned, scholars have cautioned against referring to the current biotic crisis as another mass extinction because current trends are not readily comparable to estimates from the fossil record, and it is not yet clear whether the magnitude of species losses is consonant with the mass extinctions recorded in said record. See John C. Avise, Stephen P. Hubbell, and Francisco J. Ayala, "In the Light of Evolution II: Biodiversity and Extinction," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105, Supplement 1 (2008): 11453–57; Anthony D. Barnosky et al., "Has the Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?," *Nature* 471, no. 7336 (2011): 51–57; Douglas H. Erwin, *Extinction* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2006); Maria Rita Palombo, "Thinking about the Biodiversity Loss in This Changing World," *Geosciences* 11, no. 9 (2021): 370; Telmo Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction," *Rendiconti Lincei* 25, no. 1 (2014): 85–93.

These trends have already intensified to the point of posing the possibility of significant and irreversible alterations to the

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future of life on the planet.² The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the chief mechanism of so-called global environmental governance tasked with addressing this crisis, has consistently reported failures over the last three decades

to meet even its modest conservation goals, thus intensifying long-running debates over the methods and objectives of conservation. Against calls for a “new conservation” that is effectively subsumed by economic development, some conservationists have advocated a drastic scaling up of protected areas to cover at least half the planet, championed by E. O. Wilson as the Half-Earth approach in a book by that title.³

At the UNCBD’s fifteenth Conference of Parties in Montreal in December 2022, several parties to the convention called

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for a more modest goal of extending protected areas over 30 percent of terrestrial and marine surfaces by 2030 (“30 by 30”). Given that, as of 2018, only 15 percent of Earth’s terrestrial freshwater surfaces and 7.5 percent of its oceans were classified as protected areas, even this

represents an ambitious attempt to bring conservation closer to the scale of the biotic crisis.⁴

Any attempt to resolve rather than merely postpone the biotic crisis must confront multiple interdependent factors operating at three general levels: (1) what the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) refers to as direct drivers (land/sea-use changes, resource extraction, pollution, invasive alien species, climate change); (2) what it refers to as indirect drivers (values, demographic, technological, economic, and governance issues); and (3) what could be called structural factors or systemic imperatives (the way capital operates as a totalising, alienated, constitutionally uncontrollable mode of social metabolic control, as emphasised in the theory of metabolic rift).⁵

One of the central criticisms of Half-Earth and related proposals is that they exacerbate conservation’s tendency to focus too heavily on protected areas to the neglect of other necessary measures, which is problematic for multiple reasons. By definition, protected areas target the direct drivers of biodiversity loss, and do not even address all of these completely

² ↪ The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES; the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity’s counterpart to the IPCC) provides a comprehensive review of the biotic crisis and its implications in its 2019 [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#). For reflections on how this may affect the future of life on Earth, see Norman Myers and Andrew H. Knoll, “The Biotic Crisis and the Future of Evolution,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 98, no. 10 (2001): 5389–92

³ ↪ Successive failures to meet the UNCBD targets are acknowledged in the Convention’s third (2010), fourth (2014), and fifth (2020) *Global Biodiversity Outlook*. Wilson’s *Half Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Survival* (New York: Norton, 2016) was preceded by other closely related and somewhat overlapping initiatives that are frequently grouped with Wilson’s under the “Half-Earth” title. As George Holmes, Chris Sandbrook, and Janet A. Fisher note in “Understanding Conservationists’ Perspectives on the New-Conservation Debate,” *Conservation Biology* 31, no. 2 (2017): 353–63, the debate between so-called new and traditional conservation builds on longer running debates over the delineation, enforcement, and purpose of protected areas. The dichotomous framing of this debate tends to exclude or neglect several of these issues, as well as the more nuanced positions of many conservationists.

⁴ ↪ As the UNCBD observes in the aforementioned fifth *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, these numbers continue a strong upward trend in the coverage of protected areas, yet fall short of the targets established in 2010 to achieve 17 percent coverage of terrestrial and 10 percent coverage of marine areas by 2020.

⁵ ↪ On the immediate and underlying drivers, see chapter 2.1 of IPBES, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. On capital as a mode of metabolic control, see István Mészáros, *Beyond Capital* (London: Merlin Press) 1995. For discussion of how the metabolic rift relates to the biotic crisis, see John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010) and Brian M. Napoletano and Brett Clark, “An Ecological-Marxist Response to the Half-Earth Project,” *Conservation and Society* 18, no. 1 (2020): 37–49.

(that is, protected areas could be expected to offer more defence against land- or sea-use changes and overexploitation than against invasive alien species or climate change). Moreover, the difference between formally designating a given space as a protected area and genuinely protecting biodiversity within that space is significant, as the amount of area where habitat and organisms are truly protected is much smaller than that of formally declared protected areas.

This problem is compounded when the focus on protected areas eclipses attention to the underlying and systemic factors, or—as is frequently the case in Half-Earth proposals—these factors are reduced to simplistic combinations of

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human numbers, per capita incomes and resource use, and technological factors that result in proposals for population reductions and technological fixes that would be largely ineffective and, in many cases, threaten to exacerbate the crisis.⁶ Even more significantly, protected areas have also been historically

intertwined with colonial and other forms of land expropriation, with particular violence aimed at Indigenous communities. While the IPBES has repeatedly stressed the need to respect Indigenous and local communities, and the large, multinational, conservation non-governmental organisations now claim to prioritise Indigenous stewardship, several mobilisations around the 30-by-30 initiative at COP15 have indicated that conservation has yet to translate this rhetoric into action, prompting many to question the fundamental legitimacy and colonial mentality of conservation.⁷ Thus, while designating half or more of the planet as protected areas could potentially challenge capital's implicit assertion that it is entitled to seize all of nature as a "free gift," the proposal has also drawn intense debate and sharp criticism.⁸

In their very important, if flawed, work, Half-Earth Socialism, Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass attempt to overturn the

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problem by contending that "the solution is that Half-Earth must be socialist, not that socialism doesn't need

⁶ ↪ As Bram Büscher and Robert Fletcher note in *The Conservation Revolution* (London: Verso, 2020), new conservation's criticisms of the failure of protected areas to address the underlying drivers of the biotic crisis is valid, but becomes problematic when these criticisms are tied to assumptions of neoclassical economics and used to frame the problem in terms of market and individual incentives. See, for example, two responses to Michael Soulé's "The New Conservation," *Conservation Biology* 27, no. 5 (2013): 895–97, found in Peter Kareiva, "New Conservation," *Conservation Biology* 28, no. 3 (2014): 634–36 and Michelle Marvier, "New Conservation Is True Conservation," *Conservation Biology* 28, no. 1 (2014): 1–3.

⁷ ↪ Mac Chapin's "A Challenge to Conservationists," *World Watch Magazine* 17, no. 6 (2004): 17–31 is one of the most widely referenced criticisms of eviction for conservation. Daniel Brockington and James Igoe attempt to provide a global overview of conservation evictions in "Eviction for Conservation," *Conservation and Society* 4, no. 3 (2006): 424–70. Mark Dowie provides evocative accounts of various Indigenous communities displaced by conservation interventions while remaining sympathetic to conservationists' stated intent in *Conservation Refugees* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2009). Jessica Hernandez in *Fresh Banana Leaves* (Huichin: North Atlantic, 2022) discusses, from the positionality of a displaced Indigenous person, how settler-colonialism in the Americas both necessitates and permeates conservation theory and practice. Although her framing of "Western conservation" is somewhat monolithic, she offers several important criticisms of dominant or influential beliefs and practices. For brief accounts of mobilizations around COP15, see Phoebe Weston and Patrick Greenfield, "Plan to Protect 30% of Earth Divides and Inspires at Cop15," *Guardian*, December 12, 2022, and Karen McVeigh, "My Life Is Being Endangered," *Guardian*, December 10, 2022. Advocates of new conservation have often seized on such criticisms of Indigenous and local displacement by protected areas and turned them, through a generous use of ahistorical generalization, into arguments for more intensive industrial development, thereby compounding the aforementioned tendency to see the issue in binary terms as new versus conventional conservation and render alternative, particularly anticapitalist and anticolonial, framings invisible; see, for example, Michelle Marvier, Peter Kareiva, and Robert Lalasz, "Conservation in the Anthropocene," *Breakthrough Journal* 2 (2012).

⁸ ↪ Much of this criticism is summarized in Bram Büscher et al., "Half-Earth or Whole Earth?," *Oryx* 51, no. 3 (2017): 407–10. Their brief essay initiated a brief exchange continued in Philip Cafaro et al., "If We Want a Whole Earth, Nature Needs Half," *Oryx* 51, no. 3 (2017): 400; Bram Büscher et al., "Doing Whole Earth Justice," *Oryx* 51, no. 3 (2017): 401; Eileen Crist et al., "Protecting Half the Planet and Transforming Human Systems Are Complementary Goals," *Frontiers in Conservation Science* 2 (2021). While Crist et al. are partially correct in arguing that their Half-Earth agenda could be complemented by social transformation, their understanding of the problem as one of human overpopulation leads in the same problematic direction that Vettese and Pendergrass indicate in their critique of Malthusian environmental thought.

Half-Earth.”⁹ This is a simple but important corrective in two respects. First, it emphasises that any favorable resolution of the biotic crisis will require a break with capital as the key point of departure, while, second, avoiding the insinuation that the social-ecological problems inherited from capitalist society would be automatically solved in a socialist society. Instead, Half-Earth Socialism posits socialism as a precondition for a successful Half-Earth project. Thus, while the authors do not hesitate to identify capital as the primary threat to life on the planet or to point out the colonial and white-supremacist affiliations of various figures who have helped to shape the Half-Earth vision, they argue that the Half-Earth conservation agenda remains a valid program that can—and must—be extricated from its neocolonial framework and reconstructed as a socialist endeavour.

Vettese and Pendergrass present Half-Earth Socialism as a utopian-socialist “cookbook divided into four courses: the philosophical, the material, the technical, and the imaginative.”¹⁰ They open with a speculative account offered in the spirit of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* of a dystopian future in 2047, and close with a brief counter-narrative set in the same year and modelled somewhat after William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*. In between these two portraits of possible futures, the authors compress in three dense but accessible chapters a philosophical treatise on three epistemologies of: humanity’s knowledge of the rest of nature; a materialist critique of frequently proposed solutions to the climatic and biotic crises of the twenty-first century; and a technical proposal for a distributed, cybernetic approach to centralised planning to replace the neoliberal model of “market” rule.

The philosophical discussion focuses on the following ecological epistemologies: (1) Hegelian Prometheanism, which assumes the complete “humanisation,” control, or domination of nature (the authors tend to use these terms interchangeably); (2) Malthusianism, which assumes control of human demography; and (3) Jennerite ecological skepticism (attributed to Edward Jenner, who introduced the smallpox vaccine to England in the early nineteenth century), which questions whether nature is capable of being controlled. They subdivide Hegelian Prometheanism into two general camps of Marxism and neoliberalism, contending that both share the same assumptions regarding the ability to control nature and a view of “the market as an unconscious, all-powerful force, the difference being that the former [Marxism] abhors it, while it is worshiped by the latter [neoliberalism].”¹¹ Although they draw on Karl Marx’s critique of capital, Vettese and Pendergrass assert—in a remarkable travesty of both thinkers—that Marx wholeheartedly endorsed what they understand as G. W. F. Hegel’s vision of the complete humanisation of nature through labor as the end of history, and echo a central claim of the Frankfurt School in their contention that “Prometheanism is so ingrained in Marxist thought that it must be confronted, refuted, and extirpated so that socialism can be made fit for an age of environmental catastrophe.”¹² The abundant textual and contextual evidence in ecological Marxism that definitively contradicts this claim, with respect to classical materialism, is dismissed by the authors using vituperation rather than analysis as merely “reading Capital with vidrian-tinted glasses.”¹³ Malthusianism, in turn, reflects the view that “the optimal human population can be known and controlled while the market and nature both remain unknown and

⁹ ↪ Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism: A Plan to Save the Future from Extinction, Climate Change and Pandemics* (London: Verso, 2022).

¹⁰ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 18. This reference to cookbooks is an explicit reference to Karl Marx’s defense of his approach in *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 1976), 99, of “confining myself merely to the critical analysis of the actual facts, instead of writing recipes (Comtist ones?) for the cook-shops of the future,” and a rebuttal of what Vettese and Pendergrass view as a vulgarization of Marx and Frederick Engels’s nuanced critique into a wholesale rejection of utopian socialism.

¹¹ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 40.

¹² ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 34. On problems with the Frankfurt School’s understanding of Marx’s views on the domination of nature, see John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, “Marx’s Universal Metabolism of Nature and the Frankfurt School,” in *Changing Our Environment, Changing Ourselves*, ed. James S. Ormrod (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 101–35.

¹³ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 34.

uncontrolled,” with more liberal versus more fascistic manifestations of this view essentially representing points along the same continuum.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the authors explicitly reject these two epistemologies in favor of their “Jennerite solution to the problem of disease,” which “is to undo the humanisation of nature and leave it forever incomplete.”¹⁵ This “Jennerite” skepticism posits that the economy is a controllable variable when the market is replaced by central planning, while the human population is essentially a self-regulating variable, and nature remains beyond the possibility of control or even knowledge. Accordingly, humanity must (1) “limit our species’ interchange with nature”; (2) regard Earth as “a natural machine, both ancient and alien, whose operating systems we will never fathom”; and (3) “limit the admixture of human consciousness and self-willed nature,” as well as reconceptualise labor as “the hard work of disentangling human consciousness from self-willed nature.”¹⁶

In the second chapter, Vettese and Pendergrass criticise bioenergy carbon capture and sequestration, nuclear power, and the existing Half-Earth narrative as three “demi-utopias” that fail to adequately link “food, land, ecology, and politics within a single analytical frame,” and counterpoise a Half-Earth Socialism based on rewilding, energy quotas, and global veganism.¹⁷ Their criticisms of the demi-utopias summarise the most damning theoretical and empirical shortcomings of the proposals, while sustained engagement with Andreas Malm’s work on fossil capital allows them to explain these shortcomings as a failure to confront the systemic imperatives of capital.¹⁸ According to Vettese and Pendergrass, advocates of both solar radiation management and carbon capture and sequestration have yet to demonstrate that the

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technological and economic barriers to their proposals could feasibly be overcome. Instead, the global implementation of such technologies would threaten to destabilise other biospheric processes with dangerous, cascading effects. This is already obvious in the promotion of biofuels, which exacerbate land change and the commodification of agriculture on one side without yielding adequate reductions in carbon in the atmosphere on the other, but benefit key sectors of capital

accumulation.¹⁹

Green agitation for nuclear power is similarly problematic, and runs somewhat counter to the historical struggle against nuclear testing. Here again, Vettese and Pendergrass bolster this objection by arguing that the technological solution—so-called fast-breeder reactors—has yet to be proven effective, while the construction of nuclear plants on the scale that James Hansen and other prominent ecologists advocate would virtually guarantee a disaster that could dwarf Fukushima, Chernobyl, and Three-Mile Island combined.

¹⁴ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 36.

¹⁵ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 38. For a concise but decisive rebuttal to the idea that Marx posits the transcendence of alienation as the end of history, and either of these as the domination of nature, see István Mészáros, *Marx’s Theory of Alienation* (London: Merlin Press, 2005), 241–53.

¹⁶ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 51, 52, 53, 54.

¹⁷ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 60.

¹⁸ ↪ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital* (London: Verso, 2016).

¹⁹ ↪ Fred Magdoff, “The Political Economy and Ecology of Biofuels,” *Monthly Review* 60, no. 3 (July–August 2008): 34–50; Philip McMichael, “Agro-Fuels, Food Security, and the Metabolic Rift,” *Kurswechsel* 3 (2008): 14–22.

Finally, they offer a critical account of some of the more reactionary perspectives and personalities involved in the North American predecessors to the Half-Earth narrative, and note how these often reflect a Malthusian perspective that views the root problem as too many people. In this dominant framing of the Half-Earth proposal, the underlying drive of capital accumulation remains unaddressed. In their criticism of this “colonial” Half-Earth approach, however, Vettese and Pendergrass attempt to distance Wilson from his more reactionary peers, as well as his own work on sociobiology, and instead present him as “a mostly harmless centre-Left Democrat who thinks that policy nudges and the generosity of enlightened philanthropists suffice to achieve planetary conservation,” and whose biogeographical argument for the Half-Earth project still holds.²⁰

Thus, the key distinction between the authors’ Half-Earth Socialism and the demi-utopias on offer, including Wilson’s Half-Earth project, primarily pivots on the need to transform society around the problem of “land scarcity” instead of looking for “magic bullet” solutions that leave capitalist relations of production intact. This socialist alternative is built around the aforementioned counter-proposal of rewilding, energy quotas, and global veganism intended to reflect an ecological society both dedicated to simultaneously respecting all the planetary boundaries defining humanity’s “safe operating space” and built on a broad coalition of social mobilisation.²¹

This segues into more detailed discussion of what a socialist implementation of the Half-Earth project would entail in the third and most substantive chapter. Here Vettese and Pendergrass provide a great deal of theoretical and biographical information on several key figures upon whom they draw, especially Leonid Kantorovich, Otto Neurath, Stafford Beer, and Olga Burmatova. Their planning framework entails a globally distributed network of cybernetic and adaptive management that would work to balance two necessary criteria: “limiting extraction to keep the biosphere healthy, while equitably distributing enough natural resources to supply needs.”²²

The centralised global planning authority and its army of social engineers would, in this vision, elaborate different plans and submit them to the public to select one among these “total plans” for implementation in a recursive process.²³ The global authority here is limited to dictating the broad contours of the plan, with the finer details of implementation left

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up to regional and local collectives. Moreover, local and regional representatives are able to propose alternative allocation schemes and thus, to some extent at least, participate in social engineering at the planning stage. This elaborate planning system incorporates the techniques, algorithms, and data used to monitor and model global change, as well as Soviet optimisation and control techniques to facilitate multi-scale integration and constant

readjustment. Vettese and Pendergrass contend that their global system of universal per capita allocations of land, calorie, and energy quotas offers a superior alternative to socialist accounting proposals that attempt to replace money with allotments based on labor time, in contrast to the neoliberal claim that markets represent the only or best way to coordinate decision-making among multiple parties operating with partial information. They view global planning as the

²⁰ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 74.

²¹ ↪ On planetary boundaries, see Johan Rockström et al., “Planetary Boundaries,” *Ecology and Society* 14, no. 4 (2009): 32; Will Steffen et al., “Planetary Boundaries,” *Science* 347, no. 6223 (2015): 1259855.

²² ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 102.

²³ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 101–8.

best way to confront many of the key challenges that a postcapitalist society will face in attempting to reverse simultaneously the multiple trajectories toward social-ecological chaos along which capital is currently propelling us.

Half-Earth Socialism raises an important point for any critical discussion of humanity's social-ecological crisis—namely,

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the need to recognise climate change, the extermination of the biosphere, chemical pollution, and the numerous other ecological issues as interconnected parts of a deeper crisis in humanity's metabolic interchange with the rest of nature. It is also necessary to situate capital at the center of this crisis.²⁴ For more than half a century now, capital has attempted to foster an illusion regarding its ability to address this crisis by isolating its manifestations as separate issues and promising (primarily technological) fixes that, in

reality, just shift around the contradictions.²⁵

In attempting to approach the planetary crisis in its totality, Vettesse and Pendergrass call attention to the fact that capital is running out of places (both temporally and spatially, literally and metaphorically) into which it can continue this shell game without incurring dangerous shifts in biosphere processes. This is particularly salient in how these authors demonstrate the ways in which the technological fixes being proposed to address climate change would exacerbate the biotic crisis. At the same time, they dismantle the Malthusian claim, common in advocacy of the Half-Earth project, that population reduction is a precondition to sustainability, and they highlight the danger that treating fertility as an input to sustainability poses to the struggle for women's reproductive liberation, as well as how this has facilitated the greenwashing of white nationalism and other pathological ideologies.²⁶ While some of the assumptions and implications of their approach to centralised planning are problematic, it at least refutes common Malthusian objections to wealth redistribution that appeal to the material impossibility of sustaining 8–10 billion people at U.S. per capita rates by demonstrating that land, calories, and energy could be allocated equitably without reducing everyone to abject poverty. Moreover, the manner in which their model attempts to circumvent monetary exchange implicitly shifts the focus from exchange value to use value, and it challenges the justifications offered for the contemporary financialization of nature.²⁷

Vettesse and Pendergrass's decision to frame their proposal as a utopia allows them to ignore some of the constraints that hegemonic ideologies place on what is deemed possible. However, it is also somewhat problematic, inasmuch as they use this to decree their program of Half-Earth rewilding and universal veganism as guiding principles without considering whether a mass movement could or should be built around these objectives. This is where Marx's warning that criticism loses its independence and essence when it is simply used to promote a preconceived utopian end

²⁴ ↪ While the underlying argument of *Half-Earth Socialism* is important in this respect, Vettesse and Pendergrass are hardly unique in recognising the centrality of capital to the biotic crisis. Büscher and Fletcher's proposal for "convivial conservation" similarly posits the necessity of a "post-capitalist" resolution to the biotic crisis, but ties it to degrowth; see Büscher and Fletcher, *The Conservation Revolution*. Napoletano and Clark, "An Ecological-Marxist Response to the Half-Earth Project," also emphasize the need to break with capital and its alienated mediations, while considering the Half-Earth proposal from an explicitly Marxist perspective.

²⁵ ↪ Brett Clark and Richard York, "Rifts and Shifts," *Monthly Review* 60, no. 6 (November 2008): 13–24.

²⁶ ↪ To their credit, advocates of the existing Half-Earth proposal have responded to criticisms and attempted to provide some nuance to their Malthusian claims by focusing on population growth in the "middle class" while bringing in some proposals from the degrowth movement. However, they still tend to exhibit undue optimism regarding the compatibility of these measures with capitalist growth imperatives and the extent to which a smaller population would translate into fewer demands on nature. See Eileen Crist et al., "Protecting Half the Planet and Transforming Human Systems Are Complementary Goals."

²⁷ ↪ John Bellamy Foster, "Nature as a Mode of Accumulation," — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, May 2022.

suddenly becomes directly relevant.²⁸ Rather than a dogmatic rejection of utopian thought that Vettese and Pendergrass lament among some Marxist currents, this admonition represents an important insight into the nature of the utopian critique. If it is to expand the realm of the possible into the impossible, radical utopianism needs, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, to step “back from the real without, however, losing sight of it.”²⁹

Vettese and Pendergrass, unfortunately, tend to lose sight of the real where it is most important—that is, where their Half-Earth vision potentially comes into conflict with anticolonial, and especially Indigenous, struggles over land, territory, and self-determination—prompting the authors to either assume away or remain disturbingly ambiguous on potentially fatal disconnects between their own priorities and those of the social forces whose mobilisation they anticipate as necessary to fulfil their vision. Positing socialism as a precondition to their project and advocating equal per capita land, calorie, and energy allotments speaks to several important concerns regarding glaring disparities in the burden and history of conservation and its links to racial capital. Moreover, Vettese and Pendergrass call on animal-rights activists to “temper their attacks on Indigenous hunting, both out of respect for a different way of life and” because “biodiversity tends to be higher in Indigenous-managed territory than in nature preserves.”³⁰ While such a corrective to some of the more egregious attacks on Indigenous autonomy in conservation represents progress, it still falls far short of the anticolonial reflexivity that Indigenous criticisms of conservation entail. Moreover, there is no clear indication of the extent to which this concession translates into support for sovereign Indigenous territorial management and self-determination. All that they offer is a handful of scattered comments on engagement without broaching the pressing issues of ecological debt, land return, and additional concerns raised by Indigenous and rural peoples and their allies.

This is problematic because any viable, defensible, and effective Half-Earth proposal needs to start by recognising the

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imbrication of the biotic crisis with capital accumulation and its settler-colonial project, which are mutually constitutive but non-identical phenomena. In addition to their frequent demonstrations of more sustainable ways of relating to the rest of nature, Indigenous and rural peoples still manage more than a quarter of the world's land, and have been struggling for

centuries to restore, maintain, or assert their territorial autonomy and alternative worldviews.³¹ A coalition that takes this as its starting point and asks how conservation can ally with these peoples in their struggles would not only help to begin redressing a centuries-long history of injustice and expropriation, but would also be extremely formidable in the social, cultural, and political spheres, capable of rapidly transforming the dialectic of the impossible-possible.³²

²⁸ ↪ Karl Marx, *The Poverty Of Philosophy* (New York: Wentworth, 2019), 26.

²⁹ ↪ Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 7

³⁰ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 16–17.

³¹ ↪ David Barkin and Alejandra Sánchez, “The Communitarian Revolutionary Subject,” *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 8 (2019): 1–23; Walden Bello, *The Food Wars* (London: Verso, 2009); John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, *The Robbery of Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020); Hannah Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); The Red Nation, *The Red Deal* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2021). For an estimate of lands under *de facto* indigenous management, see Stephen T. Garnett et al., “A Spatial Overview of the Global Importance of Indigenous Lands for Conservation,” *Nature Sustainability* 1, no. 7 (2018): 369–74. For an estimate of rural lands, see GRAIN, “Hungry for Land,” May 28, 2014, grain.org. The IPBES, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, 77–78, reports that “Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities” presently administer territories over 25 percent of the world's land.

³² ↪ Kyle A. Artelle et al., “Supporting Resurgent Indigenous-Led Governance,” *Biological Conservation* 240 (2019): 108284; John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Hannah Holleman, “Marx and the Indigenous,” *Monthly Review* 71, no. 9 (February 2020): 1–19. The necessary generalizations here should not be taken to suggest an essentialization of Indigenous peoples, any more than peasants and other rural peoples, as inherently more in “harmony” with nature. Rather, the point is the need for a movement aimed at social transformation and emancipation to ally with some of the most systematically oppressed sectors of society that have faced centuries of expropriation and genocide at the hands of capital and its settler-colonial project.

Instead, Vettesse and Pendergrass invoke Wilson's somewhat oversimplified account of species-area relationships, and contend that humans must "rewild half of the planet to stanch the haemorrhaging of biodiversity."³³ While a socialist society would presumably be more capable of and interested in dedicating larger areas to nature's reproduction and more aesthetic concerns such as the beauty of wilderness areas, rewilding is not an appropriate concept on which to pin this endeavour, particularly when extended to half or more of the planet. As various scholars point out, rewilding is a highly plastic term used to describe very different types of projects originating in the North Atlantic, from managing

This feeds into what the various Indigenous and rural groups and their allies associated with the "Marseille manifesto" describe as "the flawed thinking that believes in 'nature' devoid of human presence.

succession processes on abandoned agricultural land in Europe to attempting to recreate entire ecosystems, all of which tend to be united by a vision of nature and wilderness that sees any form of human habitation as an unnatural deviation.³⁴ This feeds into what the various

Indigenous and rural groups and their allies associated with the "Marseille manifesto" describe as "the flawed thinking that believes in 'nature' devoid of human presence. This single-minded focus has led to a model of conservation that is often violent, colonialist, and racist in approach."³⁵

Compounding this is the manner in which Vettesse and Pendergrass also describe this as a "'natural geoengineering' to draw down carbon through rewilded ecosystems."³⁶ Rewilding would likely be preferable to carbon sequestration, plantation forestry, and other proposed technological fixes in terms of its complementary benefits to biodiversity, although there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding tradeoffs between the large-scale afforestation required to influence atmospheric carbon concentrations and more diverse landscape mosaics conducive to higher levels of biodiversity.³⁷ Moreover, it renders the key question of land return even more urgent: Where do the lands of Indigenous and local communities fit into this sort of Half-Earth vision? If rewilding half the planet includes restoring lands to Indigenous and local communities, then the term risks perpetuating the colonial dehumanisation of Indigenous people and their equation with the "natural backdrop."³⁸ Thus, if Indigenous autonomy is rendered contingent on conformity to the stereotypical idea of the "noble savage," then we are facing a proposal to exacerbate the settler-colonial project

Neither alternative suggests a healthy or viable starting point for a global coalition of mutual solidarity and respect.

responsible for the biotic crisis by continuing to prevent Indigenous peoples from providing much-needed healing to their lands. If, conversely, land return is to be denied and existing lands are to be expropriated and dedicated to a vision of rewilding that categorically

excludes all humans, this would mean the actual removal of Indigenous populations, extending colonialism and cultural genocide. This would further expropriate Indigenous peoples from their remaining lands, in order to solve a problem to

³³ ↪ Vettesse and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 11. The species-area relationship undergirding arguments for the Half-Earth proposal somewhat simplifies the dimensions and processes pertaining to biodiversity at different scales (see, for example, Fangliang He and Stephen P. Hubbell, "Species-Area Relationships Always Overestimate Extinction Rates from Habitat Loss," *Nature* 473, no. 7347 [2011]: 368–71; Christian Lévêque and Jean-Claude Mounolou, *Biodiversity* [Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2003]), such that it is better understood as a shorthand reference to the scale at which the biotic crisis must be confronted than a scientific claim that dedicating 50 percent of the planet to conservation would protect 85 percent of biodiversity. This is particularly important when this simplification is further stretched to advocate rewilding of half the planet.

³⁴ ↪ Dolly Jørgensen, "Rethinking Rewilding," *Geoforum* 65 (2015): 482–88; Jamie Lorimer et al., "Rewilding," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 40, no. 1 (November 4, 2015): 39–62; David Nogués-Bravo, Daniel Simberloff, Carsten Rahbek, and Nathan James Sanders, "Rewilding Is the New Pandora's Box in Conservation," *Current Biology* 26, no. 3 (2016): R87–91.

³⁵ ↪ Survival International, "A People's Manifesto for the Future of Conservation," Our Land, Our Nature Congress, Marseille, September 2021, survivalinternational.org.

³⁶ ↪ Vettesse and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 79.

³⁷ ↪ IPBES, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*; Lynn M. Russell et al., "Ecosystem Impacts of Geoengineering," *Ambio* 41 no. 4, 350–69.

³⁸ ↪ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 2005), 182.

which they did not contribute and on the basis of an ontological opposition between humans and nature that many surviving Indigenous cultures do not necessarily share. Neither alternative suggests a healthy or viable starting point for a global coalition of mutual solidarity and respect, while the failure of the authors to provide more clarity on this key point is itself telling.³⁹

Similar problems arise with Vettese and Pendergrass's contention that "the easiest—and perhaps only—way to achieve large-scale reforestation and feed the world at the same time is through widespread veganism."⁴⁰ They defend this contention by feeding into their model per capita estimates of land requirements for different dietary regimes based on

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agricultural figures within the coterminous United States and multiplying these by global population numbers. Notably, even the article from which these estimates are drawn observes that a smaller total number of people can be supported by a vegan diet than a vegetarian or low-meat mixed one, as the former is unable to use land suitable to

grazing.⁴¹ Although this may be less of a problem in the context of the United States—as even the lowest estimate of the maximum population fed by U.S. agriculture is 1.3 times the size of the 2010 U.S. population—it becomes a much more dangerous assumption when applied to more arid regions, such as parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, where attempts to impose sedentary agriculture on Indigenous populations have undermined pastoral livelihoods with disastrous social and ecological consequences.⁴² It also runs counter to the nonprofit organisation GRAIN's contentions that struggles around agriculture and sustainability need to start from the premise that "farming communities should also be able to decide by and for themselves, and without pressure, the type of land tenure they want to practice"—a sentiment echoed by movements such as La Vía Campesina and in the Marseille Manifesto.⁴³

These complexities do not negate the fact that shifting that portion of the world's population presently consuming large quantities of industrially produced meat to a more vegetable-based diet would have numerous health, ecological, and ethical benefits. Rather, a more comprehensive ecological approach suggests that there are problems with assuming that experiences and conditions based on a single U.S. metropolitan view are directly translatable into global realities.⁴⁴

³⁹ ↪ Fiore Longo, "Why Nature-Based Solutions Won't Solve the Climate Crisis—They'll Just Make Rich People Even Richer," Common Dreams (blog), October 13, 2021, [org](https://www.commondreams.org). In a separate article, Vettese acknowledges that the precedent for their natural geoengineering proposal is the genocide inflicted on the Americas by the *conquista*. Apart from the contention that this time the project would be "bloodless and democratic," there is no indication of how half the earth might be dedicated to such geoengineering without the expropriation of Indigenous and rural lands; see Troy Vettese, "The Political Economy of Half-Earth," Socialist Project, January 30, 2019, socialistproject.ca.

⁴⁰ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 81.

⁴¹ ↪ Christian J. Peters et al., "Carrying Capacity of U.S. Agricultural Land: Ten Diet Scenarios," *Elementa* 4 (2016): 000116.

⁴² ↪ Another paper cited by Vettese and Pendergrass in support of universal veganism, Karl-Heinz Erb et al., "Exploring the Biophysical Option Space for Feeding the World without Deforestation," *Nature Communications* 7, no. 1 (2016): 11382, similarly notes that vegetarian or vegan diets may be preferable in some places, but less suitable in regions where sedentary agriculture is not viable. Eugene Hillman, "The Pauperization of the Maasai in Kenya," *Africa Today* 41, no. 4 (1994): 57–65 offers one among a multitude of examples where the imposition of sedentary agriculture has proven disastrous both socially and ecologically. See also Dowie, *Conservation Refugees*, for additional examples.

⁴³ ↪ GRAIN, "Hungry for Land"; CLOC—Via Campesina Secretary, "Returning to the Countryside," La Via Campesina, April 14, 2020, [org](https://www.laviacampesina.org); Survival International, "A People's Manifesto for the Future of Conservation."

⁴⁴ ↪ The decision to base their arguments on U.S. yield data instead of, say, Cuban figures is particularly puzzling given that Vettese and Pendergrass themselves point to the latter's extraordinary accomplishments during its Special Period in Peacetime as evidence of what an agroecological revolution can achieve, that the necessary data are readily available, and that the conditions under which Cuba transformed its agricultural practices likely have more in common with those facing most of the world than do conditions in the United States (see, for example, Mauricio Betancourt, "The Effect of Cuban Agroecology in Mitigating the Metabolic Rift," *Global Environmental Change* 63 [July 2020]: 102075).

As Rob Wallace and Max Ajl point out in response to a piece co-authored by Vettese that advocates Half-Earth Socialism, planetary veganism, and synthetic meat in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many vegan criticisms of the social-

“specific values and devaluations, and pathological externalisations” undergirding a project “that consents to the brute confiscation and erasure of peasant and pastoral particularisms in the name of ‘universal’ ideals: rewilding Earth upon the bones of supposedly atavistic peoples poor and brown.”

ecological effects and suffering inflicted by industrial animal husbandry are valid. Nevertheless, they lose their moral and empirical backing when they adopt a series of settler-colonial biases that facilitate the careful drawing of distinctions between industrial and sustainable cultivation of plants while treating industrial and peasant animal husbandry as an undifferentiated whole. That is, the

differences between peasant and pastoral animal husbandry practiced by countless peoples around the world and industrial livestock operations are as great as those that Vettese and Pendergrass recognise between industrial and organic agriculture, in terms of their ecological consequences, their contributions to and imbrications with cultural identities, and the amount of harm inflicted on the animals involved. In this sense, Vettese and Pendergrass’s universal condemnation of all “animal husbandry as one of the most consequential and dangerous ways humans shape life on Earth” is both inaccurate and reflects what Wallace and Ajl refer to as “specific values, specific devaluations, and pathological externalisations” undergirding a project “that consents to the brute confiscation and erasure of peasant and pastoral particularisms in the name of ‘universal’ ideals: rewilding Earth upon the bones of supposedly atavistic peoples poor and brown.”⁴⁵

These problems with confusing distinctions, tearing apart the conjoined, and imposing particular North Atlantic values and ontologies are raised to the worldwide level by the proposed operationalisation of these mandates in a global system of centralised planning. Global integration, coordination, and planning are undoubtedly necessary in any socialist future, but it seems that the political, geographical, and cultural dimensions of this problem would be as important as the technical and economic aspects to which Vettese and Pendergrass devote the majority of their attention.⁴⁶

When they contend that “meeting the needs of nature and humanity is fundamentally a material goal, measured in food and carbon molecules, and seeing the world in natural units allows us to directly confront trade-offs without the obfuscation of money,” the authors neglect the vital need to restore the dialectic of quantity and quality, at the risk of perpetuating the “pseudorationality” that they charge, via Neurath, against both monetary exchange and socialist proposals based on labor time.⁴⁷ This is because capital’s fetishistic “obfuscation of money” pivots on the partial rationality of reducing human need to a quantitative measure (or even an array or matrix of such measures), when human need itself is “an inherently qualitative determination.”⁴⁸

Embedding “Half-Earth Socialism’s ‘vast machine’ of planetary calculation” within an iterative process of deliberation, as they propose, might mitigate this risk by facilitating the articulation of qualitative needs in debates over which plan to adopt. However, their continued division between planning and decision-making falls far short of dialectical unity,

⁴⁵ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 37; Rob Wallace, *Dead Epidemiologists* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020); Max Ajl and Rob Wallace, “Red Vegans against Green Peasants,” *New Socialist*, October 16, 2021.

⁴⁶ ↪ As I am less acquainted with the debates surrounding socialist accountancy and planning than with the controversies surrounding the Half-Earth proposal, my reflections on this aspect of Vettese and Pendergrass’s proposal are somewhat more tentative.

⁴⁷ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 100–1.

⁴⁸ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 100; István Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008), 268.

particularly in light of the authors' failure to go beyond the obvious observation that deliberation is needed to even suggest a mechanism that matches said deliberation to the scope and reach of the planning aspect.⁴⁹

Framing this proposal as the "end of history" further strengthens doubts regarding the extent to which Vettese and Pendergrass are willing to concede to everyone "full control of their life-activity as social individuals" as a basic prerequisite to sustainable planning.⁵⁰ Setting aside the fact that, from a Marxist perspective, the end of history implies the end of humanity, this posited freezing of history suggests that the authors have failed to overcome capital's conflation of history with quantitative economic growth. The result is a society in which the genuine historical agency of the subjects in mediating their own relations to nature seems to be supplanted by an a priori commitment to a particular ideology (premised on reversing the humanisation of nature) that imposes a steady state instead of allowing the associated producers consciously and collectively to reconcile their social metabolism with civilisation's planetary boundaries and concern for nature's ability to reproduce itself.⁵¹

Moreover, Vettese and Pendergrass's Neurathian view of socialist democracy as "choosing one among several competing 'total plans' devised by the social engineers," together with the top-down direction of their per capita allocations, gives the impression that, for many of the world's people, decisions will be imposed rather than reached collectively by the

"choosing one among several competing 'total plans' devised by the social engineers," together with the top-down direction of their per capita allocations, gives the impression that, for many of the world's people, decisions will be imposed rather than reached collectively by the self-governing producers and communities.

self-governing producers and communities.⁵² As this planning approach is not a transitional step away from capital, but the just mentioned end of history, we are confronted with an eternal present in which the alienation and subjugation of one part of society by another persists. For example, at one point in Half-Earth Socialism's closing narrative, someone informs the protagonist that fishing will soon be banned at the behest of the animal-rights movement. This hardly seems like it would be a

just outcome for the various island, coastal, riparian, and lacustrine communities—such as the Purépecha fishers on the island of Janitzio here in Mexico—for whom fishing is as much an affirmation of cultural identity as it is a livelihood.⁵³ Instead of imposing such mandates through majority rule, it is helpful to recall experiences in Indigenous-led governance indicating that "there is no one-size-fits-all approach to bringing about socially just and effective land and sea decision-making."⁵⁴ Here Lefebvre's observation that an appropriation of space requires a degree of local autonomy, while expropriation of space by a distant order, even with benign intentions, tends to domination is absolutely crucial to any socialist ecology. His theorisation of autogestion (or radical self-management/self-determination) therefore suggests a potentially helpful corrective.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 131.

⁵⁰ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 54–56; Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time*, 196.

⁵¹ ↪ Mészáros, [The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time](#).

⁵² ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 101.

⁵³ ↪ Stefano B. Longo, Rebecca Clausen, and Brett Clark, *The Tragedy of the Commodity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 2015).

⁵⁴ ↪ Artelle et al., "Supporting Resurgent Indigenous-Led Governance," 8.

⁵⁵ ↪ Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 140; see also Brian M. Napoletano, Brett Clark, John Bellamy Foster, and Pedro S. Urquijo, "[Sustainability and Metabolic Revolution in the Works of Henri Lefebvre](#)," — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, May 2022;; Brian M. Napoletano, Pedro S. Urquijo, Brett Clark, and John Bellamy Foster, "[Henri Lefebvre's Conception of Nature-Society in the Revolutionary Project of Autogestion](#)," *Dialogues in Human Geography* (2022).

As a planning mechanism, the direct leap to globally standardised per capita energy and other allotments threatens to neglect the ecological debt that many core capitalist countries have accumulated, as well as the fact that substantive equality in the context of the world's extremely diverse geography is likely to translate into equally diverse per capita requirements. Thus, it seems that Vettese and Pendergrass's tool could be more effective if it were focused on promoting lower-level self-management and cooperation first by allowing regional and local collectives to work together to specify their own needs and surpluses, and then used these figures to elaborate various global projections (emissions, carbon uptake, land configurations, nutrition, and so on) that could be employed to facilitate negotiations and adjustments from local to global scales without necessarily requiring that everyone ultimately adopt a single "total plan" from which per capita allotments would be assigned. While this could end up raising as many problems as it solves, it seems like a more reliable way eventually to arrive at a just and sustainable global convergence in per capita resource demands while simultaneously promoting a healthy dialectic of individual meaning and collective solidarity necessary to a viable ecological civilisation.

Somewhat paradoxically—at least in light of their assertions regarding Marx's Hegelian Prometheanism—a stronger engagement with Marxist currents other than that of the Frankfurt School, with its dualist neo-Kantian approach to humanity and nature, might have helped Vettese and Pendergrass to articulate a more viable utopian vision by

Approaching Marx's project as an open-ended one suggests that the objective is not so much to impose a "shared world-view to bind this heterogeneous movement of movements," but to overcome capital and its totalising aspirations to clear the way for a multiplicity of worldviews to flourish and experiment around the world in the spirit of what the Zapatistas refer to as "the world with the many worlds that the world needs."

preventing premature closure and ossification of the nature-society dialectic. Their dismissal of ecological Marxism as an extension of the Hegelian vision of the end of history through the domination of nature not only ignores two decades of scholarship, but also fails to recognise that Marx's "strategic hypothesis inverted that of Hegel, pertaining as it did to the revolutionary overthrow of the upside-down world, as opposed to the frozen knowledge that seeks to legitimise the world."⁵⁶ Approaching Marx's project as an open-ended one suggests that the objective is not so much to impose a

"shared world-view to bind this heterogeneous movement of movements," but to overcome capital and its totalising aspirations to clear the way for a multiplicity of worldviews to flourish and experiment around the world in the spirit of what the Zapatistas refer to as "the world with the many worlds that the world needs."⁵⁷ Notably, such ontological openness would also be more in keeping with the spirit of Vettese and Pendergrass's own contention that "agreeing on the details of what that utopia might look like matters less than agreeing that speculation is a vital political act."⁵⁸

Utopian speculation can help us to imagine and illuminate the possibilities for a better future, but risks becoming an impediment to revolutionary action if it loses sight of the real and neglects the social forces and demands necessary to realising its possibilities. Here it is helpful to recall that one of the reasons that Marx refrained from "writing recipes...for the cook-shops of the future" was his recognition that a socialist (and eventually communist) society by definition requires that the determinate values and worldviews need to be developed autonomously by the social individuals, thereby precluding the imposition of a hegemonic worldview on the whole of humanity.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ ↪ Henri Lefebvre, *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche* (London: Verso, 2020).

⁵⁷ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 16; The Zapatistas, *Zapatista Encuentro* (New York: Seven Stories, 1996), 49; see also Foster et al., "Marx and the Indigenous"; John Bellamy Foster, "[Marx's Open-Ended Critique](#)," — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, February 2021.

⁵⁸ ↪ Vettese and Pendergrass, *Half-Earth Socialism*, 18.

⁵⁹ ↪ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 99. On the need to autonomously determine meaning and value, see Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time*.

In this sense, instead of a foil to their proposal, Marx’s insights into the appropriation and humanisation of nature as a sensuous, as well as practical activity, together with his insistence that revolutionary theory creates the opening for alternative articulations of the nature-society dialectic, provide a point from which to contest capital’s destruction of nature. Moreover, it represents an opportunity for solidarity and active engagement with anticolonial and other struggles against all forms of domination and oppression, thereby attacking the root of humanity’s antagonistic relation with the rest of nature.⁶⁰ The result of such a socialist, ecological revolution would not be the end of history, but of pre-history, and the beginning of an epoch in which humanity can transcend its alienation from and instrumental relation to nature, and instead choose to value this nature—including different conceptions of wilderness—as ends rather than means.⁶¹

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- Álvaro J. de Regil Castilla: [Transitioning to Geocratia the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — First Steps](#)

⁶⁰ ↪ Foster et al., “Marx and the Indigenous.”

⁶¹ ↪ Vettese’s contention in “[The Humanisation of Nature and the Naturalisation of Marxism](#),” *Historical Materialism* 28, 22 (2019), that “eco-Marxists will have to predicate their analyses on the works of a man who was not at all an environmentalist and indeed was hostile to the notion of nature’s intrinsic worth,” is therefore mistaken in two respects. In addition to attributing a position to Marx that available evidence indicates he did not hold, Vettese’s attempt to reassert the Frankfurt School’s interpretation of Marx expounded by Alfred Schmidt in *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: Verso, 1971) over the counter-evidence provided by two decades of scholarship in ecological Marxism by diverting the debate into one over nature’s intrinsic worth actually obscures the fact that worth and value are inherently relational concepts, and thereby threatens to exacerbate the very bourgeois reification of value that the category of “intrinsic worth” ostensibly rejects. For further discussion on this point, see John Bellamy Foster and P. Burkett, *Marx and the Earth* (Boston: Brill, 2016), 34–56.

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