

## JUS SEMPER NEWSLETTER

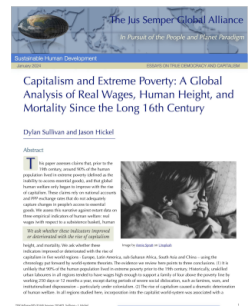
In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm

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

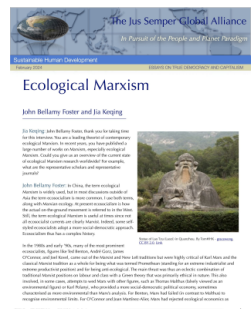
## HIGHLIGHTS

JUS SEMPER Newsletter – Winter-Spring 2024

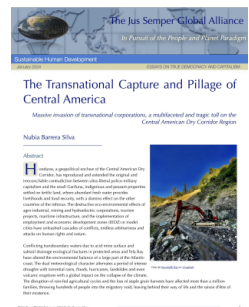
**Capitalism and Extreme Poverty: A Global Analysis of Real Wages, Human Height, Mortality Since the Long 16th Century — (Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel) — This work debunks claims that human welfare only began to improve with capitalism. Page 2**



**Ecological Marxism (John Bellamy Foster and Jia Kejing) — Interviewing John Bellamy Foster from a Chinese perspective. Page 2**



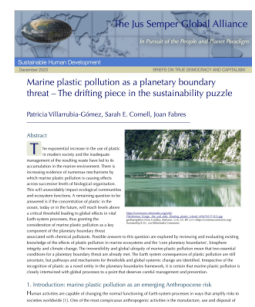
**The Transnational Capture and Pillage of Central America (Nubia Barrera Silva) — Massive invasion of transnational corporations, a multifaceted and tragic toll on the Central American Dry Corridor Region. Page 3**



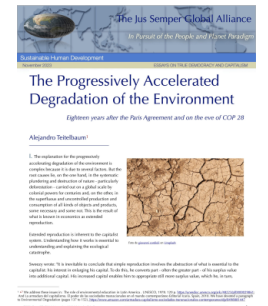
**Gaza: On Zionism, Judaism, Racism and Barbarism (Ariel Feldman) — The narrative of the Zionist state, the U.S. empire, and its lackeys about Palestine and Israel is a ruse that evades historical facts. Here, an Israeli, not a Zionist, summarises the unvarnished truth. Page 3**



**Marine plastic pollution as a planetary boundary threat – The drifting piece in the sustainability puzzle (Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez, Sarah E. Cornell, Joan Fabres) — Public awareness of marine plastic pollution is rising, which should help to mobilise the action that is now urgently needed. Page 3**



**The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment – COP 28 (Alejandro Teitelbaum) — The systematic plundering and destruction of nature and the superfluous and uncontrolled production and consumption of anything that can be sold. Page 4**



**Marx and the Indigenous (John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman) P. 4**

**Capitalism, Global Poverty, and the Case for Democratic Socialism (Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan) P. 4**

**The Ecological Collapse We Were Warned About Has Begun (José Seoane) P. 5**

**Prioritising U.S. Imperialism in Evaluating Latin America's Pink Tide (Steve Ellner) P. 5**

**Why do materialist values undermine flow experiences? The role of self regulatory resources (Amy Isham, Birgitta Gatersleben and Tim Jackson) P. 6**

**What Every Child Should Know about Marx's Theory of Value (Michael A. Lebowitz) P. 6**

**Sustainable deaths (Gustavo Duch) P. 6**

**“Not growing but thriving”: The Beginning of a Paradigm Shift (Kate Raworth) P. 7**

**Marxian Ecology, Dialectics, and the Hierarchy of Needs (John Bellamy Foster, Dan Swain and Monika Woźniak) P. 7**

**If Climate Policy Isn't Social, It Fails (Jason Hickel – Suzanne Kröger) P. 7**

**Engels and the Second Foundation of Marxism (John Bellamy Foster) P. 8**

**The Communitarian Revolutionary Subject and the Possibilities of System Change (David Barkin – Brian M. Napoletano) P. 8**

**Unequal Value Transfer from Mexico to the United States (Mateo Crossa) P. 8**

**Questioning Our Limits to Leave Scarcity Behind (Giorgos Kallis) P. 9**

**Frederick Engels: The First Marxist? (Bruce McFarlane) P. 9**

**The Meaning of ‘So-Called Primitive Accumulation’ (Ian Angus) P. 9**

**A New Geopolitics for the Anthropocene (Simon Dalby) P. 10**

**Marxian Ecology, East and West: Joseph Needham and a Non-Eurocentric View of the Origins of China's Ecological Civilisation (John Bellamy Foster) P. 10**

**The Double Objective of Democratic Ecosocialism** (Jason Hickel) **P. 10**

**The Left and the Imperial Mode of Living** (Ulrich Brand | Markus Wissen) **P. 11**

**Due diligence, a mandatory standard devoid of content** (Juan Hernández Zubizarreta / Erika González / Pedro Ramiro) **P. 11**

**The U.S. is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia but also on China** (The Editors of Monthly Review) **P. 11**

**Post-Second World War Social Christianity and Its Relevance to Pope Francis's Criticism of NATO** (Toby Terrar) **P. 12**

**"If we can prevent the genocide of billions of human beings, I would be happy"** (Jorge Riechmann and Gorka Castillo) **P. 12**

**A handbook against climate denialism in the axial decade** (Juan Bordera / Fernando Valladares / Antonio Turiel) **P. 13**

**Settler Colonialism in Palestine** (The Editors of Monthly Review) **P. 13**

**The pressing priority of saving the Amazonia** (David Roca Basadre) **P. 13**

**The New Cold War Washington Consensus** (The Editors of Monthly Review) **P. 14**

**The end of seasons?** (Juan Bordera – Antonio Turiel) **P. 14**

**Why strike action is climate action** (Simon Mair) **P. 14**

**The Disinformation Wars: An Epistemological, Political, and Socio-Historical Interrogation** (Helena Sheehan) **P. 15**

**Palestine, Oh, Palestine!** (Paul Buhle) **P. 15**

**Assessing the suitability of sustainability frameworks for embedding sustainability in higher education curricula: pragmatism versus transformation** (Simon Mair, Angela Druckman) **P. 15**

**El Niño and its (flaming) sea in the era of the Great Acceleration** (Juan Bordera) **P. 16**

**Sustainability: a catalogue of ideas received** (Cristina Goberna Pesudo) **P. 16**

**A Final Thought** ..... **P. 16**

## CAPITALISM AND EXTREME POVERTY: A GLOBAL ANALYSIS OF REAL WAGES, HUMAN HEIGHT, MORTALITY SINCE THE LONG 16TH CENTURY — Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel



### Capitalism and Extreme Poverty: A Global Analysis of Real Wages, Human Height, and Mortality Since the Long 16th Century

Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel

Abstract

**T**his paper assesses claims that, prior to the 19th century, around 90% of the human population lived in extreme poverty (defined as the inability to access essential goods), and that global human welfare only began to improve with the rise of capitalism. These claims rely on national accounts and PPP exchange rates that do not adequately capture changes in people's access to essential goods. We assess this narrative against extant data on three empirical indicators of human welfare: real wages (with respect to a subsistence basket), human height, and mortality. We ask whether these indicators improved or deteriorated with the rise of capitalism.



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We ask whether these indicators improved or deteriorated with the rise of capitalism in five world regions – Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and China – using the chronology put forward by world-systems theories. The evidence we review here points to three conclusions. (1) It is unlikely that 90% of the human population lived in extreme poverty prior to the 19th century. Historically, unskilled urban labourers in all regions tended to have wages high enough to support a family of four above the poverty line by working 250 days or 12 months a year, except during periods of severe social dislocation, such as famines, wars, and institutionalised dispossession – particularly under colonialism. (2) The rise of capitalism caused a dramatic deterioration of human welfare. In all regions studied here, incorporation into the capitalist world-system was associated with a

capitalism in five world regions – Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and China – using the chronology put forward by world-systems theorists. The evidence we review here points to three conclusions. (1) It is unlikely that 90% of the human population lived in extreme poverty prior to the 19th century. Historically, unskilled urban labourers in all regions tended to have wages high enough to support a family of four above the poverty line by working 250 days or 12 months a year, except during periods of severe social dislocation, such as famines, wars, and institutionalised dispossession – particularly under colonialism. (2) The rise of capitalism caused a dramatic deterioration of human welfare. In all regions studied here, incorporation into the capitalist world-system was associated with a decline in wages to below subsistence, a deterioration in human stature, and an upturn in premature mortality. In parts of South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, key welfare metrics have still not recovered. (3) Where progress has occurred, significant improvements in human welfare began several centuries after the rise of capitalism. In the core regions of Northwest Europe, progress began in the 1880s, while in the periphery and semi-periphery it began in the mid-20th century, a period characterised by the rise of anti-colonial and socialist political movements that redistributed incomes and established public provisioning systems.

**Download the full document here!**

**ECOLOGICAL MARXISM — John Bellamy Foster and Jia Keqing - Interviewing John Bellamy Foster from a Chinese perspective**

Jia Keqing: John Bellamy Foster, thank you for taking time for this interview. You are a leading theorist of contemporary ecological Marxism. In recent years, you have published a large



## Ecological Marxism

John Bellamy Foster and Jia Keqing

Jia Keqing: John Bellamy Foster, thank you for taking time for this interview. You are a leading theorist of contemporary ecological Marxism. In recent years, you have published a large number of works on Marxism, especially ecological Marxism. Could you give us an overview of the current state of ecological Marxism research worldwide? For example, what are the representative scholars and representative journals?

John Bellamy Foster: In China, the term ecological Marxism is widely used, but in most discussions outside of Asia the term ecosocialism is more common. I use both terms, along with Marxian ecology. At present ecosocialism is how the actual on-the-ground movement is referred to in the West. Still, the term ecological Marxism is useful at times since not all ecosocialist currents are clearly Marxist. Indeed, some self-styled ecosocialists adopt a more social-democratic approach. Ecosocialism thus has a complex history.



Statue of Lao Tzu (Luozhi) in Qiongzhusi, China. CC BY 2.0. Link

In the 1980s and early '90s, many of the most prominent ecosocialists, figures like Ted Benton, André Gorz, James O'Connor, and Joel Kovel, came out of the Marxist and New Left traditions but were highly critical of Karl Marx and the classical Marxist tradition as a whole for being what was termed Promethean (standing for an extreme industrialist and extreme productivity position) and for being anti-ecological. The main thrust was thus an eclectic combination of traditional Marxist positions on labour and class with a Green theory that was primarily ethical in nature. This also involved, in some cases, attempts to wed Marx with other figures, such as Thomas Malthus (initially viewed as an environmental figure) or Karl Polanyi, who provided a more social-democratic political economy, sometimes characterised as more environmental than Marx's analysis. For Benton, Marx had failed (in contrast to Malthus) to recognise environmental limits. For O'Connor and Joan Martinez-Alier, Marx had rejected ecological economics as

TEC&Maj90-03/10 February 2024/3, B.Foster & J.Keqing

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## THE TRANSNATIONAL CAPTURE AND PILLAGE OF CENTRAL AMERICA – *Nubia Barrera Silva* — *Massive invasion of transnational corporations, a multifaceted and tragic toll on the Central American Dry Corridor Region.*



### The Transnational Capture and Pillage of Central America

*Massive invasion of transnational corporations, a multifaceted and tragic toll on the Central American Dry Corridor Region*

Nubia Barrera Silva

#### Abstract

**H**onduras, a geopolitical enclave of the Central American Dry Corridor, has reproduced and extended the original and irreconcilable contradiction between ultra-liberal police-military capitalism and the small Garifuna, indigenous and peasant properties settled on fertile land, where abundant fresh water provides livelihoods and food security, with a domino effect on the other countries of the isthmus. The destructive eco-environmental effects of agro-industrial, mining and hydroelectric corporations, tourism projects, maritime infrastructure, and the implementation of employment and economic development zones (EEDZ) or model cities have unleashed cascades of conflicts, endless arbitrariness and attacks on human rights and nature.

Conflicting transboundary waters due to acid mine surface and subsoil drainage ecological fractures in protected areas and Tela Bay have altered the environmental balance of a large part of the Atlantic coast. The dual meteorological character alternates a period of intense droughts with torrential rains, floods, hurricanes, landslides and even volcanic eruptions with a global impact on the collapse of the climate. The disruption of rain-fed agricultural cycles and the loss of staple grain harvests have affected more than a million families, throwing hundreds of people into the migratory void, leaving behind their way of life and the raison d'être of their existence.

TJSGJusSemper02-0108 January 2024/Nubia Barrera Silva



Photo by Nubia Barrera Silva

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Central America is located in the Northern Hemisphere of the torrid zone, part of the Pacific Ring of Fire. It is a natural bridge between the Americas, the Caribbean Sea to the

east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Its biogeography is spread over eleven ecoregions of freshwater, mountains and volcanoes in the Ring of Fire. In this paper, Honduras is the geopolitical epicentre of the Central American Dry Corridor (hereafter CDC). Activist Bertha Cáceres highlights Honduras' geopolitical position in the concentration of capital from the most promising sectors of the Global North and its subsequent expansion to the rest of the CDC countries. The massive invasion of corporate capital demanded from the outset the complete militarisation of Honduras, extended to the other neighbouring CDC countries as a strategy of occupation and indiscriminate domination of natural capital and the creation of model cities.

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## GAZA: ON ZIONISM, JUDAISM, RACISM AND BARBARISM— *Ariel Feldman*

*— Affluence as a driver of environmental and social impacts — Systemic drivers and possible solutions.*



### Gaza: On Zionism, Judaism, Racism and Barbarism

Ariel Feldman

**I** was born in Israel 44 years ago. I am Jewish, and I have been living in Argentina for more than three decades. Since then, I have visited the State of Israel several times, walked through Arab towns and villages, talked with the so-called Israeli Arabs (Palestinians who remained within the Israeli borders after the war that followed the self-proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948), crossed checkpoints and toured the occupied territories. In particular, I walked through Hebron more than once - one of the Palestinian cities with a strong Israeli military and settler presence - and talked to Palestinian families and young people living there. I was not fortunate enough to see Gaza. For someone with Israeli nationality, it has been practically impossible to do so for 16 years.

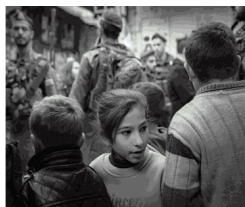


Photo: Ariel Feldman

This biographical information does not pretend that my words are worth more than others, thanks to an authority that I do not feel, but they do try to inhibit ad hominem fallacies that are often used against those who criticise the State of Israel. Whether in this particular context of the horrific attack on civilians by Hamas followed by the inhumane retaliation against the Gaza population or in any other historical moment of the debate, it is argued that an anti-Zionist position is based on a lack of sensitivity and empathy for the suffering of the Jewish people, either by pointing to an alleged anti-Semitism or ideological position in the interlocutor or by arguing a lack of knowledge of the territory and its complexity. These are a set of statements that avoid answering arguments and instead seek to cancel the discussion by annulling the interlocutor.

TJSGJusSemper02-0108 October 2023/A. Feldman

**I** last visited the occupied territories in 2016. The photos accompanying this article are from my visit to Hebron. Knowing I was Jewish (my name is Ariel, like the infamous Ariel Sharon), they opened their homes to me, told their stories, and let me take pictures. The girl in the portrait on the stone wall suffered an assassination attempt by settlers, and the teenagers on the terrace told me about their impossible futures. Hebron is a highly contested city because it is home to the Abraham Mosque, where the tombs of the patriarchs who share a Jewish and Muslim religion are said to be located (in 1994, Goldstein, a fundamentalist Zionist, entered the mosque and murdered 29 people at prayer and wounded more than 100 others). The city is home to fewer than a

thousand settlers and more than 200,000 Palestinians. The photos of soldiers and children are from when I witnessed the Israeli army guarding, as it does every Friday, a provocative parade of settlers through the streets of the Palestinian market in Hebron to show them that they not only dominate the Jewish quarter in the heart of their city but that the whole city belongs to them.

In Gaza, the reality is radically worse. Palestinians in the West Bank often excuse themselves from commenting on Hamas's methods in the Strip because they say they cannot know what they would do under that level of oppression. When one considers the systematic attempt at dehumanisation that Israeli colonialism entails, which seeks to drive the Palestinians to their bare minimum, the perseverance of the Palestinian people is simply admirable. Gaza has been under a 16-year blockade by land, air, and sea, with constant bombardment of the civilian population, with cuts in the supply of water, electricity, fuel and essential goods. It is now customary to call Gaza an open-air prison. But it should be added that it is a prison where the most basic human rights are not respected. Gaza is a ghetto, and we are witnessing in real-time and on television the process of annihilation of that ghetto and its population. The Jewish ancestors, whom the Nazis tried to dehumanise in the concentration camps, the victims of the pogroms in Eastern Europe, and the very worthy uprisings in the Warsaw ghetto, today would rise in indignation at the racist colonialism of the State of Israel and its ongoing genocide. Again, not in our name.

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## MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION AS A PLANETARY BOUNDARY THREAT – THE DRIFTING PIECE IN THE SUSTAINABILITY PUZZLE — *Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez, Sarah E. Cornell, Joan Fabres*

The exponential increase in the use of plastic in modern society and the inadequate management of the resulting waste have led to its accumulation in the marine environment. There is increasing evidence of numerous mechanisms by which marine plastic pollution is causing effects across successive levels of biological organisation. This will unavoidably impact ecological communities and ecosystem functions. A remaining question to be answered is if the concentration of plastic in the ocean, today or in the future, will reach levels above a critical threshold leading to global effects in vitalEarth-system processes, thus granting the consideration of marine plastic pollution as a key component of the planetary boundary threat associated with chemical pollutants. Possible answers to this question are explored by reviewing and evaluating existing knowledge

The explanation for the progressively accelerating degradation of the environment is complex because it is due to several factors. But the root causes lie, on the one hand, in the systematic plundering and destruction of nature - particularly deforestation - carried out on a global scale by colonial powers for centuries and, on the other, in the superfluous and uncontrolled production and consumption of all kinds of objects and products, some necessary and some not. This is the result of what is known in economics as extended reproduction. Extended reproduction is inherent to the capitalist system. Understanding how it works is

essential to understanding and explaining the ecological catastrophe.

# The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment

Eighteen years after the Paris Agreement and on the eve of COP 28

Alejandro Teitelbaum<sup>1</sup>

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Foto de [giovanni cordiali](#) en [Unplash](#)

Sweezy wrote: "It is inevitable to conclude that simple reproduction involves the abstraction of what is essential to the capitalist: his interest in enlarging his capital. To do this, he converts part - often the greater part - of his surplus value into additional capital. His increased capital enables him to appropriate still more surplus value, which he, in turn,

<sup>1</sup> <sup>+</sup> We address these issues in: The role of environmental education in Latin America - UNESCO, 1978, 120 p. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf000029861>. And *La armadura del capitalismo. El poder de las sociedades transnacionales en el mundo contemporáneo* Editorial Icaria, Spain, 2010. We have devoted a paragraph to Environmental Degradation (pages 137 to 152). <https://www.amazon.com/armadura-capitalismo-sociedades-transnacionales-contemporaneo/dp/8498881447>

TSCA/EPA/SD (1164) November 2023/Alexandra Teitelbaum

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**MARX AND THE INDIGENOUS** — *John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman*

## Marx and the Indigenous

John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman

He "turn toward the indigenous" in social theory over the last couple of decades, associated with the critique of white settler colonialism, has reintroduced themes long present in Marxian theory, but in ways that are often surprisingly divorced from Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism.<sup>1</sup> Part of the reason for this disconnection is that the current discussions of settler colonialism have evolved out of traditions of postmodernist and postcolonial cultural theory that are distant from historical materialism.<sup>2</sup> However, a deeper explanation for the gap between current scholarly work on settler colonialism and Marxism is associated with the claims of some left critics that Marx's work is characterised by the following: (1) a crude developmentalism and economic determinism; (2) a pro-colonialist stance; (3) a teleological conception of progress; and (4) thoroughness or extreme political commitment.<sup>3</sup> This article examines how these claims are employed to cast historical materialism as irrelevant or even hostile to contemporary indigenous struggles and perspectives.

#NoDNPL by the Palestinian artist, [Leila Abolnaga](#)

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Sean Coulthard provides a more nuanced view of Marx and the indigenous, engaging the latter's critique of "so-called primitive accumulation." Coulthard insists that "Marx's theoretical frame" in this respect can be seen as extremely "relevant to a comprehensive understanding of settler-colonialism and Indigenous resistance," but that this requires that classical historical materialism "be transformed in conversation with the critical thought and

<sup>1</sup> Kerstin Knopf, "The Turn Toward the Indigenous," *American Studies* 60, no. 2/3 (2016): 179–200.

2. <sup>82</sup> See SYLVIA SORAL, "Marxism and Post-Colonial Theory," *Marxist Left Review* 10 (2016).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the essays in Ward Churchill, ed., *Marxism and Native America* (Boston: South End, 1999); Russell Lawrence Barsh, "Contemporary Marxist Theory and Native American Reality," *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 187–211; Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 9–10.

TSCA EPCRA (EPA) October 2012 Ballou, Foster, Clark and Holliman

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often surprisingly divorced from Karl Marx's critique of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. Part of the reason for this disconnection is that the current discussions of settler colonialism have evolved out of traditions in postmodernist and postcolonial cultural theory that are distant from historical materialism. However, a deeper explanation for the gulf between current scholarly work on settler colonialism and Marxism is associated with the claims of some left critics that Marx's work is characterised by the following: (1) a crude developmentalism and economic determinism; (2) a pro-colonialist stance; (3) a teleological conception of progress; and (4) Prometheanism or extreme productivism in relation to the environment. Such charges are often employed to cast historical materialism as irrelevant or even hostile to contemporary indigenous struggles and perspectives.

Taking these criticisms seriously, we return to the classical foundations of Marxian theory in order to ascertain where—if anywhere—the analysis went wrong, what can be usefully derived from it, and how to construct (or reconstruct) a Marxian critique of colonialism relevant to contemporary struggles. Through this assessment, we believe, the strengths of the classical historical-materialist argument will become evident.

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## CAPITALISM, GLOBAL POVERTY, AND THE CASE FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM — *Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan*

# Capitalism, Global Poverty, and the Case for Democratic Socialism

Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan

Over the past several years, a new narrative about global poverty has become entrenched in mainstream discourse. It holds that extreme poverty—a condition of absolute deprivation associated with severe calorie and nutrient deficiency and an inability to access basic goods—is the natural condition of humanity, and afflicted some 90 percent of the world population before the rise of capitalism liberated people from misery. This narrative relies in large part on a graph showing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty since 1820, declining from a starting point of 90 percent. The graph was originally developed by the former World Bank economist Martin Ravallion and was later popularized by Steven Pinker in his bestselling book, *Enlightenment Now*. It has since circulated widely on social media.

This narrative suffers from several empirical problems, <https://doi.org/10.1017/etp.2017.1>

This narrative suffers from several empirical problems, however, which we explored in a recent article published in *World Development*.<sup>1</sup> Measuring poverty requires direct data on household consumption, but this is generally not available prior to the 1980s. To get around this limitation, the Ravallion/Pinker graph relies on historical GDP growth rates as a proxy for changes in household consumption. This is not a valid method, however, because empirical data show that the two indicators generally do not

<sup>1</sup> <sup>a</sup> Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel, "Capitalism and Extreme Poverty: A Global Analysis of Real Wages, Human Height, and Mortality since the Long 16th Century," *World Development* 161 (2023).

TRCA/ISSN(SD #160) October 2023/01 Hickel - D. Sullivan

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This narrative suffers from several empirical problems, however, which we explored in a recent article published in *World Development*. Given these issues, the standard public narrative about the history of extreme poverty needs reassessment. Toward this end, we took an empirical approach to examine the social impact of capitalist expansion and integration using data on real wages (with respect to the cost of basic needs), human height, and mortality since the long sixteenth century, for five world regions (Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and China). This data points to three conclusions.

First, it is unlikely that 90 percent (or even 75 percent) of the global population lived in extreme poverty prior to the rise of capitalism. Historically, unskilled urban labourers in all regions tended to have wages high enough to support a family of four above the poverty line. Extreme poverty seems to arise predominantly during periods of severe social and economic distress, like famines, wars, and institutionalised dispossession, which became particularly prevalent under colonialism. Rather than being the natural condition of humanity, extreme poverty is a symptom of severe social dislocation and displacement.

The second conclusion is that the rise of capitalism coincided with a deterioration in human welfare. In every region we assessed, incorporation into the capitalist world-system was associated with a decline in wages to below subsistence, a deterioration in human stature, and a marked upturn in premature mortality. In parts of Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, key welfare metrics have still not recovered.

Our third conclusion is that in those regions where progress has occurred, it began much later than the Ravallion/Pinker graph suggests. In the core regions of Northwest Europe, welfare standards began to improve in the 1880s, around four centuries after the emergence of capitalism. In the periphery and semi-periphery, progress began in the mid-twentieth century. This corresponds with the rise of organised labor, the anticolonial movement, and other radical and progressive social

movements, which organised production around meeting human needs, redistributed wealth, and invested in public provisioning systems.

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**THE ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE WE WERE WARNED ABOUT HAS BEGUN — José Seoane** — *Raging fires rage across Canada, an unprecedented drought is raging in Uruguay and global temperatures have broken all records. An urgent people's plan to adapt and mitigate the situation is still possible.*



## The Ecological Collapse We Were Warned About Has Begun

*Raging fires rage across Canada, an unprecedented drought is raging in Uruguay and global temperatures have broken all records. An urgent people's plan to adapt and mitigate the situation is still possible.*

José Seoane

In 2023, different climatic anomalies have been recorded that set new historical records in the tragic progression of climate change at the global level.

Thus, in June, the surface temperature in the North Atlantic reached the maximum increase of 1.3 degrees Celsius with respect to preindustrial values. In a similar direction—although in lower values—the average temperature of the seas at the global level increased. On the other hand, the retraction of Antarctic ice reached a new limit, reaching the historical decrease of 2016, but several months earlier in the middle of the cold season.

The combination of these records has led scientists who follow these processes to warn of the danger of a profound change in the currents that regulate temperature and life in the oceans and globally. The heat waves recorded on the coasts of a large part of the world—in Ireland, Mexico, Ecuador, Japan, Mauritania, and Iceland—may, in turn, be proof of this.

TJCA/Commentary/NO (CH7) November 2023/Issue 3



Forest fires in 2023. Downtown Calgary, Alberta, Canada is shrouded in wildfire smoke. 2023. By Christine Bellander—Chen walls, CC BY-SA 4.0. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chenwalls132070486>

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## PRIORITISING U.S. IMPERIALISM IN EVALUATING LATIN AMERICA'S PINK TIDE — Steve Ellner



## Prioritising U.S. Imperialism in Evaluating Latin America's Pink Tide

Steve Ellner

Two conflicting leftist positions on Latin America's wave of progressive governments known as the Pink Tide have become increasingly well-defined over the last two decades. One position is favorable, while the other highly critical, to the extent that Pink Tide presidents—including Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, Bolivia's Evo Morales, and Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula)—are sometimes put in the same category as conservative and right-wing leaders.

At the heart of these differences is the issue of imperialism. The key question that emerges from the debate has paramount implications: Is the struggle against U.S. imperialism the left's foremost priority worldwide, no matter what view is taken on the Ukraine war? If the answer is yes, then steadfast support for Pink Tide governments, which have been subjected to and resisted U.S. interventionism, is particularly compelling.

Or has globalisation set in motion other contradictions that need to be prioritised since the principal target must be global capital, and not Washington's political machinations? Furthermore, the environment, Indigenous rights, gender equality, and participatory democracy—all banners of what some call the "anti-globalisation movement"—have to be foremost in the formulation of leftist strategies and goals in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> The Pink Tide's performance on these fronts has



President Lula and presidents Hugo Chávez and Néstor Kirchner during a meeting at Casa de Frei Jimmy (15, 2006). By Ricardo Sánchez/PA. Agência Brasil (11-11-2006) (112217), CC BY-SA 4.0.

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> In fact, the number one priority in the world today is of an ecological nature. It may be argued, however, that real progress in halting climate change is contingent on respect for national sovereignty and slashing military spending, fundamental goals of anti-imperialism.

TJCA/essay/NO (816) December 2023/Issue 3

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## WHY DO MATERIALISTIC VALUES UNDERMINE FLOW EXPERIENCES? THE ROLE OF SELF REGULATORY RESOURCES — Amy Isham, Birgitta Gatersleben and Tim Jackson



### Why do materialistic values undermine flow experiences? The role of self-regulatory resources

Amy Isham, Birgitta Gatersleben and Tim Jackson

#### Abstract

**Aims:** Research has shown that the possession of materialistic values can lead individuals to be less likely to experience flow, an important component of well-being. In this research, we test whether a lack of self-regulatory resources, and a tendency to use self-regulatory resources for avoidance purposes, can mediate this relationship. **Methods:** A representative sample of 2000 adults in the UK completed an online survey. Results were analysed using structural equation modelling. **Results:** Materialistic values were related to a heightened tendency to dedicate self-regulatory resources towards the avoidance of negative states, which in turn was linked to lower levels of self-regulatory strength. Low levels of self-regulatory strength were related to a reduced tendency to experience flow. **Discussion:** The findings provide new insights surrounding the factors and processes that hinder and enhance the creation of flow experiences. In doing so, they suggest suitable routes to promoting flow experiences in materialistic individuals, which in turn should improve their well-being. **Conclusions:** Reducing the desire to avoid negative experiences could encourage flow experiences by enhancing self-regulatory resources. Future research is needed to test the causal nature of these relationships.



DOI: 10.1016/j.jss.2024.1000000

Flow describes a state of total immersion in an optimally challenging activity. It requires effort to achieve, as individuals must acquire the necessary skills to effectively engage with a challenging task and choose to dedicate all of their attention to it. Once in flow, individuals may experience a lack of boundaries between themselves and the action they

TJGASusSD (2024) 1(1) March 2024, Isham et al.

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Despite the beneficial nature of flow, emerging evidence is suggesting that individuals holding strong materialistic values are less able to have these experiences. Individuals with strong materialistic values hold firm beliefs concerning the importance of acquiring material goods to achieve happiness and status. It has been demonstrated that highly materialistic students in the US and India felt more alienated (separated from own experience) during their work, leisure, and personal relationships, compared to their less materialistic counterparts.

Difficulties in experiencing flow may have detrimental effects for the wellbeing of more materialistic individuals. Indeed, strong

materialistic values have been negatively linked to many facets of personal wellbeing such as self-esteem, life satisfaction and positive affect. In this research we test several hypotheses concerning the potential mediating factors in this relationship.

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## WHAT EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MARX'S THEORY OF VALUE — Michael A. Lebowitz



### What Every Child Should Know about Marx's Theory of Value

Michael A. Lebowitz

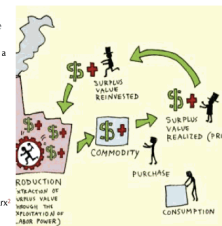
**T**he law of value works in mysterious ways. For some Marxists, it underlies everything we need to know about capitalism. But, just as Karl Marx claimed he was not a Marxist, so too might he have said, "that's not my law of value."

It is All about the Allocation of Labour

Every child knows that any nation that stopped working, not for a year, but let us say, just for a few weeks, would perish. And every child knows, too, that the amounts of products corresponding to the differing amounts of needs demand differing and quantitatively determined amounts of society's aggregate labour.

—Karl Marx<sup>1</sup>

Every child in Marx's day might have heard about Robinson Crusoe. That child might have heard that on his island Robinson had to work if he was not to perish, that he had "needs to satisfy." To this end, Robinson had to "perform useful labours of various kinds": he made means of production (tools), and he hunted and fished for immediate consumption. These were diverse functions, but all were "only different modes of human labour," his labour. From experience, he developed Robinson's Rule: "Necessity itself compels him to divide his time with precision between his different



<sup>1</sup> In his first introduction and interpretation of Capital, Michael Heinrich criticizes traditional and worldwide Marxism in An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012). Heinrich further responds the early sections of the first volume of Capital internally in Michael Heinrich, How to Read Marx's Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1975), vol. 43, 48.

TJGASusSD (2024) 1(1) February 2024/Lebowitz

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with precision between his different functions." Thus, he learned that the amount of time spent on each activity depended upon its difficulty—that is, how much labour was necessary to achieve the desired effect. Given his needs, he learned how to allocate his labour in order to survive.

As it was for Crusoe, so it is for society. Every society must allocate its aggregate labour in such a way as to obtain the amounts of products corresponding to the differing amounts of its needs. As Marx commented, "In so far as society wants to satisfy its needs, and have an article produced for this purpose, it has to pay for it.... It buys them with a certain quantity of the labour-time that it has at its disposal." It must allocate "differing and quantitatively determined" amounts of labour to the production of goods and services for direct consumption and a similarly determined quantity of labour for the production and reproduction of means of production.

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## SUSTAINABLE DEATHS — Gustavo Duch — Maritime transport is responsible for 14% of polluting gases. There is already talk of miracle proposals to make this sector sustainable.



### Sustainable deaths

Maritime transport is responsible for 14% of polluting gases. There is already talk of miracle proposals to make this sector sustainable.

Gustavo Duch

**A**mong the answers artificial intelligence (AI) gave me when I asked it about transporting live animals on ships from one continent to another, the first one was to be expected: efficiency and low costs that allow "producers to access foreign markets and expand their trade opportunities, which is considered beneficial for global economic growth". For example, more than 20,000 calves can be transported on a single ship. The second was also predictable, as this intelligence seems driven by quite precise neoliberal arguments: "Animal welfare standards must be set to ensure that animals are treated with care and respect throughout the process. This includes providing them with sufficient space, water, adequate food and veterinary care



Image of a cargo ship sailing at sea. / Photos

during the journey". But the third congratulated me on the creative capacity of these algorithms: "In addition, in some cases, animals can have access to outdoor areas on the ship, which provides a more enriching experience during the trip. Come on, like a cruise.

It was to play, to try out and get to know these totalitarian technologies to which we will have to get used to (or not), because what I wanted to get to in my research is the consideration of some examples of how maritime

TJGASusSD (2024) 1(1) December 2023/Gustavo Duch

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## "NOT GROWING BUT THRIVING": THE BEGINNING OF A PARADIGM SHIFT — Kate Raworth



### "Not growing but thriving": The Beginning of a Paradigm Shift

Kate Raworth

What if we understood the economy not as some abstract construct at once shaping society but separated from the living planet that we all call home? What if the European Union transformed itself to meet the people's needs without pushing beyond planetary boundaries? The Green European Journal sat down with Kate Raworth, the renegade thinker and author of *Doughnut Economics*, to talk prosperity beyond growth.

Green European Journal (GJ): How would you define prosperity?

Kate Raworth (KR): When Tim Jackson wrote *Prosperity Without Growth*, he pointed out that

Prosperity emerges out of every person having the means to lead a life of dignity, community, and opportunity. But what I think we can aim for collectively is to create the conditions that enable prosperity to come about. For me, that's what the doughnut aims to do.

The doughnut envisions a world in which every person has the resources to meet their essential needs and that we do that within the means of this living planet. Prosperity emerges out of every person having the means to lead a life of dignity, community, and opportunity, while we hold the integrity of this delicately balanced living planet. That, to me, is the very 21st-century vision for prosperity that we should be striving for.



Image by Ramon Gonzalez-Rodas: <https://www.pexels.com/en-es/ramon-gonzalez-rodas-nature-submarine-736143/>

prosperity means prospero or that for which we hope. Each person will have a different interpretation of what prosperity looks like in their life. But what I think we can aim for collectively is to create the conditions that enable prosperity to come about. For me, that's what the doughnut aims to do.

## MARXIAN ECOLOGY, DIALECTICS, AND THE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS— John Bellamy Foster, Dan Swain and Monika Woźniak – interviewing John Bellamy Foster



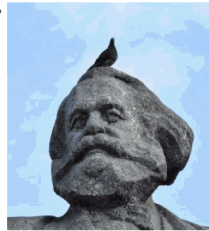
### Marxian Ecology, Dialectics, and the Hierarchy of Needs

John Bellamy Foster, Dan Swain and Monika Woźniak

Dan Swain and Monika Woźniak: More than two decades ago, you refuted popular assumptions about Karl Marx's relation to ecological issues in your book *Marx's Ecology*. In your recent book, *The Return of Nature*, you undertake a similar task in regard to the other founding figure of Marxism, Frederick Engels. Why do you see it as so important to set the record straight when it comes to the popular views of Engels?

John Bellamy Foster: In *Marx's Ecology and The Return of Nature*, I was not primarily concerned with refuting "popular assumptions" on Marx and Engels's ecology which were, of course, mainly products of a profound lack of knowledge of their thought in this area. As Baruch Spinoza said, "Ignorance is no argument." It thus hardly deserves a direct refutation. Rather, the concern was the more affirmative one of unearthing the classical historical-materialist ecological critiques developed by Marx and Engels, as well as later socialist thinkers who were influenced by them, as a methodological basis on which to develop a socialist ecology for the twenty-first century.

Marx, as we know today, was a foundational ecological thinker, not only in relation to his own time but also with respect to our own, since crucial aspects of his method have never been surpassed. This acute understanding of ecological contradictions grew out of his fundamental materialist method and was evident in his concepts of the



Karl Marx statue in Moscow (August 20, 2019). By Stanislav - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, USA

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Marx, as we know today, was a foundational ecological thinker, not only in relation to his own time but also with respect to our own, since crucial aspects of his method have never been surpassed. This acute understanding of ecological contradictions grew out of his fundamental materialist method and was evident in his concepts of the "universal metabolism of nature," the "social metabolism," and the "irreparable rift in the interdependent

process of social metabolism" (or metabolic rift). This allowed him, in a way that is unique in ecological thought down to the present, to develop a critique of the political economy of capital that focused on both the social and the environmental contradictions of the mode of production. His analysis in this respect anticipated and, in some ways, influenced the subsequent development of ecological thought. Today, the recovery of his ecological method has attained a real importance with regard to both theory and practice, giving rise to a powerful critique of the planetary crisis of the twenty-first century, underpinning the modern ecosocialist movement.

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## IF CLIMATE POLICY ISN'T SOCIAL, IT FAILS — Jason Hickel – Suzanne Kröger – interviewing Jason Hickel



### If Climate Policy Isn't Social, It Fails

Jason Hickel – Suzanne Kröger

Economic anthropologist Jason Hickel is a prominent advocate of degrowth:

the theory that, if we wish to secure our wellbeing and the health of the planet, we must abandon our capitalist obsession with economic growth. His premise is clear: if we acknowledge the seriousness of the climate crisis, we must also accept the need to radically transform our economies.



Photo by Mike Baumert on Unsplash

Suzanne Kröger (SK): The discussion on shifting the focus away from economic growth is in full swing. In the Netherlands, we now speak of "bread welfare", which measures wellbeing and not simply gross domestic product. That's a step in the right direction, isn't it?

Jason Hickel (JH): Of course. It's great that there's a shift underway in how we measure prosperity – that we're now looking at how many people have access to decent housing, or at life expectancy. Even classical economists like Joseph Stiglitz say that GDP, which is nothing more than the market value of everything produced, is a poor way to measure welfare. Former French president Sarkozy set up an entire state commission on this topic.

But we don't think this is enough. If your can't about to drive off a cliff, you can't just slow down. This approach doesn't address the underlying problem: that our energy and resource use is way above what the planet can handle. You have to take the question by the horns, and that's what degrowth is all about.

SK: In theory, we should be able to have a kind of economic development whereby GDP growth is combined with lower energy use and a more efficient use of resources. But can we really decouple growth from our planetary boundaries?

TJSCAR/af5D/8086, February 2024, Hickel - S. Kröger

Economic anthropologist Jason Hickel is a prominent advocate of degrowth: the theory that, if we wish to secure our wellbeing and the health of the planet, we must abandon our capitalist obsession with economic growth. His premise is clear: if we acknowledge the seriousness of the climate crisis, we must also accept the need to radically transform our economies. Here is the interview.

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## ENGELS AND THE SECOND FOUNDATION OF MARXISM— John Bellamy Foster



### Engels and the Second Foundation of Marxism

John Bellamy Foster

In the opening page of *The Return of Nature*, I referred to the “second foundation” of socialist thought as follows:

For socialist theory as for liberal analysis—and for Western science and culture in general—the notion of the conquest of nature and of human exemption from natural laws has for centuries been a major trope, reflecting the systematic alienation of nature. Society and nature were often treated dualistically as two entirely distinct realms, justifying the expropriation of nature, and with it the exploitation of the larger human population. However, various left thinkers, many of them within the natural sciences, constituting a kind of second foundation of critical thought, and others in the arts rebelled against this narrow conception of human progress, and in the process generated a wider dialectic of ecology and a deeper materialism that questioned the environmental as well as social deprivations of capitalist society.<sup>1</sup>



Engels takes charge of the building of barricades in Eberfeld, Germany, 1849. Drawing by V. Schlegel, 1967. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Museum, Moscow.

The origins and development of this second foundation of critical thought in materialist philosophy and the natural sciences and how this affected the development of socialism and ecology constituted the central story told in *The Return of Nature*. The initial challenge confronting such an analysis was to explain how historical materialism, in the dominant twentieth-century conception in the West, had come to be understood as strictly confined to the social sciences and humanities, where it was divorced from any genuine materialist dialectic, since cut off from natural science and the natural-physical world as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> John Bellamy Foster, *The Return of Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), 7, emphasis added. Reference to the “second foundation of Marxist ecological thought” was first introduced twenty years earlier in *Marx’s Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 250.

TSCK/Issue/SD 6163/ October 2023/John Bellamy Foster

Explorations of the dialectics of nature by Frederick Engels along with Marxian contributions to natural science were commonly treated in the Western Marxist philosophical tradition as if they simply did not exist. The natural-physical world was seen within the dominant view of Marxism in the West as outside the domain of historical materialism. The realm of biophysical existence was thus ceded to a natural science that was viewed as inherently positivist in orientation. This was so much the case that, with the rise of the environmental movement in the 1960s, it never occurred to those on the left who wrongly charged that Marxism had contributed little or nothing to the development of ecological analysis, to look beyond the social sciences to socialist contributions in the natural sciences, out of which today’s systems ecology arose. The irony was that not only had socialism engaged with the natural environment, but it had, in fact, from the very beginning played a pivotal role in the development of a critical ecology within science and materialist philosophy.

To be sure, the classical Marxism of Karl Marx and Engels in the mid-nineteenth century had its origin in the critique of social science. As Engels wrote, “classical political economy” was “the social science of the bourgeoisie” and, as such, the enemy of socialism.<sup>3</sup> Marx’s critique of classical political economy was aimed at uncovering the “hidden abode” of class-based exploitation and expropriation on which the capitalist mode of production was based. It was this critique, therefore, that constituted the initial foundation of Marxism. But from the first, the materialist conception of history in critical social science was inextricably tied to the

materialist conception of nature in natural science. No coherent critique of political economy was possible without exploring the actual biophysical conditions of production associated with what Marx called the “universal metabolism of nature.”

Human beings themselves were seen by Marx as corporeal beings, and thus objective beings, with their objects outside of themselves. There was, then, in the end, only a “single science” looked at “from two sides,” those of natural history and human history. It was necessary, therefore, to go beyond philosophy and social science to engage in the critique of bourgeois natural science as well. Indeed, as a theoretical method, the philosophy of praxis could not be confined to the realm of social sciences and humanities, that is, it could not be divorced from natural science, without undermining its overall critique.

The fact that natural science and social science, nature and society, are bound inextricably together in any attempt to confront the current mode of production and its consequences is dramatically demonstrated to us today by the current Anthropocene Epoch of geological history, in which capitalism is generating an “anthropogenic rift” in the biogeochemical cycles of the Earth System, endangering humanity along with innumerable other species. In these circumstances, the role of Marxian ecology in understanding our current environmental predicament is of crucial importance. It is here that the second foundation of Marxian theory within materialist philosophy and natural science proves to be indispensable to the development of a revolutionary praxis.

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### THE COMMUNITARIAN REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECT AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF SYSTEM CHANGE — David Barkin – Brian M. Napoletano

The latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) indicate a subtle but significant shift among many of the world’s scientists. At the same time as the environmental and biotic crises have grown more pronounced and dangerous, governments, corporations, and related sectors have grown increasingly intransigent. Fortunately, both the IPCC and IPBES have gone beyond calling for economic and market reforms. The IPBES stresses the importance of “a fundamental, system-wide reorganisation across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values.” The IPCC highlights that “the move towards climate-resilient societies requires transformational or deep systemic change.”



### The Communitarian Revolutionary Subject and the Possibilities of System Change

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Illustration of the Paris Commune adapted from the century edition of Casell’s History of England, (ca. 1900)

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<sup>1</sup> IPBES, “Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” (Bonn: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019), 14; IPCC, “Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change” (Geneva: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022), 75-131. On state attempts to curtail the scientific consensus on the IPCC report, see Editors, “Notes from the Editors on Time is Running Out” – The Jus Semper Global Alliance, June 2022.

TSCK/Issue/SD 6164/ January 2024/ David Barkin, Brian M. Napoletano

These statements do not mean that the majority of scientists have begun to openly advocate revolutionary politics or even a substantial break with the capitalist system. The “transformative change” proposed in the scientific reports is ambiguous and coupled with strategies that presuppose the existing institutional framework in which the state operates over and against civil society. Nonetheless, the shift in attitude here is significant inasmuch as it is symptomatic of a growing recognition of the need for an alternative to capital’s alienated, totalising, and structurally uncontrollable mode of alienated domination over the material and energy—that is, metabolic—flows associated with the mutually constitutive processes of social reproduction.

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### UNEQUAL VALUE TRANSFER FROM MEXICO TO THE UNITED STATES — Mateo Crossa

Utilising a Marxist perspective and the concept of unequal exchange, I describe here the enormous drain of wealth that Mexico has experienced as a manufacturing supplier to the U.S. market. Unlike the analyses that understand Mexico as a backward economy, low on the scale of production compared to the United States, my argument is based in the value-labor time perspective and demonstrates that the meagre wages of the working class in Mexico do not correspond to productive backwardness, but to a vast value creation that is drained away systematically through unequal exchange mechanisms occurring in trade. The



## A NEW GEOPOLITICS FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE — *Simon Dalby*

The Anthropocene requires a fundamental rethink of humanity's place in the Earth system. In the process, the traditional assumptions of geopolitics, with their premises of separate spaces and peoples in rivalry over scarce land, are superseded by a focus on producing flourishing ecologies as new peaceful habitats for humanity.

Geopolitics is a term with troubling historical connotations. Some of the most pernicious thinking of "classical geopolitics" suggested that environmental circumstances determine the character and conduct of states and their inhabitants, a series of arguments that were often used to justify European imperialism. A particularly dangerous strand of this thinking was the concept of "Lebensraum", which strongly influenced Hitler's policies after he attained power in 1933. According to this theory, the need for food production and access to other resources required states (Völker) to expand. If states fail to grow, they must inevitably be taken over by other more powerful ones. The racist and implicitly violent militaristic assumptions of this Geopolitik were rightly condemned after the collapse of the Third Reich.



## A New Geopolitics for the Anthropocene

Simon Dalby

The Anthropocene requires a fundamental rethink of humanity's place in the Earth system. In the process, the traditional assumptions of geopolitics, with their premises of separate spaces and peoples in rivalry over scarce land, are superseded by a focus on producing flourishing ecologies as new peaceful habitats for humanity.

Geopolitics is a term with troubling historical connotations. Some of the most pernicious thinking of "classical geopolitics" suggested that environmental circumstances determine the character and conduct of states and their inhabitants, a series of arguments that were often used to justify European imperialism. A particularly dangerous strand of this thinking was the concept of "Lebensraum", which strongly influenced Hitler's policies after he attained power in 1933. According to this theory, the need for food production and access to other resources required states (Völker) to expand. If states fail to grow, they must inevitably be taken over by other more powerful ones. The racist and implicitly violent militaristic assumptions of this Geopolitik were rightly condemned after the collapse of the Third Reich.



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Much of the success of the European Union can be seen as a direct repudiation of the premises of Geopolitik. However, partly as a result of the climate difficulties caused by this fossil-fuel-powered progress, we are now living in an increasingly disrupted world in which the term "geopolitics" is once again being used to refer to the rivalry of great powers. While some of this usage is related to xenophobic nationalism and suggestions of separate homelands for national populations, the geography in all this is also cut across by economic trade relationships

and military alliances. This complicates the picture. For we are now being forced to address some of the old questions about resources, environment, and conflict, but in a very different way from the classical geopolitical mode of thinking.

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## MARXIAN ECOLOGY, EAST AND WEST: JOSEPH NEEDHAM AND A NON-EUROCENTRIC VIEW OF THE ORIGINS OF CHINA'S ECOLOGICAL CIVILISATION — *John Bellamy Foster*



Marxian Ecology, East and West: Joseph Needham and a Non-Eurocentric View of the Origins of China's Ecological Civilisation

John Bellamy Foster

Ecological materialism, of which ecological Marxism is the most developed version, is often seen as having its origins exclusively within Western thought. But if that is so, how do we explain the fact that ecological Marxism has been embraced as readily (or indeed, more readily) in the East as in the West, leaping over cultural, historical, and linguistic barriers and leading to the current concept of ecological civilisation in China? The answer is that there is a much more complex dialectical relation between East and West with respect to materialist dialectics and critical ecology than has been generally supposed, one that stretches back over millennia.

Materialist and dialectical conceptions of nature and history do not start with Karl Marx. The roots of "organic naturalism" and "scientific humanism" according to the great British Marxist scientist and Sinoologist Joseph Needham (李约瑟), author of *Science and Civilization in China*, can be traced to the sixth to third centuries BCE both in ancient Greece, beginning with the pre-Socratics and extending to the Hellenistic philosophers, and in ancient China, with the emergence of Daoist and Confucian philosophers during the Warring States Period of the Zhou Dynasty.<sup>1</sup> As Samir Amin indicated in his Eurocentrism, the "philosophy of nature" (as opposed to



Portrait of Joseph Needham, adapted from a painting by James Wood, Cambridge and Essex College, University of Cambridge.

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Joseph Needham, *Within the Four Seas: The Dialogue of East and West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 27, 87; Arun Rala, "Chinese Organic Materialism and Modern Science Studies: Rethinking Joseph Needham's Legacy," *Culture of Science* 3, no. 1 (2020): 62–82.

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In *Within the Four Seas: The Dialogue of East and West* in 1969, Needham noted the absolute alacrity with which "dialectical materialism" was taken up in China during the Chinese Revolution and how this was treated as a great mystery in the West. Nevertheless, the sense of mystery, he contended, did not extend in the same way to the East itself. He wrote: "I can almost imagine Chinese scholars," confronted with Marxian materialist dialectics, "saying to

themselves 'How astonishing: this is very like our own philosophia perennis integrated with modern science at last come home to us.'" The Marxian materialist dialectic, with its deep-seated ecological critique rooted in ancient Epicurean materialism, was in Needham's view, so closely akin to Chinese Daoist and Confucian philosophies as to create a strong acceptance of Marxian philosophical views in China, particularly since China's own perennial philosophy was in this roundabout way integrated with modern science. If Daoism was a naturalist philosophy, Confucianism was associated, Needham wrote, with "a passion for social justice."

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## THE DOUBLE OBJECTIVE OF DEMOCRATIC ECOSOCIALISM — *Jason Hickel*



The Double Objective of Democratic Ecosocialism

Jason Hickel

We face a double crisis as the twenty-first century unfolds. On the one hand, it is an ecological crisis: climate change and several other Earth System pressures are exceeding planetary boundaries to a dangerous extent. On the other hand, it is also a social crisis: several billion people are deprived of access to basic goods and services. More than 40 percent of the

human population cannot afford nutritious food; 50 percent do not have safely managed sanitation facilities; 70 percent do not have necessary health care.

Deprivation is most extreme in the periphery, where imperialist dynamics of structural adjustment and unequal exchange continue to perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment. But it is evident also in the core: in the United States, nearly half the population cannot afford health care; in the United Kingdom, 4.3 million children live in poverty; in the European Union, 90 million people face economic insecurity. These patterns of deprivation are shot through with brutal inequalities of race and gender.



Simon Clarke/Contrast awaiting departure towards Gare d'Orléans, at its terminus in Châteauneuf. Open work, CC-BY-SA, ILL, ILL.

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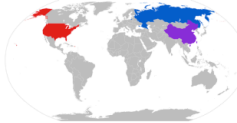
forming what is sometimes referred to as a “giant noose” (Robert Daly, “China and the U.S.: It’s a Cold War, But Don’t Panic,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, March 10, 2022; Arthur R. Ramsey, “Anthropologist Warns of Growth in U.S. Bases,” *Investigative Reporting Workshop*, September 8, 2020; John Bellamy Foster, “The New Cold War on China,” *Monthly Review*, July–August 2021; Kari Quinn, “The Coming War on China: Pilger Says US Is Threat in the Pacific, Not China,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 9, 2017).



## The U.S. is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia but also on China

The Editors of Monthly Review

There is no longer any question that the United States is waging a New Cold War, not simply on Russia (via NATO's proxy war in Ukraine), but also on China, which Washington has now defined as its number one security threat. Thus, the United States is taking an increasingly aggressive military position with respect to Taiwan, which under the internationally recognised One China principle is an inalienable part of China, but with a separate government. Along with this, Washington is building up its military alliances and forces in the Indo-Pacific and bolstering its four hundred military bases currently surrounding China, forming what is sometimes referred to as a “giant noose” (Robert Daly, “China and the U.S.: It’s a Cold War, But Don’t Panic,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, March 10, 2022; Arthur R. Ramsey, “Anthropologist Warns of Growth in U.S. Bases,” *Investigative Reporting Workshop*, September 8, 2020; John Bellamy Foster, “The New Cold War on China,” *Monthly Review*, July–August 2021; Kari Quinn, “The Coming War on China: Pilger Says US Is Threat in the Pacific, Not China,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 9, 2017).



A locator map for three major powers of the Second Cold War: America, Russia, and China.

To be sure, in its official diplomatic posture, the United States, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared a year ago, is “not looking for conflict or a new Cold War” with China. Instead, Washington claims that its sole strategic goal with respect to People’s Republic of China is to defend the existing “rules-based international order,” which Beijing is accused of seeking to undermine. However, what the Biden administration’s rules-based international order refers to is not the United Nations system, or even international law, but rather the system of economic, political, and military institutions (the IMF and World Bank, various international trade agreements shaped by Washington including the World Trade Organization itself, the dollar-based foreign exchange system, and the network of U.S. military bases and alliances stretching across the globe) that define the U.S. imperial system. These structures originated after the Second World War and were given a further boost in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and with the onset of the U.S. dominated unipolar world order. Today China is accused by Blinken of having “the intent to reshape the [U.S. dominated] international order,” while the United States is determined to defend the U.S. imperial order from China at virtually any cost to humanity, raising the threat of global nuclear holocaust (Antony J. Blinken, “The Administration’s Approach to the People’s

Republic of China,” speech at George Washington University, May 26, 2022).

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**POST-SECOND WORLD WAR SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO POPE FRANCIS’S CRITICISM OF NATO** — **Toby Terrar** — *A Christian social analysis that continues to be held by those like Pope Francis, who in May 2022 criticised NATO as “barking at Russia’s door.”*



## Post-Second World War Social Christianity and Its Relevance to Pope Francis’s Criticism of NATO

*A Christian social analysis that continues to be held by those like Pope Francis, who in May 2022 criticised NATO as “barking at Russia’s door.”*

Toby Terrar

Published last year, “I Was a Red Priest”, by Father Jean Boulrier offers through its protagonist a Christian social analysis that, though now minimised, was widely held in the post-Second World War era and continues to be held by those like Pope Francis, who in May 2022 criticised NATO as “barking at Russia’s door.” The book is the autobiography of Boulrier (1894–1980), which for the first time has been translated from French into English, complete with newly added scholarly appendices, indexes, graphics, and a bibliography, so that it is also a reference work.

Boulrier was professor of Christian Legal Principles at the Catholic University of Paris. Over his long life, he published multiple scholarly

*For social Christianity in the post-Second World War era, the main international peace issue that faced believers was the U.S.-led Cold War, waged in order to undo advances made by the working class as a result of capitalism’s Second World War debacle.*

works, his autobiography being one of them. I Was a Red Priest is not



Alber Jean Boulrier at the 7th party conference of the CPUSA held in the Westmonte in Winter (September 22nd, 1950). By Ron Kerkow; 2012. 15-30715-0007 / Wikimedia / CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC-BY-SA 3.0, IMA, IMA

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For social Christianity in the post-Second World War era—as taught by Boulrier—the main international peace issue that faced believers was the U.S.-led Cold War, waged in order to undo advances made by the working class as a result of capitalism’s Second World War debacle. More specifically, the priest-professor took a stand, based on Christian authority, against anti-communism. He also stood firmly against U.S. nuclear policy, as it violated the Christian principles of war and peace. Finally, he took a stand on the side of social Christianity. Regarding social Christianity, he maintained that Christians can be good citizens of the socialist order, but could not accept the bourgeois state and its fundamental law, the

one to which all others finally give in: make money, get rich.

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**"IF WE CAN PREVENT THE GENOCIDE OF BILLIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS, I WOULD BE HAPPY" — Jorge Riechmann and Gorka Castillo**

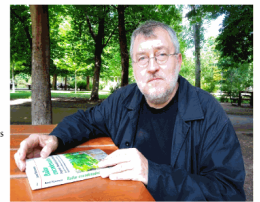


## "If we can prevent the genocide of billions of human beings, I would be happy"

An interview...

Jorge Riechmann and Gorka Castillo

Philosopher, poet, ecologist, translator and one of the most respected voices in ecosocialism, Jorge Riechmann (Madrid, 1962), has just published his latest book, *Bailar encadenados. Pequeña filosofía de la libertad* (Ed. Icaria), an essay in which he once again sticks his finger in the eye of power with a lucid analysis of the value most scorched by impatient neoliberalism. “Freedom does not include the right to harm”, he states. Overwhelmed by the ecosocial crisis in which humanity is involved, Riechmann examines the facets that make up the false reality created by digital technologies, paying special attention to the enormous influence they exert on the acceleration capitalism is undergoing in a context of extreme limitations. As a patriot of biodiversity, he concludes with a bittersweet certainty: “We will not be able to avoid ecological-social collapse if we continue to protect this economic system”. The author of more than a hundred books in which he reconciles his philosophical concerns and his pleasure in poetry, Riechmann insists that what is at stake today is, quite simply, the survival of the human species. That is why his commitment to environmentalism is indelible. He is one of 15 activists



Jorge Riechmann with his new book during the interview. / G.C.

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fragility, they tend to perceive any kind of social protest as problematic," he says.

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## A HANDBOOK AGAINST CLIMATE DENIALISM IN THE AXIAL DECADE — Juan Borda / Fernando Valladares / Antonio Turiel



### A handbook against climate denialism in the axial decade

Three arguments are often given for the claim that global warming is due to natural causes: orbital or Milanković cycles, solar cycles and volcanoes. All three have been refuted.

Juan Borda / Fernando Valladares / Antonio Turiel

Crops fail in half of Spain and many other places amidst everlasting droughts and catastrophic floods that sweep the world. Extreme events are becoming more and more virulent, causing expressions such as sixth-generation fires, level four hailstorms or medicanes (hurricanes in the Mediterranean) to become normal in places where they were not usual. The oceans are burning at temperatures beyond all logic, astonishing the scientific community.



What do India, Turkey, the UK, or Spain have in common? They coexist in that space between a sea boiling with accumulated heat and a sky overloaded with progress. And the energy retained for decades in the oceans is not being lost, it is being transformed. In the meantime, a coterie of know-it-alls and scholars keeps trying to deny the undeniable, to negotiate with the non-negotiable. To become Kafkaesque confirmation biases with little legs.

Until this historic July, the hottest day ever recorded was in 2016, with an average temperature of 16.92°C across the globe. That figure was surpassed on Monday, 3 July (17.01°C), but it was the shortest possible record because it

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## SETTLER COLONIALISM IN PALESTINE — The Editors of Monthly Review — Direct expropriation of the land and promotion of outright extermination

The genocide being inflicted by the Israeli state on the Palestinian people has now (as we write

31/03/24

this in late November 2023) reached a particularly lethal stage, giving rise to a second and perhaps final Nakba, akin to the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their land in 1948. Under these circumstances, it is crucial to turn to the concept of settler colonialism as it emerged over the last century and a half from the Marxian critique of colonialism/imperialism.



### Settler Colonialism in Palestine

Direct expropriation of the land and promotion of outright extermination

The Editors of Monthly Review

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In his chapter on "The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist" in the first volume of Capital, Karl Marx placed special emphasis on the notion of colonialism proper—that is, settler colonialism (from the Latin colonus, meaning settler). In his words, "The treatment of the indigenous population [of the Americas] was... most faithful in plantation colonies set up exclusively for the export trade... But even in the colonies properly so called," by which he meant settler colonies, "the Christian character of primitive accumulation," as he sarcastically remarked, "was not [to be] belied." As a scholar of Ancient Greece, Marx was familiar with the history of the Athenian settler colonies, or cleruchies, in which the entire population was forcibly removed to make way for settlers. Settler colonies, whether ancient or modern, directly expropriate the land and, in the process, promote the outright extermination.

Settler colonies, whether ancient or modern, directly expropriate the land and, in the process, promote the outright extermination. Referring to "those sober exponents of Protestantism, the Puritans of New



Israeli military personnel and settlers in Ramat, Palestine. Author: (BM Palestine, CC BY-SA 4.0) [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BM\\_Palestine.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BM_Palestine.jpg)

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Israeli apartheid in occupied Palestine, following the 1948 Nakba, was a product of conditions resembling those experienced by British and French settler colonialists in Africa, given the size of the Palestinian population relative to that of the incoming settlers. Nevertheless, apartheid in the occupied territories was always regarded as a stopgap, while the long-term objective of Zionist settler colonialism has remained the elimination of the Palestinians. Indeed, what mainly caused settler colonialism to re-emerge as a major historical and theoretical concept was its growing presence in Israeli-occupied Palestine in the twentieth century. The settler colonial project arose historically out of the reaction ("Zionism") of many Eastern European Jews to a renewed virulent antisemitism in late nineteenth-century modernity, which August Bebel famously referred to as the "socialism of fools." This reaction was then manipulated by the British as part of their long-term policy in the region, beginning with the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Washington is the one entity, outside Israel itself, that has the power to stop the genocide immediately, as required by international law. However, rather than protesting like most of the world, it is providing arms for genocide, backed by both major political parties. This marks a turning point, not just for Israel or Palestine, but for the world as a whole (Emile Badarin, "Israel-Palestine War: This is Not about Hamas. It's a 75-Year Colonial War," Middle East Eye, November 17, 2023, [middleeasteye.net](https://middleeasteye.net); Andre Damon, "The Forced Evacuation of Southern

Gaza: The Next Stage in the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," Defend Democracy Press, November 18, 2023, [defenddemocracy.press](https://defenddemocracy.press)).

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## THE PRESSING PRIORITY OF SAVING THE AMAZONIA — David Roca Basadre — The world's most biodiverse region is threatened by deforestation levels close to the point of no return. Despite this, the countries involved failed to reach agreements at the last summit in Brazil in August



### The pressing priority of saving the Amazonia

The world's most biodiverse region is threatened by deforestation levels close to the point of no return. Despite this, the countries involved failed to reach agreements at the last summit in Brazil in August

David Roca Basadre

The Amazonia covers just 0.5% of the planet's surface but contains 10% of its biodiversity, making it the world's most biodiverse habitat, yet little more than a tenth of its biodiversity is known. It also contains 20% of the planet's freshwater. The transpiration of the forest also generates so-called "flying rivers", which are large quantities of water vapour transported from the surface of the Amazonia rainforest to other regions, where it condenses and precipitates; these "rivers" of water vapour play a crucial role in the water cycle and the global climate. Conservation of the Amazonia is thus fundamental to the balance of global ecosystems, and life would be different if the Amazonia were to disappear.



Image of an illegal deforestation strip in the Amazonia rainforest. (Vincenzo Montagna / Reuters)

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And yet, the levels of degradation/deforestation are on the verge of reaching the point of no return, of irreparable savannisation, estimated at 20% of the territory. If the Amazonia is lost, the region could emit enough carbon dioxide to render useless all the international efforts invested in keeping the planet below the 1.5°C temperature increase that the scientific community considers still manageable.

But the balance of losses is alarming. Between 1985 and 2021, the Amazonia lost 75 million hectares (1/4th of forest, according to the Red Amazonica de Información Socioambiental Georreferenciada (RAISG) for its acronym in Spanish).

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## THE NEW COLD WAR WASHINGTON CONSENSUS – *The Editors of Monthly Review*



### The New Cold War Washington Consensus

The Editors of Monthly Review

On April 27, 2023, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan gave a speech on “Renewing American Economic Leadership” at the Brookings Institution. Sullivan’s talk was unusual and attracted widespread attention for at least three reasons. First, what was being announced was a fundamental shift away from the previous “Washington Consensus” associated with neoliberal globalisation and its replacement by what Sullivan called a “New Washington Consensus” organised around the de facto U.S. New Cold War against China. The purported China threat was used to justify economic sanctions against rival states, and government supply-side subsidies to corporations in a militarised industrial policy. Second, such a major departure in overall U.S. economic policy was issued not by the president or by a top economic official, but by the U.S. National Security Adviser, evidence of the primacy of New Cold War thinking. Third, to justify Washington’s new stance, Photo by Vishwas Katti in Unsplash (trimmed). Sullivan laid out a number of “challenges” or crises facing the United States, including economic stagnation, deindustrialization, climate change, growing inequality, and waning U.S. hegemony (Jake Sullivan, “Remarks by National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Renewing American Economic Leadership at the Brookings Institution,” April 27, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>).

Key to the Sullivan doctrine is the notion that there has been a “hollowing out” of the U.S. “industrial base” as a result of neoliberal globalisation and U.S. “overdependence” on the global economy. This has made the United States more

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In presenting the New Cold War strategy, Sullivan insists that all of this is simply necessary to compete effectively with China, both economically and strategically, and that “we are not looking for confrontation or conflict.” However, such declarations of benign intent are contradicted by the sheer

aggressiveness of Washington with respect to Taiwan. The Biden administration has repeatedly sent military vessels and aircraft through the Taiwan Strait, which the People’s Republic of China under the One China policy—agreed to by the United States along with 180 other countries—recognises as its territory, although the island is under an autonomous government. Sullivan’s National Security Council is a nest of China hawks, most of whom have written books and articles on confronting Beijing and all of whom speak of bellicose competition with, if not all-out warfare on, China (Sullivan, “Remarks”; “Provocative Manoeuvres and Close Encounters,” Committee for a Sane U.S.-China Policy, accessed July 11, 2023, [www.saneuschinapolicy.org/](http://www.saneuschinapolicy.org/); Alex Thompson, Phelim Kine, and Max Tani, “Jake’s Nest of China Hawks,” Politico, April 13, 2022).

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**THE END OF SEASONS? — Juan Borda and Antonio Turiel** — Extreme temperatures and events such as Hurricane Daniel tell us we are approaching a point of no return. There is a good chance that in 2023, we will exceed the 1.5°C limit [and we have exceeded it].



### The end of seasons?

Extreme temperatures and events such as Hurricane Daniel tell us we are approaching a point of no return. There is a good chance that in 2023, we will exceed the 1.5°C limit [and we have exceeded it].

Juan Borda – Antonio Turiel

He who by chance stops the world will be its saviour – Émile Zola

We take such pride in our enormous technical advances that we have formed a kind of dogma: technology will always come to the rescue of progress. But we hardly want to face an increasingly evident feeling. This locomotive of history we are travelling in is more like a bullet train, and it is going so fast that there are hardly any stations left for nature and all of us on it to stop at. We are already feeling it: in our sweaty skin, in the tropical sleepless nights that go on forever, in the crop failures that drive up the cost of living, in the fires, floods, hurricanes and hailstorms that are getting stronger and more frequent. And this is only the beginning. We have stepped so far on the gas that the atmosphere is becoming unbearable, and the four seasons are already looking like two. The bullet train is taking on an increasingly perverse double meaning.

More wood. More coal. More oil. More minerals, even if there are not enough to go around. More and faster. More progress and, of course, more growth. Always. To infinity. Consequently, anomalies and extreme phenomena are also increasing. And now September is already another month of summer. And October is on its way to becoming one, too.

TSCA/CommentarySD (2023) March 2024, Borda A, Turiel



The streets of Latisia, Greece, completely flooded after the passage of storm Daniel. / Wikirekha Corneiro

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**WHY STRIKE ACTION IS CLIMATE ACTION — Simon Mair** — Striking pushes against the core capitalist dynamics also responsible for global warming, CUSP researcher Simon Mair writes. Reducing fossil fuel use will not happen without a major shift in the centres of power. Strike action is one way to build towards these shifts, and in this way can be a precursor to stronger climate action.



### Why strike action is climate action

Striking pushes against the core capitalist dynamics also responsible for global warming, CUSP researcher Simon Mair writes. Reducing fossil fuel use will not happen without a major shift in the centres of power. Strike action is one way to build towards these shifts, and in this way can be a precursor to stronger climate action.

Simon Mair

Taking strike action is difficult. Some difficulties are obvious: sacrificing my pay as a lecturer creates immediate financial difficulties. Other difficulties are more hidden, like the pervasive anxiety of a strike day as emails roll in. Strike-breaking colleagues remind me about pressing deadlines and students ask about class, marks, supervisors. I feel guilty for letting them down. Again, there is the threat of financial instability: will I be punished for papers I haven’t written, the student work I haven’t marked, the grants I haven’t submitted?

This is all compounded by the sense that when I stop working I stop contributing in some small way to action on environmental issues which, for me, is the point of my academic career. *Strike research* aims to support efforts to build a different, more sustainable, economic system. Through *teaching* I aim to help my students build the critical capacities and technical skills they need to support an ecological transition.

Not doing the work can leave me feeling that I’m letting down activists and others on the coalface of climate action in order to support narrower concerns around wages, working conditions and pensions. As Extinction Rebellion founder Roger Hallam *recently tweeted*: “Why are lecturers not going on strike to stop their outrageous flying to conferences rather than protecting their pensions?”

TSCA/CommentarySD (2024) March 2024/Simon Mair



Image: Norwich NEU UCU PCS PDS IMET ABLEF strike protest march in Norwich, Feb 2023. Courtesy of Roger Dooland / North.com (CC-BY-NC 2.0)

Participating in strike action is a demand for a democratisation of production and an assertion of the idea that something more than money matters. When we strike, we use our leverage as the people delivering the actual products in order to force our employers to consider things that they prefer to ignore. On the picket line I am asserting that I am more than a cost of production, and more than a generator of income.

Strike action alone is not enough. I do not believe that standing on a picket line can replace tearing down the fossil fuel industry. But strike action does constitute a push against core capitalist dynamics. Tearing down the fossil fuel industry will not happen without a major shift in the centres of power in capitalist economies. Strike action is one way to build towards these shifts, and in this way can be a precursor to stronger climate action.

To build on this potential requires more overlap between environmental and labour movements. There are existing links: Extinction Rebellion have a Trade Unionist Chapter, and my own union, UCU, is campaigning on environmental issues. But on the picket lines there is still space to have more conversations.

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## THE DISINFORMATION WARS: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL INTERROGATION — Helena Sheehan



### The Disinformation Wars: An Epistemological, Political, and Socio-Historical Interrogation

Helena Sheehan

What really is going on in the current mobilisation against disinformation? Whose interests are being served by it? Could it be that those forces portraying themselves as bulwarks against disinformation are actually the most insidious purveyors of disinformation? Does the focus on disinformation conceal the real deceit?

The current wave of interest in disinformation is predicated on a perceived decline in truthfulness.

*I do think that public discourse is full of deceit and self-deception and that there has been a definite rise in this.*

even blatant deception, in public discourse—sometimes called post-truth society. Disinformation studies has emerged in academe as a subdiscipline offering big research funding and fast-track career progression.<sup>1</sup> There are many powerful players pushing this agenda.<sup>2</sup>

I do think that public discourse is full of deceit and self-deception and that there has been a definite rise in this. But the dominant discourse surrounding disinformation and disinformation studies is oblivious to the historical presence of this deception as well as the present pervasiveness of it. Such studies typically focus on social media rather than mainstream media as the source of the problem, but I want to focus on mainstream media as a source.



Image by Frenger Cut on Unsplash

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> There is a proliferation of literature in disinformation studies in recent years. A book articulating the typical themes and arguments is Eileen Culley and Jane Sallis, *Disinformation and Manipulation in Digital Media: Information Pathologies* (London: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> & <sup>4</sup> In 'Bad News: Selling the Story of Disinformation', Joseph Bernstein outlines the corporate, academic and governmental forces driving the 'Big Disinfo' agenda. Joseph Bernstein, 'Bad News: Selling the Story of Disinformation', *Foreign Magazine*, September 2021.

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## PALESTINE, OH, PALESTINE!— PAUL BUHLE



### Palestine, Oh, Palestine!

Paul Buhle

News updates from the Middle East seem to widen the tragedies of Palestinians on the West Bank—and not only on the West Bank—almost daily. The crisis in Gaza has only dramatised the ongoing tragedy, and underlines how badly a leading faction in the Israeli government would like to deport or otherwise dispose of Palestinians, and perhaps how eager U.S. leaders would be to facilitate some mass deportation under the guise of “humanitarian relocation.”

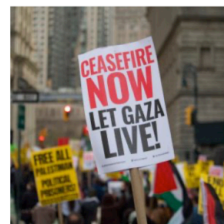
Monthly Review readers least of all need reminders of

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how the current government of Israel is completing the historic vision of the “revisionists”: to annex the West Bank in one way or another. The otherwise impressive protests in the streets of Israel—hardly related to the occupation at all—seem unlikely to halt the momentum. Still, scholarly history can tell much that is worthwhile. History, experienced personally and deeply, can tell still more. Linda Dittmar's new book, *Tracing Homelands*, is a brilliantly written, tragic pondering of the Palestinian fate, page by page, but also looks hard at the assumptions that made even the best-intended Zionists avid, if sometimes unknowing, partners in the large scheme of dispossession.

Dittmar is herself unique. She is by no means the only erstwhile so-called pioneer of the Jewish state to reconsider the assumptions she had made since childhood, but she is surely among the most careful observers of the details. Born in 1938 during her parents' brief pause from living in pre-statehood Israel as a part of a multigenerational Zionist project,

TJCSACommentary/01 (01/01) January 2024/Paul Buhle



Courtesy: Free Palestine protest in Foley Square, Wall Street, New York City, New York (December 9, 2023).

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Monthly Review readers least of all need reminders of how the current government of Israel is completing the historic vision of the “revisionists”: to annex the West Bank in one way or another. The otherwise impressive protests in the streets of Israel—hardly related to the occupation at all—seem unlikely to halt the momentum. Still, scholarly history can tell much that is worthwhile. History, experienced personally and deeply, can tell still more. Linda Dittmar's new book, *Tracing Homelands*, is a brilliantly written, tragic pondering of the Palestinian fate, page by page, but also looks hard at the assumptions that made even the

best-intended Zionists avid, if sometimes unknowing, partners in the large scheme of dispossession.

The destruction is often incomplete, however. Traces can still be found of an older life. Educators from many parts of the world lead tours—though only to permitted places as long as they are allowed by the Israeli government—of former Palestinian sites and seek to explain their significance to visitors.

All of this offers hope. In the evidence of a life that has been eradicated, signs “keep appearing, unbidden, all of them clues. Beyond what they say are the who, where and why of the telling. They are all runes, markings in languages we have yet to learn if we are ever to listen, hear, and come together” (233). History may yet hold hope when hope is otherwise lacking when we reject the stalemate that only leads to despair.

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## ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORKS FOR EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA: PRAGMATISM VERSUS TRANSFORMATION — Simon Mair, Angela Druckman



### Assessing the suitability of sustainability frameworks for embedding sustainability in higher education curricula: pragmatism versus transformation

Simon Mair, Angela Druckman

Abstract

This viewpoint paper addresses the use of sustainability frameworks in embedding education for sustainability into the curriculum of higher education institutions (HEIs). The purpose of this paper is to explore the paradox that sustainability frameworks must facilitate transformation of existing structures whilst also being well-enough aligned with current conditions to be readily adopted by today's HEIs.

*Design/methodology/approach*

This paper proposes a set of four criteria for assessing the suitability of sustainability frameworks for use across the curriculum: relevance to current curricula, language, institutional fit and concept of the future. Using these criteria, this paper assesses how various frameworks align with the current (unsustainable) state of affairs and their transformative potential. The frameworks assessed are: the sustainable development goals (SDGs), the three pillars framework and the capitals approach.

*Findings*

This paper finds that each of the frameworks has strengths and weaknesses: the SDGs and the capitals approach perform well on alignment but less well on transformational criteria. Conversely, the three pillars framework performs well on transformation criteria but less well on alignment criteria. By applying the criteria set out in this paper, the authors hope

TJCSAEssay/01 (01/01) October 2023/5: Mair - A. Druckman



Image © Naveen Kishan/Corbis.com

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## EL NIÑO AND ITS (FLAMING) SEA IN THE ERA OF THE GREAT ACCELERATION

— **Juan Bordera** — *We are breaking records with an increasingly unnatural naturalness: 40°C in Siberia, historic fires and the slowing of ocean currents essential for sustaining marine life.*



### El Niño and its (flaming) sea in the era of the Great Acceleration

*We are breaking records with an increasingly unnatural naturalness: 40°C in Siberia, historic fires and the slowing of ocean currents essential for sustaining marine life.*

Juan Bordera

There are moments in a person's life or the world itself when it seems like time speeds up. In just ten days, changes take place, lasting for decades or even centuries. On those days, one feels there is more to tell, yet time is not enough. Not even to understand what is happening. Even less to describe it. Marguerite Duras said that to write is to try to know what we would write if we wrote. So, let's at least try.



An image of the Perito Moreno glacier in Argentina. / Christa Berger

I could write about the robust thermal equilibrium provided by the oceans, those life-filled wonders that store more than 90% of excess heat, and I would have to tell how that equilibrium, that ancient robustness, is vanishing before our eyes at an incredible speed. Ocean surface temperature records are being shattered in a way that reason cannot comprehend. The values in the North Atlantic look like an impossibility, a mistake. But there is no error in the graph. The error, as we shall see, lies elsewhere.

TJSGACommentarySD-0308 December 2023/31, Bordera

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## SUSTAINABILITY: A CATALOGUE OF IDEAS RECEIVED — **Cristina Goberna Pesudo**

*The term is often used as a collective conscience-cleansing tool for the coming climate catastrophe. Perhaps an exercise in deconstructing the most common clichés would be necessary.*



### Sustainability: a catalogue of ideas received

*The term is often used as a collective conscience-cleansing tool for the coming climate catastrophe. Perhaps an exercise in deconstructing the most common clichés would be necessary.*

Cristina Goberna Pesudo

Many things have not yet been named, and many others have been lost in the name. One of these is the notion of sustainability.

Sustainability, by definition, is the prevention of the depletion of natural resources necessary for ecological balance. However, it is a term often used as a collective conscience-cleansing tool for the looming climate catastrophe. This makes it the recipient of innumerable clichés, which only take us further from the urgency of its original meaning. While reactionary political sectors appropriate terms historically used by left-wing movements, such as "freedom", the market acts similarly, reducing concepts to superficial aesthetics and ending up as consumer appeals. Perhaps an exercise in deconstructing the clichés surrounding sustainability would be necessary as a plea for its recovery.



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Let these brief notes serve as a small, unfinished catalogue of what sustainability is not.

Planting vegetation is not the best way to be sustainable; sometimes, it is more effective to do almost nothing. The extraction of natural resources through mining is perhaps the activity that has the greatest impact on environmental degradation. Rotterdam-based Spanish artist Lara Almaraz buys the mining rights to explore the natural soil deposits in various parts of the world to prevent their exploitation. These sites are delimited by a circular or square surface, which, when sectioned, reach the centre of the earth, forming gigantic cones or inverted

TJSGACommentarySD-0307 March 2024/C. Goberna Pesudo

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## A final thought



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

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

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

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