

# JUS SEMPER NEWSLETTER

*In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm*

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

### HIGHLIGHTS

JUS SEMPER Newsletter – Summer-Autumn 2020

**Transitioning to Geocratia — the People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm — (Alvaro J. de Regil)** — This essay explores the key characteristics of the disastrous trajectory that we are still following, what we need to do to radically veer towards a sustainable path, where should we set course and the first steps to materialise a planetary movement to take us there. **Page 2**

**Marxism and Ecology: Common Founts of a Great Transition (John Bellamy Foster)** This essay unearths the deep ecological roots of Marx's thought, showing how he brought an environmental perspective to bear on the overarching question of social transformation. **Page 2**

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**Marxism and Ecology: Common Founts of a Great Transition**  
John Bellamy Foster

Since thought is emerging at the forefront of the movement to build a more just and sustainable world, it is important to understand the deep ecological roots of Marx's thought. This essay unearths the deep ecological roots of Marx's thought, showing how he brought an environmental perspective to bear on the overarching question of social transformation.

**Labour-Value Commodity Chains —The Hidden Abode of Global Production (Intan Suwandi)** This work focuses on the global exploitation (along with expropriation—or appropriation without an equivalent) of labour in capitalist production, particularly under the domination of multinational firms emanating primarily from the core of the system. **Page 2**

**COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital (Rob Wallace et al)** Yes, infectious diseases, for most of human history our greatest source of premature mortality, will remain a threat. But given the bestiary of pathogens now in circulation, can we fundamentally adjust the modes by which we appropriate nature and arrive at more of a truce with these infections? **Page 3**

**COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital**  
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Calculations  
The U.S. administration's economic stimulus package is a public health insurance policy for the rich. It is a public health insurance policy for the rich. It is a public health insurance policy for the rich.

**An Eco-Revolutionary Tipping Point? (Paul Burkett)** The system of capitalism is moving toward an end of history of humanity due to the increasingly barbaric socio-economic and environmental conditions the system creates. Sustainable development now depends on a definite historical break with capitalism. **Page 3**

**An Eco-Revolutionary Tipping Point?**  
Global Warming, the Two Climate Denials, and the Environmental Politician  
Paul Burkett

In the summer of 2019, the announcement of the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius was met with a mix of relief and skepticism. The Paris Agreement is a landmark moment in the history of climate change negotiations, but it is far from a silver bullet. The world is still on a path towards a catastrophic future, and the only way to avoid that future is through a radical transformation of our economic and social systems.

**To Die for Wall Street — Coronavirus, Social Classes and the Prevailing Culture (Alejandro Teitelbaum)** Will there be social awareness of a radically unprecedented and innovative new paradigm? In any case, it will not begin to understand that there are alternatives to capitalism. **Page 4**

**To Die for Wall Street**  
Coronavirus, Social Classes and the Prevailing Culture  
Alejandro Teitelbaum

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the fragility of our economic and social systems. The system of capitalism is moving towards an end of history of humanity due to the increasingly barbaric socio-economic and environmental conditions the system creates. Sustainable development now depends on a definite historical break with capitalism.

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**TRANSITIONING TO GEOCRATIA — *The People and Planet and Not the Market Paradigm* — (Alvaro J. de Regil)**

conception of development, progress, growth and the concept of democracy. We do not know yet, but this may include a reconfiguration of the so-called nation states to give way to the formation of smaller social and geographical identities. Essentially, we must establish a new global citizens' contract between us and Mother Earth, where we commit to design new structures of social organisation devoted to living in harmony with our planet, where the use of the resources necessary for life will be managed so that consumption does not happen faster than the time required by the planet to replenish them. Concurrently, by building Geocratia's ethos we achieve happiness, peace and freedom, as in Epicurus' ataraxia, the enjoyment of peace, absence of fear and happiness, and aponia, the absence of pain.

This paper argues that the underlying causes of the unsustainability of market societies belong solely to the intrinsic nature of capitalism, and of the unrelenting pursuit of the reproduction and accumulation of wealth, which requires the infinite consumption of resources, with no regard whatsoever for its impact on the economic, social and environmental dimensions. It also probes to demonstrate that this is completely incompatible—a true oxymoron—with the premiss of transitioning to a truly sustainable, democratic, equitable, peaceful and ecological paradigm. Lastly, this essay explores the key characteristics of the disastrous trajectory that we are still following, what we need to do to radically veer towards a sustainable path, my vision of where we should set course and the first steps to materialise a planetary movement to take us there.

Following up on my commentary to the March 2020 Great Transition Initiative (GTI) forum: "Planetise the Movement", I assess the diverse ideas discussed in the forum and concurrently elaborate with far more detail in this essay how I envision the first steps to materialise the change of paradigm from the current unsustainable market-centred ethos to a global movement that rescues our planet and provides sustainable life systems for our future generations and all living things.

Parting from the fact that saving Planet Earth, our home, changes everything, we need to build a new ethos where the majority of humankind commits to a system whose only purpose is the pursuit of the welfare of people and Planet Earth. This requires that all Earth resources necessary for the enjoyment of life of all living things be managed to achieve true long-term sustainability. Beginning with removing the market from its encroachment of the institutions of society, this is a paradigm that will break many of the structures, beliefs and notions that we now regard as permanent into a sort of Geocratia—from Greek *ge* and *kratos*: government of the or by the Earth—which is the name I chose to refer to the new paradigmatic proposal. As you may expect, saving the planet will radically change our consumer-driven cultural frameworks and life systems, including the standards of living, consumption habits, use of energies, economic indicators, the

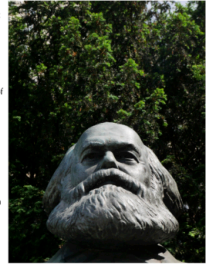
transformative route of social-system change aimed at egalitarian human development in coevolution with the vital parameters of the earth. This constitutes the epochal challenge of our time: to advance radical 3 reform measures that oppose the logic of capital in the historical present while coalescing with a long revolution to construct a new social and ecological formation that promotes sustainable human development.



**Marxism and Ecology:  
Common Fonts of a Great Transition**

John Bellamy Foster

Socialist thought is re-emerging at the forefront of the movement for global ecological and social change. In the face of the planetary emergency, theorists have unearthed a powerful ecological critique of capitalism at the foundations of Marx's materialist conception of history. This has led to a more comprehensive conception of socialism rooted in Marx's analysis of the rift in "the universal metabolism of nature" and his vision of sustainable human development. This work resonates with other approaches for understanding and advancing a Great Transition. Such a social and ecological transformation will require a two-step strategy. First, we must mount struggles for radical reforms in the present that challenge the destructive logic of capital. Second, we must build the broad movement to carry out the long revolutionary transition essential for humanity's continued development and survival.



**Introduction**

To link Marxism and ecological transition may seem at first like trying to bridge two entirely different movements and discourses, each with its own history and logic: one having mainly to do with class relations, and the other, the relation between humans and the environment. Historically, however, socialism has influenced the development of ecological thought and practice, while ecology has informed socialist thought and practice. Since the nineteenth century, the relationship between the two has been complex, interdependent, and dialectical.

TRANSITIONS Issue 93 | February 2020 | John Bellamy Foster

**Download the full document "Marxism and Ecology..." here!**



**Download the full document "Transitioning to Geocratia..." here!**



**LABOUR-VALUE COMMODITY CHAINS  
— *The Hidden Abode of Global Production* (Intan Suwandi)**

**MARXISM AND ECOLOGY:  
COMMON FONTS OF A GREAT  
TRANSITION — (John Bellamy Foster)**

Jus This essay unearths the deep ecological roots of Marx's thought, showing how he brought an environmental perspective to bear on the overarching question of social transformation. From there, it traces the evolution of Marxian ecology, illuminating its profound, formative link to modern ecological economics and systems ecology. It concludes by discussing the wider project of building a social movement broad and deep enough to halt and reverse ecological and social destruction.

For the first time in human history, our species faces a dire existential choice. We can continue on the path of business as usual and risk catastrophic Earth-system change—what Frederick Engels metaphorically referred to as "the revenge" of nature—or we can take the

dominate the world market, world finance, and the global structure of production.

[Download the full document "Labour value..." here!](#)



**COVID-19 AND CIRCUITS OF CAPITAL**  
*— New York to China and Back (Rob Wallace, Alex Liebman, Luis Fernando Chaves and Rodrick Wallace)*

In COVID-19, the illness caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the second severe acute respiratory syndrome virus since 2002, is now officially a pandemic. As of late March, whole cities are sheltered in place and, one by one, hospitals are lighting up in medical gridlock brought about by surges in patients.

A successful intervention keeping any one of the many pathogens queuing up across the agro-economic circuit from killing a billion people must walk through the door of a global clash with capital and its local representatives, however much any individual foot soldier of the bourgeoisie, Glen among them, attempts to mitigate the damage. As our group describes in some of our latest work, agribusiness is at war with public health. And public health is losing.

As in V. I. Lenin's conceptualisation, imperialism can be broadly defined as the complex intermingling of economic and political interests, related to the efforts of large capital to control economic territory. Imperialism has several interrelated aspects: (1) geopolitical (including military) struggle by nation-states for positions within the international hierarchy of the system, encompassing the control of colonies or neo-colonies, (2) dispossession of petty producers outside of capitalist production, and (3) global exploitation (along with expropriation—or appropriation without an equivalent) of labour in capitalist production, particularly under the domination of multinational firms emanating primarily from the core of the system. This work focuses almost entirely on the third aspect, without in any way denying the significance of the other two. At issue is the extraction (or drain) of surplus from the poor countries by the rich countries and/or their corporations. I argue that one way to understand the persistent imperialist characteristics of the world economy is through examining the exploitation that occurs in what Karl Marx calls the hidden abode of production—which, in the era of global commodity chains, is located in the global South. Although production has shifted to the South, imperialist relations of exchange continue to prevail, precisely the class struggles central to it without focusing on the due to the fact that the difference in wages between issue of exploitation, analysed through the labour theory the North and South is greater than the difference in of value. This remains equally true when examining the productivity. As Tony Norfield argues in *The City*, economy on a global level. imperialism in the present stage of capitalist development has its primary basis in the inescapable reality that a few major corporations from a small number of countries

reintroduce the livestock and crop diversities, and reintegrate animal and crop farming at scales that keep pathogens from ramping up in virulence and geographic extent. We allow our food animals to reproduce onsite, restarting the natural selection that allows immune evolution to track pathogens in real time. Big picture, we stop treating nature and community, so full of all we need to survive, as just another competitor to be run off by the market.

The way out is nothing short of birthing a world (or perhaps more along the lines of returning back to Earth). It will also help solve—sleeves rolled up—many of our most pressing problems. None of us stuck in our living rooms from New York to Beijing, or, worse, mourning our dead, want to go through such an outbreak again. Yes, infectious diseases, for most of human history our greatest source of premature mortality, will remain a threat. But given the bestiary of pathogens now in circulation, the worst spilling over now almost annually, we are likely facing another deadly pandemic in far shorter time than the hundred-year lull since 1918. Can we fundamentally adjust the modes by which we appropriate nature and arrive at more of a truce with these infections?

[Download "COVID-19 y..." here!](#)



**AN ECO-REVOLUTIONARY TIPPING POINT?**  
*— Global Warming, the Two Climate Denials, and the Environmental Proletariat (Paul Burkett)*



**COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital**

*New York to China and Back*

Rob Wallace, Alex Liebman, Luis Fernando Chaves and Rodrick Wallace

**Calculation**

COVID-19, the illness caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the second severe acute respiratory syndrome virus since 2002, is now officially a pandemic. As of late March, whole cities are sheltered in place and, one by one, hospitals are lighting up in medical gridlock brought about by surges in patients.



China, its initial outbreak in contraction, presently breathes easier.<sup>1</sup> South Korea and Singapore as well, Europe, especially Italy and Spain, but increasingly other countries, already bends under the weight of deaths still early in the outbreak. Latin America and Africa are only now beginning to accumulate cases, some countries preparing better than others. In the United States, a bellwether if only as the richest country in the history of the world, the near future looks bleak. The outbreak is not slated to peak statewide until May and already health care workers and hospital visitors are fighting over access to the dwindling supply of personal protection equipment.<sup>2</sup> Nurses, to whom the Centres for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) has appallingly recommended using bandanas and scarves as masks, have already declared that "the system is doomed."<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. administration meanwhile continues to outbid individual states for basic medical equipment that it refused to purchase for them in the first place. It has also announced a border crackdown as a public health intervention while the virus rages on ill-addressed inside the country.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Max Roser, Hannah Ritchie, and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)—Statistics and Research," Our World in Data, accessed March 22, 2020.  
<sup>2</sup> Brian W. Rothenberg, Joseph Goldstein, and Michael Ruffolo, "Coronavirus in U.S.: Surge of Cases Begins Hitting Hospitals," New York Times, March 20, 2020.  
<sup>3</sup> Hannah Ripstein, Andrew W. Lohren, Laura Stockler, and Sarah Fitzpatrick, "The System Is Doomed! Doctors, Nurses, Scold off in NBC News Coronavirus Survey," NBC News, March 20, 2020.  
<sup>4</sup> Eliza Behren, "The Federal Government Clobbers States as Critical Coronavirus Supplies Also Run Dry, Governors as Get Their Own Medical Equipments," Business Insider, March 20, 2020; United Cities, "Trump Announces U.S.-Mexico Border Closure to Stop Spread of Coronavirus," CNN Today, March 19, 2020.  
 THE JUST SEMPER GROUP #10164 April 2020/Rob Wallace et al.

Should, however, greater humanity win such a generational conflict, we can replug ourselves back into a planetary metabolism that, however differently expressed place to place, reconnects our ecologies and our economies. Such ideals are more than matters of the utopian. In doing so, we converge on immediate solutions. We protect the forest complexity that keeps deadly pathogens from lining up hosts for a straight shot onto the world's travel network. We



**An Eco-Revolutionary Tipping Point?**

*Global Warming, the Two Climate Denials, and the Environmental Proletariat*

Paul Burkett

In the summer of 2016, the acceleration of climate change was once again making headlines. In July, the World Meteorological Association announced that the first six months of 2016 had broken all previous global temperature records, with June being the fourteenth month in a row of record heat for both land and oceans and the 378th straight month of temperatures greater than the historical average. Heating has been especially rapid in Arctic regions, where thawing effects are releasing large amounts of methane and carbon dioxide. On July 21, 2016, temperatures at locations in Kuwait and Iraq reached 129°F, the hottest ever recorded in the Eastern Hemisphere. The disruptive effects of ice-polar warming were evident in the unprecedented crossing of the



equator by the Northern Hemisphere jet stream, where it merged with the

Southern Hemisphere jet stream, further threatening seasonal integrity with unforeseen impacts on weather extremes and the overall climate system.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile a report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) described the December 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change as "isolated even before it takes effect."<sup>2</sup> Southern Hemisphere jet stream, further threatening seasonal integrity with unforeseen impacts on weather extremes and the overall climate system.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile a report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) described the December 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change as "isolated even before it takes effect," and climatologists now expecting a global warming of at least 3.4°C (more than double the 1.5°C limit supposedly built into the agreement) even if the promised emissions goals of the nations involved are somehow achieved despite the lack of binding enforcement mechanisms. *The world will still be pumping out 54–56*

<sup>1</sup> "July 2016: 'WMO: Global Warming Worsening Faster Than Predicted,' 'Hot of America, July 21, 2016; Jason Semmens, 'Two Middle East Locations Hit 129 Degrees,' Washington Post, July 22, 2016; David Edwards, 'Unprecedented' Scientists Declare Global Climate Emergency After Jet Stream Crosses Equator," Aljazeera, June 30, 2016.  
 THE JUST SEMPER GROUP #10164 April 2020/Paul Burkett



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The historical irony in this situation is hard to miss. Just a couple decades ago, we were told that neoliberal capitalism marked the “end of history.” Now it appears that the system’s ideologues may have been right, but not in the way they envisioned. The system of fossil-fuelled neoliberal capitalism is indeed moving toward an end of history, but only in the sense of the end of any historical advance of humanity as a productive, political, and cultural species due to the increasingly barbaric socio-economic and environmental conditions the system creates. There is now no alternative to the end of history as we know it. The sustainable development of human society co-evolving with nature including other species now depends on a definite historical break with capitalism (wage-labor, market competition, production for profit) as the dominant mode of production.

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**TO DIE FOR WALL STREET — Coronavirus, Social Classes and the Prevailing Culture (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

The COVID-19 epidemic has clearly revealed the process of decomposition—progressively accelerated over the past half century—of the

capitalist system in its political, economic, social and cultural aspects. The leading political elites that presented themselves—and long ago were to a certain extent—mediators between the economic power and society, have ceased to be so and, with nuances, are now simply transmission belts of real power: towering financial, industrial and commercial capital. Even as managers of the dominant system they are in clear decline: two or three decades ago there were still some among them with some capacity and ability to manage the State. They were able to foresee, evaluate and decide. And they used to surround themselves with competent people.

Citizen intervention through so-called representative democracy could function as a counterweight to the degradation of the political elites. But it is increasingly evident that the myth of "representative democracy" or "delegative democracy" as some call it, after a long agony is now in a state of advanced decomposition. Will there be social awareness of a radically unprecedented and innovative new paradigm?



**To Die for Wall Street**

Coronavirus, Social Classes and the Prevailing Culture

Alejandro Teitelbaum

*For Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, there is no dilemma, the economy must be saved and the restrictions imposed must be lifted to curb the covid-19 epidemic. He claimed to be willing to die to revive the economy. To die for Wall Street.*



The COVID-19 epidemic has clearly revealed the process of decomposition—progressively accelerated over the past half century—of the capitalist system in its political, economic, social and cultural aspects. The leading political elites that presented themselves as—and long ago were to a certain extent—mediators between the economic power and society, have ceased to be so and, with nuances, are now simply transmission belts of real power: towering financial, industrial and commercial capital. Even as managers of the dominant system they are in clear decline: two or three decades ago there were still some among them with some capacity and ability to manage the State. They were able to foresee, evaluate and decide. And they used to surround themselves with competent people.

Four examples of the decline of leading political elites are Bolsonaro, Macron, Trump, and Boris Johnson. Macron, with a Diploma of Finance Inspector, was an officer of the Rothschild Bank, and had never acted in politics until he was propelled to it by Hollande who appointed him Minister of Economy. He is now President of France, when his true qualities only enable him at most to carry out an activity in the finance sector.

Citizen intervention through so-called representative democracy could function as a counterweight to the degradation of the political elites. But it is increasingly evident that the myth of "representative democracy" or "delegative democracy" as some call it, after a long agony is now in a state of advanced decomposition. This democracy consists in citizens periodically being called upon to choose between different names that appear on the ballots and choose those who they

TSGA/TWNSI Essay/SD E0103 May 2020/Alejandro Teitelbaum

Will this brutal manifestation of the ravages that capitalism causes serve for a massive process of awareness and will provoke a profound change in the system, as some think? We do not know. In any case, it will not happen if the cultural ideological hegemony does not change the playing field and in this way the great majority begin to understand that there are alternatives to capitalism and intend to actively participate in the construction and implementation of a project—utterly unprecedented and innovative—truly socialist and authentically democratic.

[Download "To die for Wall Street" here!](#)



**CAPITALISM OF DISPOSSESSION IN THE PALM OIL PLANTATIONS IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH — (Contexts, Struggles and Peasant Resistance — Covid-19 shakes agro-industrial capitalism on the planet (Nubia Barrera Silva)**

This paper presents critical moments from prehistory through civilisation to financial capitalism, represented by the transnational corporations of oil palm monoculture; critical moments due to insurmountable ecological fractures with global impact, occurring in fragile ecosystems of humid tropical forests in Asia, Africa and the Americas. In historical evolution, between different ecological fractures, two major climatic milestones have emerged: (i) The transatlantic invasion in the Americas and Africa (16th century), gave rise to the “Cold Ice Age” with the death of 60 million of the native population. It is the beginning of the Anthropocene. (ii) The reconversion of humid tropical forests by agri-food agriculture has been intensified in expropriated lands without the consent of medium and small landowners organised in associations of land recovery, the defence of the common goods and of human rights with tens of thousands of people murdered in the three continents.



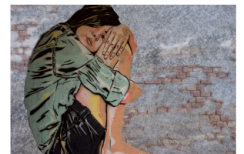
**Capitalism of Dispossession in the Palm Oil Plantations in the Countries of the Global South - Contexts, Struggles and Peasant Resistance**

Covid-19 shakes agro-industrial capitalism on the planet

Nubia Barrera Silva

Summary

This paper presents critical moments from prehistory through civilisation to financial capitalism, represented by the transnational corporations of palm oil monoculture; critical moments due to insurmountable ecological fractures with global impact, occurring in fragile ecosystems of humid tropical forests in Asia, Africa and the Americas. In historical evolution, between different ecological fractures, two major climatic milestones have emerged: (i) The transatlantic invasion in the Americas and Africa (16th century), gave rise to the “Cold Ice Age” with the death of 60 million of the native population. It is the beginning of the Anthropocene. (ii) The reconversion of humid tropical forests by agri-food agriculture has been intensified in expropriated lands without the consent of medium and small landowners organised in associations of land recovery, the defence of the common goods and of human rights with tens of thousands of people murdered in the three continents.



The commodification of land has deepened the ecological, social and economic crises. The unprecedented global pandemic of the covid-19 virus comes from the destruction of the habitats of species of wild animals and plants and the subsequent migration to humans. The neoliberal model is unsupportable in the sustainable conservation of nature and the planet's economy. A change in the capitalist economy is urgently needed.

TSGA/TWNSI Essay/SD E0107 August 2020/Nubia Barrera Silva

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[Download "Capitalism of Dispossession..." here!](#)



**CORPORATIONS IN THE CROSSHAIRS — From Reform to Redesign (Allen White)**

Corporations have become the real powers of the world in the twenty-first century, controlling governments and multilateral organizations and the life of societies across the world. Today they wield more political and economic power than many states and have a direct influence on the political ethos of the metropolises of the world's capitalist system. They have captured the nation-states that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The institutions of so-called representative democracy were hijacked in service of a tiny oligarchic elite, the robber barons of today, who have imposed a marketocratic system that privileges the maximization of shareholder value over the sustainability of people and the planet.

Allen White's thinking about how to make corporations truly sustainable in all dimensions is always stimulating. His new paper on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate redesign provides a fitting opportunity to discuss the possibility of changing the status quo, to put the sustainable welfare of people and planet as the purpose of truly democratic societies instead of the current situation where the institutional investors of international financial markets dictate how to run the world for their exclusive and unsustainable benefit.



Jus Semper has chosen the initial brief prepared by White, where he proposes a radical redesign of the purpose of corporations to change their nature and raison d'être, [four commentaries in reaction to his proposal and his response to these commentaries and others posted in the forum](#). If you are interested in reading other views on the topic, [visit the GTI forum: Corporations in the Crosshairs](#).

[Download "Corporations in the Crosshairs" here.](#)



**WHY CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS A HOAX? — (Álvaro J. de Regil)**

We cannot pretend to fix the problems inherent to capitalism without replacing capitalism. If we aspire to build a completely new paradigm, then we must realize that many elements of our value system will cease to have meaning. The concept of a "living wage," for example, would be treated as a relic of the marketocratic system, as the wage system and capital-labor divide are antithetical to true democracy. We must instead transcend the market in order to redefine how work will be remunerated in new socially and environmentally sustainable enterprises. In the same way, CSR and corporate redesign also become moot points because the nature of business will be completely replaced by new concepts.



national and multilateral institutions from their abduction by dominant classes. To establish a truly democratic ethos, where the people are directly involved in protecting our common and individual rights, we need to build a new institutional edifice designed to provide conditions of life worthy of human dignity and to sustain the planet and all its inhabitants. Rather than corporate redesign, we need a social contract redesign.

Such a vision of social justice and ecological sustainability may seem utopian, but we have no choice. Unless we stop anthropogenic climate change and recover the conditions necessary for long-term sustainability, we will fail to bequeath to future generations of all species a planet where they can live and thrive or even survive. We may have already run out of time, but our only choice is to create the conditions for transcending the market and to design a new social edifice.


[Download "Why Corporate Social"... here.](#)



**THE LIGHT SIDE OF THE MOONEY... MONEY — From Redistribution to Distribution (Andrea Surbone)**

**Corporations in the Crosshairs: From Reform to Redesign — Opening Reflections for a GTI Forum**

Allen White



Transnational corporations, the engines of global capitalism, have become the target of efforts to create an economic system both socially just and environmentally sustainable. The unprecedented power and impact of these leviathans on society and ecology raises critical questions: What is corporate purpose? To whom should corporations be held accountable? And how, in fact, can that be accomplished? To these weighty questions, recent civil society and governmental efforts—under the rubric of "corporate social responsibility" (CSR)—have offered a tepid response: profit corporations to self-regulate. The inadequacy of self-regulation has become starkly evident: the interests of shareholders remain supreme, while those of workers, communities, and the environment remain subordinate. Moving beyond CSR to "corporate redesign" politics is an urgent strategic necessity for a Great Transition.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Movement

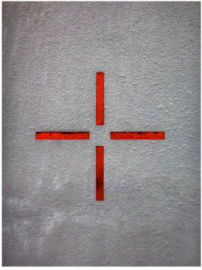
CSR arose in response to the idea that the only social responsibility of the corporation is to generate profits.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, until the nineteenth century the justification for chartering corporations, at least in principle, was to fulfill a public purpose, such as building a road, bridge, or canal, rather than private enrichment, per se. Although the public interest view of the corporation saw a mid-twentieth-century revival during economic depression and was, by the

<sup>1</sup> In 1962, Milton Friedman declared that "there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules of the game." See *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 131.

**Why "Corporate Social Responsibility" Is a Hoax**

— Commentary on Corporations in the Crosshairs: From Reform to Redesign

Álvaro J. de Regil



Allen White's thinking about how to make corporations truly sustainable in all dimensions is always stimulating. His new paper on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate redesign provides a fitting opportunity for me to revisit a chapter in my work that I abandoned several years ago out of frustration.

I became involved in social activism to find ways to gradually reduce and eventually end what is called "unequal exchange." Workers in countries on the periphery of global markets are exploited at will by transnational corporations in a "modern slave work" system in which they are paid a fraction of what such corporations would pay to workers in their home countries for equal work of equal value. When I began my effort at the start of the century, I found CSR a potentially viable concept pressuring corporations to provide living wages and gradually achieve equal pay for work of equal value.

However, as I met with many NGOs, trade unions, multilateral organizations, and business initiatives and watched CSR evolve, it gradually became evident that CSR was really a hoax, for the simple reason that the vast majority of corporations had a single-minded focus on the short-term maximization of shareholder value, and this priority was

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The Great Transition Initiative (GTI) organized a forum on the future of corporations as part of its mission to understand the contemporary world and shape its future by envisioning a truly sustainable planet.

To advance this shift, we need to first establish a truly democratic ethos. We, the Demos, must organize across the world to liberate our

Both I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. The environment on fire off of human greed. I watched the social divide spread so far out that it becomes a U-shaped turn [...] The free interpretation of Roy's famous monologue in Blade Runner is useful for introducing Philopony - getting out of the money paradigm, the essay with which I take part in the book "Work and the value of robots - Artificial intelligence and non-occupation".

Philopony, a Succinct Definition

Before starting, a few words about Philopony; industriousness in Plato's language and lexicon; is given in the text not only as a talent for doing but parting from stress on effort, on fatigue—πόνος (pain), coming to the concept of commitment, to get involved, both personally and as part of the the community...

the laws of economics are artificial laws not to be confused for any reason with the laws of nature... Being able to adopt the ideas of theartificiality of the economy is a first step which is all an inner and intellectual event yet necessary to achieve emancipation.

Download "The Light Side..." here.

And in Italian here



WHY ECOSOCIALISM: FOR A RED-GREEN FUTURE — (Michael Löwy)



Why Ecosocialism: For a Red-Green Future

Michael Löwy

The capitalist system, driven at its core by the maximisation of profit, regardless of social and ecological costs, is incompatible with a just and sustainable future. Ecosocialism offers a radical alternative that puts social and ecological well-being first. Attuned to the links between the exploitation of labour and the exploitation of the environment, ecosocialism stands against both reformist "market ecology" and "productivist socialism." By embracing a new model of robustly democratic planning, society can take control of the means of production and its own destiny. Shorter work hours and a focus on authentic needs over consumerism can facilitate the elevation of "being" over "having," and the achievement of a deeper sense of freedom for all. To realise this vision, however, environmentalists and socialists will need to recognise their common struggle and how that connects with the broader "movement of movements" seeking a Great Transition.



Introduction

Contemporary capitalist civilisation is in crisis. The unlimited accumulation of capital, commodification of everything, exploitation of labour and nature, and attendant brutal competition undermine the bases of a sustainable future, thereby putting the very survival of the human species at risk. The deep, systemic threat we face demands a deep, systemic change: a Great Transition.

In synthesising the basic tenets of ecology and the Marxist critique of political economy, ecosocialism offers a radical alternative to an unsustainable status quo. Rejecting a capitalist definition of "progress" based on market growth and quantitative expansion (which, as Marx shows, is a destructive progress), it advocates policies founded on non-monetary criteria, such as social needs, individual well-being, and ecological equilibrium. Ecosocialism puts forth a critique of

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THE EXPROPRIATION OF NATURE — (John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark)

wider social and natural environment. This historical shift and the deepening fissures that it has produced can be seen in the growth of what David Harvey has termed "anti-value politics," directed at the boundaries of the system and visible in such forms as the ecological movement, growing conflicts over social reproduction in the household/family and gender/sexuality, and global resistance to the expansion of imperialism/racism. To understand these rapidly changing conditions, it is necessary to dig much deeper than before into capital's external logic of expropriation, as it was first delineated in Marx's writings during the Industrial Revolution. Most important, because at the root of the problem, is the extreme expropriation of the earth itself and the consequent transformation in social relations.

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THE PRECARIAT TODAY'S TRANSFORMATIVE CLASS? — (Guy Standing)



The Precariat: Today's Transformative Class?

Guy Standing

Since 1980, the global economy has undergone a dramatic transformation, with the globalisation of the labour force, the rise of automation, and—above all—the growth of Big Finance, Big Pharma, and Big Tech. The social democratic consensus of the immediate postwar years has given way to a new phase of capitalism that is leaving workers further behind and reshaping the class structure. The precariat, a mass class defined by unstable labor arrangements, lack of identity, and erosion of rights, is emerging as today's "dangerous class." As its demands cannot be met within the current system, the precariat carries transformative potential. To realise that potential, however, the precariat must awaken to its status as a class and fight for a radically changed income distribution that reclaims the commons and guarantees a livable income for all. Without transformative action, a dark political era looms.



Introduction

We are living in a painful time of turbulent economic change. A global market system continues to take shape as the United States petulantly threatens the international order that it helped to create and from which it has gained disproportionately. This era, which began around 1980, has been dominated institutionally by American

finance and ideologically by the economic orthodoxy of "neoliberalism." A hallmark of this transformation has been the increasing redistribution of wealth upwards as rents to those owning property—physical, financial, and "intellectual." As "rentier capitalism" has risen, working classes have foundered, as those relying on labor have been losing ground in both relative and absolute terms.

In brief, during the past forty years, the global economy has been shaped by neoliberal economics, which, accentuated by the digital revolution, has generated two linked phenomena: global rentier capitalism and a global class structure in

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Twenty-first-century monopoly-finance capitalism constitutes what Karl Marx once called an "age of dissolution." All that is solid in the current mode of production is melting into air. Hence, it is no longer realistic to treat—even by way of abstraction—the crucial political-economic struggles of our day as if they were confined primarily to the exploitation of labour within production. Instead, social conflicts are increasingly being fought over capitalism's expropriation and spoliation of its

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[Download "The Precariat" here!](#)



rightward march of populist politics continued apace. This is only a small list of the world's problems, some of which are common to humanity and some specific to nation-states and communities. To echo Lenin, what is to be done? For an answer, we can echo Dr. King: "planetize our movement."<sup>1</sup> But what is "the movement," and how can it be planetised?

[Download "Planetise the Movement..." here.](#)



Behind this particular devil's ruse lies a deeply disturbing, even hellish, reality. Neoliberalism can be defined as an integrated ruling-class political-ideological project, associated with the rise of monopoly-finance capital, the principal strategic aim of which is to embed the state in capitalist market relations. Hence, the state's traditional role in safeguarding social reproduction—if largely on capitalist-class terms—is now reduced solely to one of promoting capitalist reproduction. The goal is nothing less than the creation of an absolute capitalism. All of this serves to heighten the extreme human and ecological destructiveness that characterises our time.

[Download "Absolute Capitalism..." here.](#)



**PLANETISE THE MOVEMENT —Opening Reflections for a GTI Forum (Valentine Moghadam)**

**ABSOLUTE CAPITALISM —(John Bellamy Foster)**

**THE NEW IMPERIALIST STRUCTURE — (Samir Amin)**



**Absolute Capitalism**

John Bellamy Foster

The French poet Charles Baudelaire wrote in 1864 that "the cleverest ruse of the Devil is to persuade you he does not exist!"<sup>1</sup> I will argue here that this is directly applicable to today's neoliberals, whose devil's ruse is to pretend they do not exist. Although neoliberalism is widely recognised as the central political-ideological project of twenty-first-century capitalism, it is a term that is seldom uttered by those in power. In 2005, the New York Times went so far as to make neoliberalism's nonexistence official by running an article entitled "Neoliberalism? It Doesn't Exist."<sup>2</sup>



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**The Origins of Neoliberalism**

The notion of neoliberalism is nearly a century old, although its main political influence is much more recent. It first arose as an ideology in the early 1920s in the face of the collapse of liberalism nearly everywhere in Europe, and in response to the rise of German and Austrian social democracy, particularly developments in Red

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Contemporary capitalism is a capitalism of generalised monopolies. What I mean by that is that monopolies no longer form islands (important as they may be) in an ocean of corporations that are not monopolies—and consequently are relatively autonomous—but an integrated system, and consequently now tightly control all productive systems. Small and medium-sized companies, and even large ones that are not themselves formally owned by the oligopolies, are enclosed in networks of control established by the monopolies upstream and downstream. Consequently, their margin of autonomy has shrunk considerably. These production units have become subcontractors

<sup>1</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Geneva Plans" in Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry, ed. Thomas B. Smith (New York: Modern Library, 1919), 82.  
<sup>2</sup> Daniel Altschuler, "Neoliberalism? It Doesn't Exist," New York Times, July 16, 2005. Altschuler's article begins by mocking frequent Monthly Review author Patrick Bond (they apparently sat next to each other on a plane) for believing that neoliberalism exists, and for seeing it as connected to contemporary imperialism and issues such as the commodification of water. "The problem is," Altschuler himself clearly a neoliberal, writes, "the real neoliberals don't even exist."

for the monopolies. This system of generalised monopolies is the result of a new stage in the centralisation of capital in the countries of the triad that developed in the 1980s and '90s.

Simultaneously, these generalised monopolies dominate the world economy. Globalization is the name that they themselves have given to the imperatives through which they exercise their control over the productive systems of world capitalism's peripheries (the entire world beyond the partners of the triad). This is nothing other than a new stage of imperialism.

As a system, generalised and globalised monopoly capitalism ensures that these monopolies derive a monopoly rent levied on the mass of surplus value (transformed into profits) that capital extracts from the exploitation of labor. To the extent that these monopolies operate in the peripheries of the globalised system, this monopoly rent becomes an imperialist rent. The capital accumulation process—which defines capitalism in all of its successive historical forms—is consequently governed by the maximisation of monopolistic/imperialist rent.

Download the "The New Imperialist..." here.



"REPRESENTATIVE" DEMOCRACY IN A STATE OF ADVANCED DECOMPOSITION — (Alejandro Teitelbaum)

ballots and choose who they believe—after having suffered brainwashing during the election campaign—who will be the people who will best represent their interests and opinions, delegating in them—without limitation or some subsequent control—the power to decide on everything that may affect in one way or another their own existence.

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FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY — Sustainable Prosperity Through a Capabilities Lens (Ingrid Robeyns)



Freedom and Responsibility - Sustainable Prosperity through a Capabilities Lens

Ingrid Robeyns

Are we at liberty to live our lives completely as we wish? Or are there constraints we have to be aware of as we want to avoid harming others and respect principles of ecological justice? And are lifestyles that embrace basic principles of ecological justice always dull and simple lives, where many enjoyable things are beyond reach, and which therefore entail a regress in our quality of life? Or is there a possibility to live lives that are at the same time sustainable and just, and that also allow us to be happy and flourishing?



This set of questions is one of the most central in the task of thinking about sustainable prosperity. To many people's minds there is an inevitable trade-off between living ecologically sustainable on the one hand and living with higher levels of well-being on the other. If that trade-off is a real one, then those striving towards a more sustainable future are facing an uphill task, since ecological sustainability will only be possible by lowering people's well-being—something most people have so far been unwilling to do. But is this trade-off real or is it spurious? Is it possible to lead good lives that are simultaneously just and ecologically sustainable?

That's the question I seek to answer in this essay. I will argue that it is possible to live good lives that are also just and ecologically sustainable, if we understand well-being and human flourishing in terms of human capabilities (while giving more weight to the non-material capabilities), and if we are willing to take the necessary steps to change our behaviour and institutions to overcome moral disengagement with our current lifestyles, which are unjust and ecologically unsustainable.

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WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE PERISH — a utopian ethic for a transformed future (Ruth Levitas)



Where there is no vision, the people perish: a utopian ethic for a transformed future

Ruth Levitas

Introduction

This paper argues that thinking about our ethical responsibilities in the present and for the future is helped by looking through the lens of Utopia. I have addressed the plethora of uses of the term Utopia elsewhere, in *The Concept of Utopia*, and more recently the merits of Utopia as a sociological method in *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstruction of Society*; this paper draws substantially on these books.<sup>1</sup> The imagination of a potential, different society in the future draws attention to the need for change, offers a direction towards that change, and a stimulus to action in the present.



Political philosophy, moral philosophy and ethics tend to look on sustainable prosperity, like justice or equality, as an abstract good. Utopia may also do this, but its emphasis differs in two ways. First, it operates at the more concrete level of the social institutions encapsulating those principles, or from which they emerge. Secondly, it considers those institutions as a system—a social system, embedded in an ecological system. There is

*The Utopian approach allows us not only to imagine what an alternative society could look like, but enables us to imagine what it might feel like to inhabit it.*

another difference, I think. By definition, all discussion of a better future is normative, that is, it makes evaluative claims about what is good. But much discussion about ethics (in common with almost all of the Western intellectual tradition) separates thought and feeling. Writers such as Martha Nussbaum (a philosopher) and Andrew Sayer (a sociologist) have argued

<sup>1</sup> Levitas, R. (2010) *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang) 1990; Levitas, R. (2013) *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstruction of Society*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. TSGA11WNSI EssaySD 00315 July 2020Ruth Levitas

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It is increasingly evident that the myth of "representative" or delegating democracy, as some call it, is in a state of advanced decomposition. Said democracy, where that citizens are periodically called upon to choose between different names that appear on the





them with a relatively comfortable remuneration when they can still enjoy life a little, resting and / or taking care of the things that interest them.

But for a few years there has been a widespread offensive against social security. The explanation is that as a result of the concentration and accumulation of capital, large oligopolies and monopolies were formed whose financial base was consolidated from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century with the merger of industrial capital and financial capital.

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**PLANETARY OFFENSIVE AGAINST SOCIAL SECURITY – (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

**THE CASE FOR LABOUR-LED DEVELOPMENT — A review of «The Struggle for Development» (Intan Suwandi)**



**The Case for Labour-Led Development**

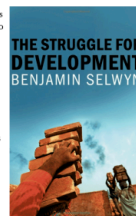
*A review of «The Struggle for Development» (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 195 pages*

Intan Suwandi

Responding to the criticism of Nike's low-cost labor strategy, the company's spokesman Dusty Kidd claimed in 1994 that low wages had nothing to do with exploitation. In his view, the company opened up economic opportunity for workers employed by its suppliers in the Global South, which would serve as a way out of poverty. If these workers had not worked for Nike, Kidd said, they would still be "harvesting coconut meat in the tropical sun."<sup>1</sup>

There is plenty to question in such a statement. Nonetheless, one thing is quite clear: Kidd's comment represents the dominant discourse regarding poverty and development. Here, capital-centred development—in which leading ideas about development are those formed by the power elite, representing the ruling class—is presented as the solution to all social problems, including poverty. "Providing jobs" in factories that assemble sneakers, shirts, or electronics is a means to integrate the periphery into global capitalism, ensuring economic growth and, therefore, benefiting both capital and labor.

However, in reality, capital-centred development deepens exploitation, as Benjamin Selwyn points out in his sharp and thoughtful *The Struggle for Development*. His book powerfully challenges the capitalist road to further immiseration for the majority of the world's population. It also opens up a path to an important discussion regarding what is to be done in the twenty-first century. The book ends with the claim that an alternative form of development, led by the labouring classes, is not only necessary but possible. Above all, "labouring class movements and struggles against capitalist exploitation can be, and are, developmental in and of themselves."<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Cynthia Brink, *The Global South* (University of California Press, 2004), 51.  
<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Selwyn, *The Struggle for Development* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 11.  
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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).

According to the times, cultures, civilisations and the social-economic situation, the "problem" that old people entail is "solved" in different ways. Some nomadic people left the old people at the edge of the road and certain sedentary people took them away from the village and abandoned them with some food and water. But also in all ages, different peoples, recognising the virtues of old age, such as experience and wisdom, have cared for and respected the old.

Modern societies invented retirement, with diverse systems that range from providing a few crumbs of bread to the old when they can no longer work and are at the cemetery doors (if they did not die before in their jobs) to provide

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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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