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## THE UNBEARABLE UNAWARENESS OF OUR ECOLOGICAL EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

— **Álvaro J. de Regil** – *Only a Revolution can stop our demise, but capitalism's behemoth keeps people deceitful and mostly unaware of being on the verge of a catastrophic end. We must arouse Now!*



### The Unbearable Unawareness of Our Ecological Existential Crisis

*Only a Revolution can stop our demise, but capitalism's behemoth keeps people deceitful and mostly unaware of being on the verge of a catastrophic end. We must arouse Now!*

Álvaro J. de Regil

In the last two years, the full report on Mitigation of Climate Change prepared by the IPCC scientists, as well as research from other centres, such as the Stockholm Resilience Centre, have consistently confirmed that we are following a trajectory of doom. Unless we veer fast in the opposite direction, the odds that we will be facing planetary catastrophes that will put at great risk the existence of life in our planet on the next twenty years are realistic and likely.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, we continue to see that such existential threat—the direct result of the dominant socioeconomic structures of capitalism—continue to fall on the indifferent ears of those in power, particularly in the Global North, the overwhelming precursor of the planetary rift we face. Instead, these elites persist on a narrative that makes most people think that all we need to do is to decrease our carbon dioxide emissions to address climate change which is only one of the nine planetary boundaries that we are on the verge of or have already transgressed without



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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Research

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Based on the track record delivered by the centers of power, it is evident that humans and nonhumans will surely reach our demise in the next few decades unless the common people rid themselves of the delusional and Promethean narrative advanced by the centers of power that has captured public opinion. To accomplish this, we must debunk this narrative and set the record straight. There is no possibility of future generations enjoying a sustainable and dignified life unless we radically change our culture and lifestyle habits and learn to live in harmony with our home, planet Earth. We must treat our planet with great care, as we would a friend we depend on for our lives. Hence, we must wake up, mobilise, and organise in order to force the replacement of the structures of unrelenting growth, endless consumption, and enormous inequality at the same time that we change our values and daily habits if we want to bequeath to future generations a life with dignity and joy.

The great challenge is to provoke awareness and critical thinking among the common people. The market reigns supreme, transforming people into consumer units, alienating and depriving them of their dignity and making them believe that success and happiness lie in having things, so that we can consume and feel happy through instant gratification. Consequently, replacing the deeply embedded culture of consumerism that is instrumental for capitalism to sustain itself is a colossal challenge. Yet, people must become conscientious and internalise that the only way to save humans and nonhumans, and the resources required from nature for both to survive and prosper, is by drastically radically cutting consumption in order to diminish our ecological footprint, replacing our structures and steering our trajectory towards a transition of consumption degrowth until we reach a sustainable steady state of production and consumption. We must embark on a sustainable transition that is safe and just for all living things and the planet.

Furthermore, because capitalism's nature requires endless growth, the only way to accomplish this is through an ecosocial Geocratic Paradigm, or "Government by the Earth". In this paradigm, humankind lives to take good care of its home as its friend, the planet. In Geocratia, instead of vying to possess and consume to survive, people enjoy a dignified life without all of the excesses of consumerism. In Geocratia, many basic needs, such as health care, education, and water—currently rendered as mere merchandise—are universal rights with guaranteed access to all people to live comfortably but frugally. There is no choice if we want to avoid the catastrophic trajectory of doom that we are rapidly undergoing, unless we prefer to ensure reaching our final demise in the next few decades.

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## CONTROVERSIAL DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS UNDER CLIMATE COLLAPSE IN 2050 - SOUTH AND MESOAMERICA IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT – Nubia Barrera Silva

*Agri-food production, consumerism, waste and food waste.*



### Controversial Demographic Projections Under Climate Collapse in 2050 - South and Mesoamerica in a Global Context

*Agri-food production, consumerism, waste and food waste*

Nubia Barrera Silva

#### Abstract

**T**he corporate sector is building another aggressive re-engineering of global agrifood systems in South America and Mesoamerica. The region represents a pillar for global food security, warns the UN in the New Mission. Capitalist euphoria assumes 10 billion inhabitants by 2050. This is forging higher agricultural productivity, innovation, digitalisation and the expansion of standardised agriculture. Thus, they produce and market food destined for populations with some or enough consumption capacity, overconsumption and waste of food with equivalent carbon footprints.



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In contrast, global overpopulation predictions based on empirical data analysis by Vienna Applied Systems analysts have declined over the last decade. From this perspective, the UN replicates another unsustainable pressure on fertile land in productive decline, under unreturnable alterations of soil properties, following ecological fractures in the Earth's biogeochemical and hydrological cycles. Among the consequences, meteorological collapse spreads through fires, high temperatures, droughts and water shortages. From the South, internal displacement, border crossings and migration to the North of thousands of people are escalating, driven by hunger, undernourishment, loss of food security

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outside of consumerism, with other political options for change and transformation.

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**SOLIDARITY WITH ANIMALS – Eileen Crist** — *The normalisation of mass killing, exploitation, and displacement of animals exhibits the ingrained assumption that animals are legitimately subject to absolute human power.*



### Solidarity with Animals

—Opening Essay for a GTI Forum—

Paul Raskin

#### Violence and Love

**T**he animal economy, wherein animals routinely suffer truncated and brutalised lives, weaves massively through the global economy.

*The normalisation of mass killing, exploitation, and displacement of animals exhibits the ingrained assumption that animals are legitimately subject to absolute human power.*

Billions of animals are utilised each year, with virtually no compunction, in industries of food, feed, supplements, clothing, furnishings, textiles, footwear, accessories, luxury products, entertainment, traditional medicine, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>1</sup>

The normalisation of mass killing, exploitation, and displacement of animals exhibits the ingrained assumption that animals are legitimately subject to absolute human power and that humanity is entitled to repurpose natural habitats without consideration of their being animal homes. Indeed, the animal economy is pervaded by structural violence, meaning institutionalised and established forms of violence disavowed as being violent or kept hidden from view. In our time, violence against animals is opposed by increasing numbers of people from all walks of life. Yet the balance of power continues to favor a Conventional Worlds



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<sup>1</sup> See the full paper <https://www.gti-forum.org/gti-forum/solidarity-animals.html>

<sup>2</sup> See Judy Eidel and Jennifer Mutch, "Witnessing the Animal Harms," in Jennifer Mutch and Judy Eidel, eds., *Animal Geography: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Human-Culture Interface* (New York: Oxford, 2018), 1-28; Steven Marder, *Animals and the Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Jo-Anne McLean and Keith Wilson, eds., *Harsh: Animals in the Anthropocene* (New York: We Animals Media, 2021).

TEGGA04902 30016 August 2023 Gati Crist

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Structural violence against animals has intensified in the "Anthropocene," with a

growing global economy motivated by profit, designed with shortcuts for efficiency, ever expanding its commodity chains, and serving a rising modernised population. The growing global economy also possesses a technological arsenal with colossal power to slaughter, exterminate, and experiment on animals; manufacture and transport animal-based products; appropriate wildlife habitats; and fish out the ocean.

The odd flip side of this violent state of affairs is that love for animals is a tangible dimension of human life. To be sure, this sentiment varies among people and is often qualified in different ways.

Yet it remains true as a general statement: We recognise it in the rise of nature conservation and ecotourism, the popularity of animal shows and documentaries, the lavish lives of companion species, burgeoning animal shelters and sanctuaries, as well as storytelling and picture sharing on social media. We can even recognise love for animals in their commodification in lucrative industries (e.g., stuffed toys) and in marketing (e.g., the Exxon tiger), which lean into the human soft spot for the animal kingdom.

Affection for animals is sometimes tagged as a privilege of modern lifestyles. This view overlooks the ways that animals have been exalted from time immemorial, in arenas of work, companionship, art, literature, music, mythology, ceremony, and spirituality. The parable of the good shepherd, as an example, whose ninety-nine sheep returned safely but who nonetheless went searching for the missing one, is emblematic. It is not a story about "efficiency and economy" or "feeding the world." It is a story about love: the heart connection of the good shepherd with each one of her sheep.

The heartfelt affinity for animals stands in tension with the violence inflicted upon them. Jürgen Habermas's framework of the societal spheres of system versus lifeworld sheds light on this contradiction. Structural violence against animals overwhelmingly adheres to systems (economic, political, and legal), while love for animals resides in uncountable expressions within lifeworlds. Of course, system and lifeworld are far from hermetically sealed, yet they encompass differentiated spheres of human experience. The lifeworld pertains to shared sensibilities and norms of care in everyday life, while systems are governed by power relations and special interests.

The concurrence of violence against animals and affection for them articulates a contradiction. Societal contradiction fosters conflict and instability that eventually precipitate transformation(s). Indeed, the stark incongruity at the core of human-animal relations is the game-changing lever of animal justice activism. Here, I interrogate the conundrum of violence and love with questions

of moral purpose: Which of these realities best reflects who we are and aspire to be? And what is the interplay between animal solidarity, human well-being, and a Great Transition to an ecologically vibrant and just future?

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## CLIMATE IMPERIALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY — Jayati Ghosh, Shouvik Chakraborty and Debamanyu Das



### Climate Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century

Jayati Ghosh, Shouvik Chakraborty and Debamanyu Das

#### Introduction

Imperialism can be defined broadly as the struggle of large, monopolistic capital over economic territory, actively aided and assisted by states. However, imperialism cannot be comprehensively addressed simply on a nation-by-nation basis but requires the recognition of the existence of an imperialist world system dominated by a hegemonic power. This was broadly the approach developed by V. I. Lenin more than a century ago. Though it has not changed in essence, it has morphed significantly in form, structure, and reliance on particular legal and

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Photo by Scott Laine on Unsplash

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Jayati Ghosh, 'The Creation of the Neoliberal: The Institutional Technologies', *Monthly Review* 57, no. 3 (July-August 2015): 146–56.

TS&A/2014/044 May 2014/2014/044

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Among the many new forms of economic territory that have proliferated in the neoliberal globalising phase of capitalism, those associated with direct human environmental interaction with the planet remain in many

ways the most crucial and the most strongly associated also with coercion, conflict, and war. The nineteenth century saw many such conflicts in the colonial expansion to other lands, in the attempt to establish control over physical territory with its attendant advantages. Wars in the late twentieth century were closely related to control over energy sources like oil. The twenty-first century may see growing water wars. Increasingly, the change resulting from anthropogenic rifts in the Earth System metabolism has come to define a sphere of struggle over influence, control, and appropriation that is now a major aspect of contemporary imperialism.

This particular feature of global capitalism today and its association with not just capitalism but with imperialism is becoming more and more evident in: (1) how core countries and elites are able to produce and consume based on an imperialist mode of living, generating increasing global carbon emissions with rising ecological footprints; (2) the deceptive and debilitating ways that climate change is addressed in international negotiations; (3) the operations of global finance that increase carbon emissions while failing to make available the required finance for effective mitigation strategies; (4) the privatised knowledge monopolies that prevent most of humanity from being able to access critical technologies required to confront the climate challenge; and (5) the changing technological requirements for both mitigation and adaptation, which give rise to further natural resource grabs aimed particularly at strategic minerals, along with new forms of extractivist competition among the leading powers.

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## THE FISHING REVOLUTION AND THE ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM — Ian Angus

Fishing is older than humanity. Palaeontologists have found evidence that our ancestors Homo herbals and Homo Erectus caught lake and river fish in east Africa a million years ago. Large shell deposits show that our Neanderthal cousins in what is now Portugal were harvesting shellfish over a hundred thousand years ago, as were Homo sapiens in South Africa. Island dwellers have been fishing in the southwestern Pacific for at least thirty-five millennia.

For most of our species' existence, fish were caught to be eaten by the fishers themselves. "They may have traded dried or smoked fish to neighbours, but this trade was not commerce in any modern sense. People donated food to those who needed it, in the certain knowledge that the donors would someday need the same charity."

Fishing for sale rather than consumption developed along with the emergence of class-divided urban societies about five thousand years ago. Getting fish to towns and cities

where people could not catch it themselves required organised systems for catching, cleaning, preserving, transporting, and marketing. This was particularly true in the Roman Empire, where serving fresh fish at meals was a status symbol for the rich, and fish preserved by salting was an essential source of protein for soldiers and the urban poor. In addition to boats, an extensive shore-based infrastructure was needed to provide fish for millions of citizens and enslaved people.



### The Fishing Revolution and the Origins of Capitalism

Ian Angus

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Angus, *Fishing: How the Sea and Civilisation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)* provides an excellent account of current knowledge about prehistoric fishing.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Angus, *Fishing*, 16.

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By 1600, shipbuilding was concentrated in a few large operations, and "the industry shifted from a medieval handicraft to something along the lines of modern factory organisation." Workers were paid daily wages at rates negotiated with local guilds, and were required to work fixed hours.

While Spanish ships carried silver and gold, a parallel trade involving far more ships and people developed far to the north. Historians of capitalism, including Marxists, have paid too little attention to what Francis Bacon called "the Gold Mines of the Newfoundland Fishery, of which there is none so rich."

Even if one accepts Parkhurst's simplistic figures, the Newfoundland fleet—comprising between 350 and 380 vessels crewed by 8,000-10,000 men—could have more than matched Spain's transatlantic commerce with the Americas, which relied on 100 ships at most and 4,000-5,000 men in the 1570s—its best years in the sixteenth century... However approximate, these figures demonstrate that the Gulf of St. Lawrence was a pole of attraction for Europeans on a par with the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Far from being a fringe area worked by only a few fishermen, the northern part of the Americas was one of the great seafaring routes and one of the most profitable



European business destinations in the New World.

Historians “have grossly underestimated the historical economic significance of the fish trade, which may have been equal to the much more famed rush to exploit the silver mines of the Incas.” The Fish Revolution was “a major event in the history of resource extraction and consumption...[which] permanently changed human and animal life in the North Atlantic region.” He adds that “the wider seafood market was transformed in the process, and the marine expansion of humans across the North Atlantic was conditioned by significant climatic and environmental parameters. The Fish Revolution is one of the clearest early examples of how humans can affect marine life on our planet and of how marine life can in return influence and become, in essence, a part of a globalising human world.”

I hope that this article contributes to a more rounded picture, and shows that no account of capitalism's origins is complete if it omits the development and growth of intensive fishing in the centuries when capitalism was born.

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## EXISTING CLIMATE MITIGATION SCENARIOS PERPETUATE COLONIAL INEQUALITIES — Jason Hickel — Aljoša Slameršak



### Existing Climate Mitigation Scenarios Perpetuate Colonial Inequalities

Jason Hickel, Aljoša Slameršak

#### Summary

The challenge of climate mitigation is made more difficult by high rates of energy use in wealthy countries, mostly in the Global North, which far exceed what is required to meet human

A just transition requires energy convergence—reducing energy use in wealthy countries to achieve rapid emissions reductions, and ensuring sufficient energy for development in the rest of the world. However, existing climate mitigation scenarios reviewed by the IPCC do not explore such a transition, and existing scenarios maintain the Global North's energy privilege. Even the more equitable scenarios perpetuate large energy inequalities for the rest of the century.



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needs. In contrast, more than 3 billion people in poorer countries live in energy poverty. A just transition requires energy convergence—reducing energy use in wealthy countries to achieve rapid emissions reductions, and ensuring sufficient energy for development in the rest of the world. However, existing climate mitigation scenarios reviewed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change do not explore such a transition. On average, existing scenarios maintain the Global North's energy privilege at a per capita level 2-3 times higher than in the Global South. Even the more equitable scenarios perpetuate large energy inequalities for the rest of the century. To reconcile the Global North's high energy use with the Paris Agreement targets, most scenarios rely heavily on bioenergy-based negative emissions technologies. This approach is risky, but it is also unjust. These scenarios tend to appropriate land in

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## THE LIMITS TO GROWTH AND THE LATIN AMERICAN WORLD MODEL — (Alejandro Teitelbaum - editor) — In stark contrast with the Meadows model



### The Limits to Growth and the Latin American World Model

*In stark contrast with the Meadows model*

Alejandro Teitelbaum - editor

#### Introduction

In January 2023, Jus Semper published "Note on The Limits to Growth" by the editors of Monthly Review, a commentary on the report prepared in 1972 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) by Dennis Meadows and others.<sup>1</sup> In 1974, the Latin American World Model (LAWM), a report by a group of Latin American sociologists and economists, was published with a critical and different approach from The Limits to Growth.

Referring to The Limits to Growth, the Latin American report stated that the ecological catastrophe predicted in other models for the more or less distant future was now a reality for a large part of humanity.

There are also other differences in the interpretation of the Latin American World Model with the Meadows report. For example, the relationship between inequality and demography: whereas The Limits to Growth had explicitly stated that demographic pressures led to inequality in the distribution of resources among people (Meadows et al. 1972), the LAWM had labelled Meadows' approach as Malthusian and adopted the opposite explanation, i.e. that poverty and inequality are the main drivers of population growth.

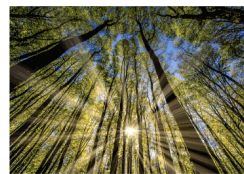


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The philosophical/epistemological critique focused mainly on the claims of objectivity of the Meadows report, which resulted in the explicit affirmation of the LAWM as a normative model. "Any long-term prognosis of human development is based on a worldview founded on a particular value system and ideology. The assumption that the current structure of the world and the value system underpinning it can be projected unchanged into the future is not an 'objective' view of reality but also implies an ideological position. This is why the often-made distinction between projective and normative long-term models is misleading. The model presented here is explicitly normative: it does not predict what will happen if current human trends continue but points to a way to achieve the ultimate goal of a world free of backwardness and poverty.

A second edition of the LAWM was published in 2004: ¿Castrofe o Nueva Sociedad? Modelo Mundial Latinoamericano. 30 años después,<sup>2</sup> in which Hugo D. Scolnick, Gabriela Chichilnisky, Gilberto C. Gallopín, Jorge E. Hardoy, Diana Mosovich, Enrique Oteiza, Gilda L. de Romero Brest, Carlos E. Suárez and Luis Talavera participated and included the Prologue by Amílcar Herrera (who died in 1995) to the first edition. Some parts of the 2004 text are reproduced below.

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## JUST TRANSITION IS ABOUT SYSTEMIC CHANGE — Dirk Holemans

Since the 1970s, a term has gained prominence as workers have forced governments to look at the social side to their environmental policies: just transition. Today the term is everywhere, its meaning at once elusive but also key to facing the multiple crises of environmental breakdown, social injustice, and global inequality. In a forthcoming collection on the

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<sup>1</sup> The Editors of Monthly Review. *Note on 'The Limits to Growth'* — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> DGA/NovoSD 15/10 July 2023/Alejandro Teitelbaum

concept and practice, Dirk Holemans unpicks just transition as a cause for Greens.



## Just Transition Is About Systemic Change

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*Green European Journal*: Just transition is a central concept today. It guides the work of

*A just transition as an overarching framework that can guide us through a systemic transformation to a new social, ecological society that is equitable.*

Dirk Holemans: It's important to frame just transition as an overarching framework that can guide us through a systemic transformation to a new social, ecological society that is equitable. It's not about superficially greening the economy. We've been trying that since the Kyoto climate conference in 1990 without success: yearly emissions increased by 60 per cent.



Image by Zuzana Ruzickova on Unsplash

of nature that we are suffering. It was the only way to say to the representatives of states and civil society in general: "Here lies the problem. So let's discuss values and find fair solutions".



## "GDP as a real indicator of progress is one of the biggest fallacies in our society"

An interview

Unai Pascual and Gorka Castillo

Humans have been pushing the boundaries of the world for years. The impact of their activity on the Earth's biodiversity is truly profound. The speed of climate change, revealed in all the regular reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is only evidence of an even more profound crisis: nature is dying. On 7 July in Bonn, a select team of international scientists and experts presented a detailed paper on the multiple values of a healthy forest or ocean and why they are not taken into account in the decisions that determine the world's future. Scientists argue that this is the Gordan knot in the decline of the Earth's ecosystems. The issue deserves an explanation.



Photo by Felipe Carillo on Unsplash

The document, commissioned by the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), is summarised in 33 overwhelming pages: "If the institutions involved in decision-making continue to see nature only as a place to exploit resources, we are heading for disaster" details Unai Pascual (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1973), PhD in Ecological Economics and main coordinator of this study, presented and defended by the scientific community before the 139 States that make up this platform and whose approval by consensus was indispensable for the report to see the light of day. "The war in Ukraine is serving as a perfect excuse to delay the structural changes that the global economy needs", he specifies. This is why negotiating the terms in which the criticisms of the economic and political system were exposed proved to be titanic. "It was a diplomatic chess game. One has to learn to think about what the negotiators' next move is and what the critical points and red lines of each country are," adds Pascual.

TSGA/Brief02/0856/April 2023/Unai Pascual and Gorka Castillo

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## GDP AS A REAL INDICATOR OF PROGRESS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST FALLACIES IN OUR SOCIETY— Unai Pascual and Gorka Castillo

Market-based governance is so entrenched that intrinsic and relational values always end up losing out. And with them, biodiversity and the sustainability of life. The dominance of the short-sighted view of nature is largely underpinned by the short-sighted neoliberal system, its free market ideology and the mantra of economic growth. Couple this with GDP, as real indicator of economic progress and the compass of a policy that only considers goods and services that pass through the market, and we have a problem because it is one of the biggest fallacies in our society. Nature has many other well-being values that are not traded on its markets, but that bring us well-being. And if we unbalance these values in our decision-making, we automatically break the balance in our relationship with the environment. We are not aware that in addition to living from nature, we also live with it, in it and even like it. Unfortunately, only the first option takes precedence in economic and political decision-making. For this reason, we consider it essential to focus on institutions and how they influence us when it comes to understanding what progress means. To do so, we had to question the role of the actors who hold the levers of power and impose certain values on others. Thus, we dissected the system in layers as if it were an onion until we reached the core of the issue, the socio-ecological crisis, the underlying causes that provoke the accelerated degradation

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## THERE WILL BE NO ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION WITHOUT A SOCIAL AND LABOUR TRANSITION — Vicente López

*The energy model must be changed. But even more urgent is a transformation that addresses the limitation of wealth, consumption and the necessary sharing of labour.*



## There will be no ecological transition without a social and labour transition

*The energy model must be changed. But even more urgent is a transformation that addresses the limitation of wealth, consumption and the necessary sharing of labour.*

Vicente López

At present, practically no one doubts the need for an ecological transition. For example, the April 2022 CS survey showed that 81.1% of the Spanish population was very concerned about climate change. Environmental denialism, although it exists, seems to retreat in the face of the overwhelming evidence of the negative effects of our way of life on nature. Significance, as for the first time in history, humankind would have a tool that makes it possible to interfere with the evolutionary process of living organisms fundamentally and to permanently eliminate species.

There are, however, political disagreements about how and with what intensity environmental measures should be tackled, especially in the field of energy.

The reason is quite simple: people are well aware of the consequences of these measures on economic growth and, therefore, on the level of employment and income distribution. The escalating prices that we are experiencing, whose origin is determined, among others, by the prices of energy, raw materials and the problems in the supply chains, are leading to a process of impoverishment of the majority of the population, especially of working men and women, while corporate margins are increasing



Parade a l'ajuntament de Barcelona després de la manifestació del 24 de juliol. Foto: Lluís

TSGA/Brief02/0870/June 2023/Vicente López

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## THE CASE FOR NOT FLYING — Fabrizio Menardo

*Although aviation accounts for 2.8 per cent of global CO2 emissions, its harmful impact rarely rises on the climate action agenda. In a globalised economy with businesses and lifestyles built around air travel, flying can be a hard habit to shake. To Fabrizio Menardo, individuals must make behavioural changes and policymakers must address the socio-economic challenges in the sector to bring travel in line with climate goals.*

In 2015, under the famed Paris Agreement, almost every country on Earth pledged to limit the global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels and "pursue efforts" to keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities have already caused around 1.1 degrees of warming, leading to an increase in extreme weather and climate events such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, and droughts. Many of these impacts will last for centuries, and their magnitude will grow in line with cumulative future emissions. The IPCC estimates that, in order to achieve a 67 per cent



probability of staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius, our cumulative CO2 emissions from the beginning of 2020 must remain below 400 billion tonnes. Current annual CO2 emissions stand at around 35 billion tonnes.



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Image by Shalek, Seattle via iStockphoto

The climate impact of air travel

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, aviation was responsible for more than one billion tonnes of CO2 emissions every year, representing around 2.8 per cent of global emissions. This proportion is somewhat larger in many high-income countries. Aviation is one of the primary drivers of the extreme differences in personal carbon footprints across the global population. It is believed that around 80 per cent of the world's almost 8 billion inhabitants have never flown. At the

with you dealing with these ten controversial questions, some twenty years after Marx's Ecology.



## Ten Questions About Marx—More Than Twenty Years After Marx's Ecology

John Bellamy Foster and Roberto Andrés

Roberto Andrés: I have long wanted to interview you about a book that was decisive in my intellectual formation: Marx's Ecology. This book was published in 2000 in English and immediately translated into Spanish and inaugurated what has become known as second generation ecosocialism, which recognises the ecological conception of Karl Marx, unlike the previous generation. However, in the more than twenty years since, Marx's Ecology not only opened a wide debate but was also the object of multiple criticisms (it could not be otherwise). Later, you and Paul Burkett, author of Marx and Nature, published an anti-critique: Marx and the Earth, where you rigorously answered each of those criticisms. And then Kohei Saito further extended this line of inquiry with Karl Marx's Ecosocialism. All of this has led me to wonder about the answers you gave in 2000 to ten controversial questions that have puzzled analysts of Marx's vast theoretical corpus for a long time. Given the debates over the last two decades, would you answer these ten questions the same way you did in 2000 with Marx's Ecology? I tend to believe that, in general terms, much progress has been made during this time in this line of research. That is why I would like to do a very specific interview with you dealing with these ten controversial questions, some twenty years after Marx's Ecology.

John Bellamy Foster: I am of course pleased to provide answers to your questions with respect to Marx and my book Marx's Ecology two decades after its publication. My views have remained generally the same, though they naturally have been refined over the years. Nevertheless, I am glad to offer some clarifications.

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NATO and the Long War on the Third World — Pawel Wargan — They say to me: Eat and drink. Be glad you have it! But how can I eat and drink if I snatch what I eat From the starving, and My glass of water belongs to one dying of thirst? And yet I eat and drink.

—Bertolt Brecht

For the first time in capitalism's long history, the global economic center of gravity is shifting decisively eastward. The balance of trade now favours China, and the nations of the Third World are preparing for the end of the era of U.S. hegemony, a period of enforced imbalances in the world-capitalist system that accelerated the underdevelopment of postcolonial societies. The tectonic movements unleashed by this process are sending tremors around the globe. The so-called "Western world," formed over centuries by the dominance of capital, is impotent in the face of the catastrophes of hunger, poverty, and climate change. Barred from marshalling their economic might towards the betterment of society—a process that would challenge the preeminence of private property—the old

colonial powers are siphoning resources toward the protection of private wealth. Fascism is rearing its head, and fresh crosshairs are being painted on nations seeking to embark on the path of sovereign development. In this way, the counterrevolutionary drive of the old Cold War is carried forward into a new century, once again filled with promise and terror in equal measure.



## NATO and the Long War on the Third World

Pawel Wargan

The Two Axes of Counterrevolution

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In the twentieth century, the colonial counterrevolution would play out along two geographic axes. One was the war of Western nations against the cascading process of emancipation unleashed in the east. In 1917, men and women with sweaty brows and calloused hands seized power in Russia. They would achieve what no peoples had yet been able to



They say to me: Eat and drink. Be glad you have it! But how can I eat and drink if I snatch what I eat From the starving, and My glass of water belongs to one dying of thirst? And yet I eat and drink! —Bertolt Brecht

1 \* Bertolt Brecht, "To Humanity," Chicago Labor and Arts Festival (Jörg), chlabarts.wordpress.com.  
TBCA/Issue50-51-48: April 2023/Pawel Wargan

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THE RETURN OF THE DIALECTICS OF NATURE: THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AS NECESSITY — John Bellamy Foster



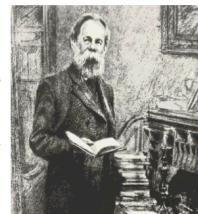
## The Return of the Dialectics of Nature: The Struggle for Freedom as Necessity

John Bellamy Foster

It is a fundamental premise of Marxism that as material conditions change, so do our ideas about the world in which we live. Today we are seeing a vast transformation in the relations of human society to the natural-physical world of which it is a part, evident in the emergence of what is now referred to as the Anthropocene Epoch in geological history, during which an "anthropogenic rift" in the biogeochemical cycles of the earth, arising from the capitalist system, is now threatening to destroy the earth as a safe home for humanity and for innumerable species that live on it on a timeline not of centuries, but of decades. The point today is not simply to understand the world, but to change it before it is too late.

"anthropogenic rift" in the biogeochemical cycles of the earth, arising from the capitalist system, is now threatening to destroy the earth as a safe home for humanity and for innumerable species that live on it on a timeline not of centuries, but of decades. This necessarily demands a more dialectical conception of the relation of humanity to what Karl Marx called the "universal metabolism of nature." The point today is not simply to understand the world, but to change it before it is too late.

Given that Marxism has been, since its conception in the mid-nineteenth century, the primary basis of the critique of capitalist society, it naturally could be expected to lead the way in the ecological critique of capitalism. But while



Frederick Engels, Drawing by N. Zhukov, 1930s, Museum of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Moscow.

1 \* Clive Hamilton and Jacques Godeval, "Was the Anthropocene Antiquated?" Anthropocene Review, 2, no. 1 (2015): 39–72.  
2 \* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, vol. 30, New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004, 54–66.

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## MATERIALISTIC VALUE ORIENTATION AND WELLBEING — Helga Dittmar — Amy Isham



### Materialistic Value Orientation and Wellbeing

Helga Dittmar, Amy Isham

Abstract

People with a strong materialistic value orientation (MVO) believe that the acquisition of more money and expensive material possessions will improve their wellbeing and social standing.

Striving for evermore money and material goods as a means of improving wellbeing often undermines quality of life.

Paradoxically, striving for evermore money and material goods as a means of improving wellbeing often undermines quality of life. This paper documents how MVO has been linked to poorer wellbeing across different facets of wellbeing (personal, social, and environmental) and that these negative associations have been recorded across the lifespan.

When people view the acquisition of products as a means of improving their image, increasing their happiness, or achieving a certain social status, this often has detrimental effects on their wellbeing.

to material possessions.

Consumption itself is neither good nor bad for wellbeing. What matters is the motives driving the acquisition of a product and how people relate to the items they are buying. If someone purchases an item with the intention to learn a



Image by Jacob Velez on Unsplash

recorded across the lifespan. However, it also shows that the link is complex in that it can be moderated by certain personal and cultural factors and is bidirectional in its nature. By demonstrating a predominantly negative effect of MVO on wellbeing, the evidence highlights a need for interventions to reduce MVO and alter how people relate to material possessions.

Consumption itself is neither good nor bad for wellbeing. What matters is the motives driving the acquisition of a product and how people relate to the items they are buying. If someone purchase an item with the intention to learn a new skill using it, or to gift it to another individual as a sign of their love, this may enhance their wellbeing. However, when people view the acquisition of products as a means of improving their image, increasing their happiness, or achieving a certain social status, this often has detrimental effects on their wellbeing. This latter view can be described as a materialistic value orientation (MVO).

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## URBAN GREEN COMMONS FOR SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES —Stephan Barthel, Johan Colding, Anne Sofie Hiswåls, Peder Thalén and Päivi Turunen



### Urban Green Commons for Socially Sustainable Cities and Communities

Stephan Barthel, Johan Colding, Anne Sofie Hiswåls, Peder Thalén and Päivi Turunen

Abstract

In these times of global pandemics and climate crisis, social sustainability has become a crucial issue within diverse sectors and disciplines. This article aims to broaden the discussions on social sustainability in general, and in relation to community work within professional social work in particular. By means of a cross-disciplinary bricolage approach—with a focus on the commons—we aim to construct a holistic view of urban social sustainability. Beginning with the Anthropocene concept, which recognises the human impact on the Earth's natural systems and hence highlights the need to include the natural environment as a determinant of good and fair living conditions for all, we remix arguments and examples relating to social sustainability with environmental and spatial dimensions to develop an urban green commons. Our cross-disciplinary perspective extends beyond contemporary social policy by bringing together natural resource management, public health, and spiritual aspects of the commons. In order to fit the plurality of urban contexts across the planet, further critical deliberations are needed, focusing on social sustainability and collective action for sustainable change in each context.



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Introduction

Unsanitation is amongst the primary characteristics of the Anthropocene (West 2017). It is a concept that carries emblematic significance, designating a generally negative human impact on the environment (Barthel et al. 2019). The

TJCSA/Rev0501 (Rev01) March 2023/Stephan Barthel et al.

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## LULA'S RETURN AND THE LEGACY OF DESTRUCTION — Rosa Maria Marques and Paulo Nakatani



### Lula's Return and the Legacy of Destruction

Rosa Maria Marques and Paulo Nakatani

The Results of the 2022 Election and the Lula-Alckmin Candidacy

On November 30, 2022, in the second round of the Brazilian presidential elections, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected President of the Republic for an unprecedented third term. The difference in votes in relation to his opponent, Jair Bolsonaro, was only 2,139,645, smaller than that which occurred in the contest between ex-president Dilma Rousseff and her challenger, Aécio Neves, in 2014. It was also the first time since the country's re-democratisation that a sitting president was not re-elected. Compared to the first round, Bolsonaro increased his total votes by 7,134,009, and Lula by 3,086,495. To achieve this, Bolsonaro used all available means, including the politicisation of benefits aimed at low-income populations in some Brazilian municipalities and concerted attempts to prevent voters in the Northeast Region of Brazil from accessing polling stations by obstructing several roads. In the end, Lula received a total of 60,345,999 votes, and Bolsonaro, 58,206,354.<sup>1</sup>

Lula won in thirteen of the twenty-six states, particularly in the Northeast—one of the country's poorest regions—registering one state victory each in the North, Central-West, and Southeast regions. Compared to the result of 2018, when Bolsonaro defeated Fernando Haddad, Lula, the Workers' Party candidate, also increased his vote in the other states. Lula's win was due to both the overwhelming loyalty of his voters in the Northeast and to the growth of support in



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President\_Lula\_11\_2022.jpg, Ricardo Konder/Agf / Wikimedia Commons

<sup>1</sup> “Eleição Geral Ordinária 2022: Presidente,” Justiça Eleitoral, resultados.bre.jus.br.

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Lula was elected by the democratic group Frente Ampla (Broad Front), also known as the Coligação Brasil Esperança (Brazilian Hope Coalition). This coalition brought together extremely diverse political forces, including political leaders who until recently would not even speak to each other.

The union of so many disparate groups and classes expresses a recognition of the absolute necessity of preventing Bolsonaro from continuing in government. The contest was presented as a struggle between civilisation and barbarism. Not only did the Bolsonaro government promote the dismantling (using the word in its literal and not figurative sense) of the state—thereby implementing brutal, previously unthinkable, reductions in resources for education, for science and technology, and for programs aimed at women, among others—it also armed the population, promoted the largest deforestation of the Amazon region in Brazil's history, and inflamed racism, sexism, religious intolerance, attacks on Indigenous peoples, and hatred toward LGBTQIA+ groups.

On the economic and social plane, the destruction has been no less dramatic. As an indication, investment (private and public) has never been so low, and Brazil has reappeared on the Map of Hunger, Poverty and Food Insecurity.

This situation, briefly described above, does not mean that nobody benefited from the policies implemented by Bolsonaro and, before him, by Michel Temer, who assumed the presidency when Rousseff was removed from office. Quite the opposite: in addition to serving interest-bearing capital in the form of large national banks, foreign pension and investment funds, and Petrobras shareholders, who link their pricing policy to the international market, they served the interests of agribusiness through the unprecedented liberation of the use of pesticides and the abandonment of surveillance and fines that previously inhibited exploitation of land in the Amazon Rainforest; of unrestricted mining and extraction firms through state-sanctioned trespassing onto Indigenous lands and the Amazon; and of those involved with the production and sale of weapons and with the criminality associated with, or developed by, militias in important capitals and cities.

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## ON ENERGY TRANSITIONS AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS — Jorge Riechmann

A notable editorial in *Nature*, in March 2022, vindicates the 1972 study *The Limits to Growth* (the first of the reports to the Club of Rome) and notes that "although there is now a consensus on the irreversible effects of human activities on the environment, researchers disagree on solutions, especially if these involve slowing economic growth. This disagreement prevents action. It is time for researchers to put an end to their debate. The world needs them to focus on the larger goals of halting catastrophic environmental destruction and improving well-being". The *Nature* editorial goes on to argue that the debate today, having accepted the existence of biophysical limits to growth, centres on two main positions, green growth versus degrowth, and that they should make an effort to dialogue with each other.

This is a central debate, no doubt, which is modulated and reiterated at different levels. To come closer to home: a friend (and fellow activist in *Ecologistas en Acción*) told me in June 2022 that the debate on the ecological transition (and the energy transition in particular) is extraordinarily complicated.

It also divides us within the environmental movements themselves. "The question is whether we can get to where we want to be (a society that respects biophysical limits) by starting from an industrialised system, modifying it and reducing it, or whether we can do it directly. And we do not seem to have much time for either option. The approach is the same as in the *Nature* editorial.

I would say that the situation in the third decade of the third millennium is that tragic: we cannot avoid a hellish climate without an emergency economic contraction (in the Global North), rushing out of capitalist relations of production. And it is doubtful, of course, that such a transformation is on our horizon... But let us take it one step at a time.

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## LIMITS TO SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE: A MONOPOLY CAPITAL CRITIQUE — Benjamin Selwyn



### Limits to Supply Chain Resilience: A Monopoly Capital Critique

Benjamin Selwyn

As the COVID-19 pandemic expanded across the world in early 2020, it generated the "first global supply chain crisis." Global supply chains represent the integrative structure of contemporary global capitalism, and any disruption to them potentially threatens the functioning of the system itself.

In response to the crisis, the global supply chain community, encompassing academics and policymakers keen to promote their purported benefits, are proposing ways to increase supply chain "resilience." The notion has been defined by the World Trade Organization and Asian Development Bank as

There is mounting evidence to suggest that [these chains] represent organisational forms of capitalism designed to raise the rate of surplus value extraction from labour by capital and facilitate its geographic transfer from the Global South to the Global North.

"the ability of these chains to anticipate and prepare for severe disruptions in a way that maximises capacity to absorb shocks, adapt to new realities, and re-establish optimised operations in the shortest possible time." Enhanced global supply chain resilience is to be pursued through a range of policies to be implemented by lead firm managers and supported by states.

<sup>1</sup> Stefano Felsa, "Why Coronavirus Triggered the First Global Supply Chain Crisis," *Promarket Blog*, March 5, 2020.  
<sup>2</sup> Rajag Neng, Elizabeth Goss, and David Dallas, *Global Value Chain Development Report 2021* (World Trade Organization, November 2021), 154.  
 WTC/SDP/20-1130 July 2022 Benjamin Selwyn



Thousands of shipping containers at the terminal of Port of Los Angeles. Photo by Getty Images. Image ID: 1241774. America's Coastline Collection. Source: Caputo-Albert C. "Threats," NOAA Corps 441, 2014/2014.

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While global supply chains are promoted as generating positive gains—for firms and workers, North and South—there is mounting evidence to suggest that they represent organisational forms of capitalism designed to raise the rate of surplus value extraction from labour by capital and facilitate its geographic transfer from the Global South to the Global North. As demonstrated in a previous *Monthly Review* article ("World Development under Monopoly Capitalism," November 2021), global supply chains have contributed to dynamics of concentration in leading firms, and a marked shift in national income from labour to capital across much of the world.

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## WHERE WE MINE: RESOURCE POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA – Annabelle Dawson – Thea Riofrancos



### Where We Mine: Resource Politics in Latin America

Annabelle Dawson – Thea Riofrancos

As the drive to expand renewable energy capacity speeds up, there is a rush for lithium and other materials around the world. What will the expansion of rare earth mining in Latin America mean for the indigenous communities and workers who have historically borne the harms of extractivism? Thea Riofrancos, author of *Resource Radicals* (Duke University Press, 2020), explains how the energy transition in the Global North risks being anything but just without structural changes to supply chains and the governance of extractive industries.

Annabelle Dawson: Your work explores the politics of resource extraction in Latin America, from oil in Ecuador to lithium in Chile. How do you define resource politics or extractivism?



Image by: Shana McLendon via Unsplash

Thea Riofrancos: Resource politics refers to any social or political activity – whether conflict, collaboration, political economy or social mobilisation – that's attributed to the extraction of resources, and in some cases to stop resource extraction. Scholarship tends to see resource politics as primarily related to elites like state officials and corporate actors. This is pivotal, for example, to the concept of the resource curse, which holds that dependency on resource rents leads to authoritarianism. However, this focus overlooks a range of resource politics such as social movements that oppose extractive projects or demand better regulation and indigenous rights.

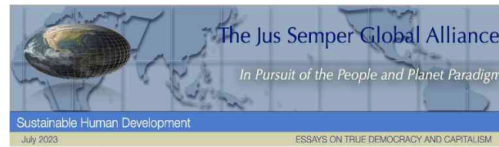
TSCA/BriefSO (BCT1) July 2023/A. Dawson, T. Riofrancos

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## ECOLOGICAL CIVILISATION, ECOLOGICAL REVOLUTION — John Bellamy Foster — An Ecological Marxist Perspective

I would like to speak to you today about the connections between ecological civilisation, ecological Marxism, and ecological revolution, and the ways in which these three concepts, when taken together dialectically, can be seen as pointing to a new revolutionary praxis for the twenty-first century. More concretely, I would like to ask: How are we to understand the origins and historic significance of the concept of ecological civilisation? What is its relation to ecological Marxism? And how is all of this connected to the worldwide revolutionary struggle aimed at transcending our current planetary emergency and protecting what Karl Marx called “the chain of human generations,” together with life in general?



### Ecological Civilisation, Ecological Revolution An Ecological Marxist Perspective

John Bellamy Foster

I would like to speak to you today about the connections between ecological civilisation, ecological Marxism, and ecological revolution, and the ways in which these three concepts, when taken together dialectically, can be seen as pointing to a new revolutionary praxis for the twenty-first century. More concretely, I would like to ask: How are we to understand the origins and historic significance of the concept of ecological civilisation? What is its relation to ecological Marxism? And how is all of this connected to the worldwide revolutionary struggle aimed at transcending our current planetary emergency and protecting what Karl Marx called “the chain of human generations,” together with life in general?

In 2018, cultural theorist Jeremy Lent, author of *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* (2017), wrote an article for the online site *EcoWatch*, entitled “What Does China's ‘Ecological Civilization’ Mean for Humanity's Future?” This article exhibits a peculiarly Western view, which, while recognising the distinctiveness of the notion of ecological civilisation in China, nevertheless attempts to separate China's core conception in this regard from ecological Marxism and the critique of capitalism. In opening his article, Lent writes:



Aerial photo taken on Sept. 16, 2020 of China's new socialist town in Shuang County, Shuang County of southwest China's Shaanxi Province. Efforts to create more livable towns feature with world's planned ecological environment, with history and ecology. Source: China's call to green development, advances ecological civilisation position paper, *People's Daily*, September 21, 2020.

conception in this regard from ecological Marxism and the critique of capitalism. In opening his article, Lent writes:

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3 (London: Penguin, 1981), 754.

TSCA/BriefSO (BCT1) July 2023/John Bellamy Foster

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## WHICH FUTURE ARE WE LIVING IN? — Paul Raskin



### Which Future Are We Living In?

—Opening Essay for a GTI Forum<sup>1</sup>

Paul Raskin

Two tumultuous decades have passed since the publication of *Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead*, the essay that prompted the formation of the Great Transition Initiative (GTI). Although the ambient pessimism of 2022 darkens the twentieth anniversary of a treatise that harboured hope for the future, it is also good reason to reflect on the durability of its message.

From the vantage point of 2002, GT envisioned contrasting scenarios for the twenty-first century. Now, standing partway into that unknown future, we are witnesses to how lived history collapsed all the possibilities into a single path—so far. The moment is propitious for locating where we are and where we are headed—and for recalibrating our conceptual framework and action agenda.

Rereading *Great Transition*

To some extent, GT shows its age: the expiration date has passed on certain details, and some formulations are a bit long in the tooth. Still, time's passing has only bolstered the essay's core premise: A world-historic shift is underway from the Modern Era to, in GT's coinage, the Planetary Phase of Civilisation. From modernity's centuries of transformation and expansion emerged something new under the sun: a global social-ecological system.

As a corollary, this perspective of an epochal shift in progress sees the polycrisis proliferating and intensifying around us—climate change, biological extinction, economic instability and inequality, geo-conflict, pandemic, and so on—as the

<sup>1</sup> See the forum page: <https://www.greattransition.org/gti-forum/which-future-are-we-living-in>

TSCA/BriefSO (BCT1) August 2022/Clare Martin



Photo by: Dave Scantle via Unsplash

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## THE SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION: FACT, FICTION OR SPECULATION? — Robert H. Cowie, Philippe Bouchet, Benoît Fontaine



### The Sixth Mass Extinction: fact, fiction or speculation?

Robert H. Cowie, Philippe Bouchet, Benoît Fontaine

Abstract

There have been five Mass Extinction events in the history of Earth's biodiversity, all caused by dramatic but natural phenomena. It has been claimed that the Sixth Mass Extinction may be underway, this time caused entirely by humans. Although considerable evidence indicates that there is a biodiversity crisis of increasing extinctions and plummeting abundances, some do not accept that this amounts to a Sixth Mass Extinction. Often, they use the IUCN Red List to support their stance, arguing that the rate of species loss does not differ from the background rate. However, the Red List is heavily biased: almost all birds and mammals but only a minute fraction of invertebrates have been evaluated against conservation criteria. Incorporating estimates of the true number of invertebrate extinctions leads to the conclusion that the rate vastly exceeds the background rate and that we may indeed be witnessing the start of the Sixth Mass Extinction. As an example, we focus on molluscs, the second largest phylum in numbers of known species, and, extrapolating boldly, estimate that, since around AD 1500, possibly as many as 7.5–13% (150,000–260,000) of all ~2 million known species have already gone extinct, orders of magnitude greater than the 0.04% on the Red List. We review differences in extinction rates according to realms: marine species face significant threats but, although previous mass extinctions were largely defined by marine invertebrates, there is no evidence that the marine biota has reached the same crisis as the non-marine biota. Island species have suffered far greater rates than continental ones. Plants face similar conservation biases as do invertebrates, although there are hints they may have suffered lower



Image by: Chris Lacey via Unsplash

TSCA/BriefSO (BCT1) July 2023/R. H. Cowie et al.

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We review differences in extinction rates according to realms: marine species face significant threats but, although previous mass extinctions were largely defined by marine invertebrates, there is no evidence that the marine biota has reached the same crisis as the non-marine biota. Island species have suffered far greater rates than continental ones. Plants face similar conservation biases as do invertebrates, although there are hints they may have suffered lower extinction rates. There are also those who do not deny an extinction crisis but accept it as a new trajectory of evolution, because humans are part of the natural world; some even embrace it, with a desire to manipulate it for human benefit.

We take issue with these stances. Humans are the only species able to manipulate the Earth on a grand scale, and they have allowed the current crisis to happen. Despite multiple conservation initiatives at various levels, most are not species oriented (certain charismatic vertebrates excepted) and specific actions to protect every living species individually are simply unfeasible because of the tyranny of numbers. As systematic biologists, we encourage the nurturing of the innate human appreciation of biodiversity, but we reaffirm the message that the biodiversity that makes our world so fascinating, beautiful and functional is vanishing unnoticed at an unprecedented rate. In the face of a mounting crisis, scientists must adopt the practices of preventive archaeology, and collect and document as many species as possible before they disappear. All this depends on reviving the venerable study of natural history and taxonomy. Denying the crisis, simply accepting it and doing nothing, or even embracing it for the ostensible benefit of humanity, are not appropriate options and pave the way for the

runaway private consumption by building a sufficiency economy with ceilings to income, wealth and consumption. This would require a further extension of state capacities and welfare state interventions. The article provides a framework for comparing and developing these two very different approaches.



## Two Scenarios for Sustainable Welfare: A Framework for an Eco-Social Contract

Ian Gough

Abstract

More nation states are now committing to zero net carbon by 2050 at the latest, which is encouraging, but none have faced up to the transformation of economies, societies and lives that this will entail. This article considers two scenarios for a fair transition to net zero, concentrating only on climate change, and discusses the implications for contemporary 'welfare states'. The first is the Green New Deal framework coupled with a 'social guarantee'. I argue that expanded public provision of essential goods and services would be a necessary component of this strategy. The second scenario goes further to counteract runaway private consumption by building a sufficiency economy with ceilings to income, wealth and consumption. This would require a further extension of state capacities and welfare state interventions. The article provides a framework for comparing and developing these two very different approaches.

Introduction: Two scenarios and a framework

In June 2019 the UK became the first major economy to commit to a legally binding target of zero net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Since then the EU, Japan and Korea have followed suit, President Biden has rapidly but as yet informally committed the USA, and China has set a target for 'climate neutrality' by 2060. A recent audit of countries, states, regions and cities finds net zero targets in place covering 61 per cent of global GHGs, two thirds of global GDP and 56 per cent of the world's population (Oxford Net Zero, 2021).

TBCA essay/SD 61486 June 2023/ Ian Gough

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## ON TECHNOLOGY AND DEGROWTH—Jason Hickel



### On Technology and Degrowth

Jason Hickel

I want to address a problem that seems to arise repeatedly in public discussions about green growth and degrowth. Some prominent commentators seem to assume that the debate here is primarily about the question of technology, with green growth promoting technological solutions to the ecological crisis while degrowth promotes only economic and social solutions (and in the most egregious misrepresentation is cast as "anti-technology"). This narrative is inaccurate, and even a cursory review of the literature is enough to make this clear. In fact, degrowth scholarship embraces technological change and efficiency improvements, to the extent (crucially) that these are empirically feasible, ecologically coherent, and socially just. But it also recognises that this alone will not be enough: economic and social transformations are also necessary, including a transition out of capitalism. The debate is therefore not primarily about technology, but about science, justice, and the structure of the economic system.

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It is now well-established that green growth scenarios suffer from a difficult problem. They start with the assumption that the rich countries in the "core" of the world-system should continue to increase aggregate production and consumption ('growth') for the rest of the century. But growth does not come out of thin air. It requires energy. Rich countries already

TBCA essay/SD 61075 September 2023/ Jason Hickel



High-speed train at Shanghai Station, China January 20, 2007. By Chengxin Cheng. Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0. Link.

technology, with green growth promoting technological solutions to the ecological crisis while degrowth promotes only economic and social solutions (and in the most egregious misrepresentation is cast as "anti-technology"). This narrative is inaccurate, and even a cursory review of the literature is enough to make this clear. In fact, degrowth scholarship embraces technological change and efficiency improvements, to the extent (crucially) that these are empirically feasible, ecologically coherent, and socially just. But it also recognises that this alone will not be enough: economic and social transformations are also necessary, including a transition out of capitalism. The debate is therefore not primarily about technology, but about science, justice, and the structure of the economic system.

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## WORLD DEVELOPMENT UNDER MONOPOLY CAPITALISM — Benjamin Selwyn and Dara Leyden

*One of the main effects (I will not say purposes) of orthodox traditional economics was...a plan for explaining to the privileged class that their position was morally right and was necessary for the welfare of society.*

—Joan Robinson



### World Development under Monopoly Capitalism

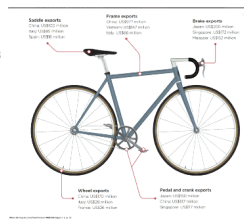
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Benjamin Selwyn and Dara Leyden

Introduction

The recent period of globalisation—following the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the reintegration of China into the world economy—is one where global value chains have become the dominant organisational form of capitalism. From low to high tech, basic consumer goods to heavy capital equipment, food to services, goods are now produced across many countries, integrated through global value chains. According to the International Labour Organization, between 1995 and 2013 the number of people employed in global value chains rose from 216 to 453 million, amounting to one in five jobs in the global economy.<sup>2</sup> We are living in a global value chain world.<sup>3</sup>



Where do bicycles come from? Source: VED2020, Figure 1.1, pp. 16.

<sup>1</sup> Joan Robinson, *Essays in the Theory of Employment* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 176.

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Organization, *World Employment Social Outlook: The Changing Nature of Jobs* (Geneva: ILO, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick W. Mayer and Nicola Phillips, "Outsourcing Coexistence: Sales and the Politics of a 'Global Value Chain World,'" *New Political Economy* 22, no. 2 (2017): 134–52.

TBCA essay/SD 60136/August 2023/ Ben Selwyn & Dara Leyden

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International Labour Organization, between 1995 and 2013 the number of people employed in global value chains rose from 296 to 453 million, amounting to one in five jobs in the global economy. We are living in a global value chain world.

The big question is whether this global value chain world is contributing to, or detracting from, real human development. Is it establishing a more equal, less exploitative, less poverty-ridden world? Which political economic frameworks are best placed to illuminate and explain the workings of this world?

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## THE CASE FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC SERVICES — Ian Gough



### The Case for Universal Basic Services

Ian Gough

#### Abstract

This paper shifts the focus from transfers to public services. It mounts a case for Universal Basic Services (UBS): a proposal to safeguard and develop existing public services and to extend this model of provision into new areas. The first part argues that public services require a distinct conceptual justification and sets this out in terms of shared human needs and a foundational economy. The second part develops the normative arguments for UBS, in terms of efficiency, equality, solidarity and sustainability. The third part considers some of the issues to be faced in delivering UBS and the role of state institutions, with brief illustrations of adult social care and live transport service provisions. The final section summarises some developments, including experience of Covid-19, which might enhance the political impetus for UBS.



Image by [Pamela Du Plessis on Unsplash](#)

#### Introduction

In his original Report, Beveridge largely focused on how money transfers and social insurance could alleviate poverty, addressing the first 'giant' of Want. The success of this system, however, was premised on the provision of a wide range of services in kind that would directly tackle Beveridge's four other giants: a National Health Service (Disease), public education (Ignorance), public housing (Squalor), and a range of employment policies (Idleness). Beveridge assumed that social transfers could only be effective if situated on a strong foundation of public services in kind.

This paper focuses on the latter issues. It develops the case for Universal Basic Services (UBS), a system which safeguards and develops existing public services while also extending such a model of provision into new areas. The

## THE NEW IRRATIONALISM — John Bellamy Foster

More than a century after the commencement of the Great Crisis of 1914–1945, represented by the First World War, the Great Depression, and Second World War, we are seeing a sudden resurgence of war and fascism across the globe. The capitalist world economy as a whole is now characterised by deepening stagnation, financialization, and soaring inequality. All of this is accompanied by the prospect of planetary omnicide in the dual forms of nuclear holocaust and climate destabilisation. In this dangerous context, the very notion of human reason is frequently being called into question. It is therefore necessary to address once again the question of the relation of imperialism or monopoly capitalism to the destruction of reason and the ramifications of this for contemporary class and anti-imperialist struggles.



### The New Irrationalism

John Bellamy Foster

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In 1953, Georg Lukács, whose 1923 History and Class Consciousness had inspired the Western Marxist philosophical tradition, published his magisterial work, *The Destruction of Reason*, on the close relation of philosophical irrationalism to capitalism, imperialism, and fascism.<sup>1</sup> Lukács's work set off a firestorm among Western left theorists seeking to accommodate themselves to the new American imperialism. In 1963, George Lichtheim, a self-styled socialist operating within the general tradition of Western Marxism while virulently opposed to Soviet Marxism, wrote an article for *Encounter Magazine*, then covertly funded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in which he vehemently attacked the *Destruction of Reason* and other works by Lukács. Lichtheim accused Lukács of generating an "intellectual



The Story of Reason Production Mistakes, funny about nothing in Francisco Goya's satirical *Los Caprichos* (c.1798). Cover design dedicated to John J. Stevens.

<sup>1</sup> Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1953), English translation, *The Destruction of Reason* (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> *JCSA Essay* SD 01148 September 2023 John Bellamy Foster

Today, Reason demands that both exploitation and expropriation, and the related exterminist tendencies of our time, be overcome. That can only be accomplished, as Baran noted in the 1960s, on the basis of "the identity of the material interests of a class [or class-based social forces] with... Reason's criticism of the existing irrationality." The source of such an identity of "material interests with a class" currently lies primarily in the Global South, and with those revolutionary-scale movements everywhere seeking to overturn the entire capitalist-colonial-imperialist system for the sake of humanity and the earth.

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## PLANNED DEGROWTH: ECOSOCIALISM AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT — John Bellamy Foster

*All important concepts are dialectically vague at the margins.* —Herman E. Daly



### Planned Degrowth: Ecosocialism and Sustainable Human Development

*All important concepts are dialectically vague at the margins.* —Herman E. Daly<sup>1</sup>

John Bellamy Foster

The word degrowth stands for a family of political-economic approaches that, in the face of today's accelerating planetary ecological crisis, reject unlimited, exponential economic growth as the definition of human progress. To abandon economic growth in wealthy societies means to shift to zero net capital formation. With continual technological development and the enhancement of human capabilities, mere replacement investment is able to promote steady qualitative advancements in production in mature industrial societies, while eliminating exploitative labor conditions and reducing working hours. Coupled with global redistribution of the social surplus product and reduction of waste, this would allow for vast improvements in the lives of most people. Degrowth, which specifically targets the most opulent sectors of the world population, is thus directed at the enhancement of the living conditions of the vast majority while maintaining the environmental conditions of existence and promoting sustainable human development.<sup>2</sup>

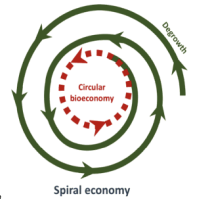


Illustration of Degrowth. Figure 1 from Foster (2023), "Toward a Dialectical Approach to the Global Ecological Crisis of Land Production, and Food Loss and Waste Management: Toward a Circular Bioeconomy." *Sustainable* 15(9):1719 (2023).

<sup>1</sup> Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>2</sup> In Marxist terms, degrowth stands for a shift from expanded reproduction in terms of material throughput to simple reproduction. See Paul M. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 75–90. The premonition of a steady-state economy (instead of simple reproduction in the context of a full-world economy) is the late Herman E. Daly in works such as *Beyond Growth and Steady-State Economics*. Daly was a sharp critic of the existing capitalist economy and frequently made predictions in his analysis. However, his approach to steady-state economics was originally inspired by John Stuart Mill's conception of the "stationary state" and like Mill, sought, in Marx's words, to "reconcile the irreconcilables" of capital and labor, seeing a no-growth economy as compatible with capitalism or at least a market system, and implemented by government policy, licensing, and cap. The problem of this was partly recognized by Daly, who dealt with the implementation of a no-growth economy as a matter of faith, ending his great work *Beyond Growth with God and a "Creation-centered economy"*. Nevertheless, his analysis was at its core deeply critical and even radical. See Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 218–24. Herman E. Daly, *Steady-State Economics* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1991) Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb Jr., *For the Common Good* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982). For a criticism of attempts to reconcile a no-growth economy with capitalism, see John Bellamy Foster, *Capitalism in the Anthropocene* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2022), 363–72.

<sup>3</sup> *JCSA Essay* SD 01151 September 2023 John Bellamy Foster

The word degrowth stands for a family of political-economic approaches that, in the face of today's accelerating planetary ecological crisis, reject unlimited, exponential economic growth as the definition of human progress. To abandon economic growth in wealthy societies means to shift to zero net capital formation. With continual technological development and the enhancement of human capabilities, mere replacement investment is able to promote steady qualitative advancements in production in mature industrial societies, while eliminating exploitative labor conditions and reducing working hours. Coupled with global redistribution of the social surplus product and reduction of waste, this would allow for vast improvements in the lives of most people. Degrowth, which specifically targets the most opulent sectors of the world population, is thus directed at the enhancement of the living conditions of the vast majority while maintaining the environmental conditions of existence and promoting sustainable human development.

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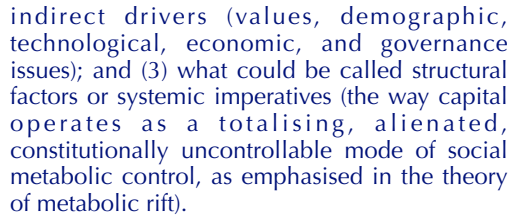
## HALF-EARTH SOCIALISM AND THE PATH BEYOND CAPITAL — Brian M. Napolitano

Intertwined with, yet distinct from, the looming threat of climate change is an even more profound biotic crisis. This crisis is much more than a sixth (or seventh) mass extinction; it entails the decimation of life's diversity at

This paper shifts the focus from transfers to public services. It mounts a case for Universal Basic Services (UBS): a proposal to safeguard and develop existing public services and to extend this model of provision into new areas. The first part argues that public services require a distinct conceptual justification and sets this out in terms of shared human needs and a foundational economy. The second part develops the normative arguments for UBS, in terms of efficiency, equality, solidarity and sustainability. The third part considers some of the issues to be faced in delivering UBS and the role of state institutions, with brief service provisions. The final section summarises some developments, including experience of Covid-19, which might enhance the political impetus for UBS.

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THE UNITED STATES OF WAR — *The Editors of Monthly Review*



Much of the impact of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy's now-classic work *Monopoly Capital* when it was published in 1966, at the very height of the Vietnam War, can be attributed to its chapter on "Absorption of the Surplus: Militarism and Imperialism." The chapter began with the question: "Why does the United States diligently need and maintain such a huge military machine nowadays when it used to get along with just a little one?" By 1959, they pointed out, the United States had acquired a total of 275 major base complexes in 21 countries, which had more than 1,400 military bases altogether, including all sites that the United States thought occupied, plus base areas it had set aside around the world.<sup>1</sup> The United States had more than 10 million troops stationed in these bases. Later, other estimates utilizing different methodologies put the number of U.S. military bases in 1957 at 883, and at 1,014 in 1971.<sup>2</sup> Although the United States had few colonial possessions outside of Puerto Rico and some Pacific islands, its foreign military bases were spread all over the world, on over 100 individual countries around the world combined. In Baran and Sweezy's argument, an "American empire." Since 1945, the United States had already fought one major regional war in Asia—in Korea—and was then engaged in another in Vietnam. According to Harry Gold a few years later, U.S. military bases were "the most important factor in the world for prices changes, dwarfed that of all other powers combined in the buildup to the Second World War and was more than twice that of Nazi Germany" (Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966], 172-171 [all further unspecified quotations that follow are to this]; John Bellamy Foster, *Social Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978], 205). John Bellamy Foster, *Social Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 205; John Bellamy Foster, *Social Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006), 57).



TJSGA/Commentary/SD (C043) September 2023/Editors MR

How could the massive U.S. military expansion in the post-Second World War years be explained? The usual propagandistic answer at the time—that the purpose of the U.S. war machine was primarily to counter military aggression by the Soviet Union—could be dismissed out of hand. Even hardened Cold Warriors, such as George Kennan, author of the “containment” strategy, together with such influential U.S. figures as diplomat Chester Bowles, Senator J. William Fulbright, and neoliberal journalist Walter Lippmann, all held to the general consensus among those in power that the Soviet Union was not an aggressive military power like Nazi Germany. Even William Schlamm, the former editor of *Fortune* magazine, who proposed threatening the USSR with nuclear Armageddon in order to force it to dissolve the Warsaw Pact, stated: “Communism thrives on peace, wants peace, triumphs in peace” (186).

Hence, “the American oligarchy’s need for a huge military machine must be sought elsewhere than in a non-existent. All of this has led in recent years to the development of more all-encompassing analyses of the history of U.S. militarism and imperialism.

One such reassessment is provided by MR author David Vine in his 2020 book *The United*

States of War. Vine adopts a methodology of focusing on the history of U.S. military bases as a means of mapping the development of U.S. military power, beginning with the wars against Indigenous nations and peoples in the early years of the republic and extending all the way to what he calls the “hyper imperialism” of the years from .1991 to the present.

An extensive commentary on the U.S. way of death is provided by David Michael Smith in his 2023 book *Endless Holocausts*. Smith's book consists of the detailed documentation, based primarily on establishment sources, of mass deaths due to war together with other forms of social murder, attributable to the "U.S. Empire" over its history. Thus, he details how: Between 1945 and 1980, major U.S. wars in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia killed twelve million people. Washington also shared responsibility for the 1.7 million people who died during the rule of the Khmer Rouge, and the U.S. proxy war in Afghanistan led to the deaths of at least 1.5 million. U.S. support for the Guomindang in the second phase of the Chinese civil war, for the French campaign to reconquer Vietnam, for the anti-communist exterminations in Indonesia, for the Biafran war, and for the Pakistani government during the Bangladesh War implicated Washington in the deaths of almost 11 million people.

Altogether, including other millions of deaths, the United States was directly responsible or shared responsibility for the deaths in that same period of some twenty-nine million people.

NOTES ON U.S./NATO IMPERIUM AND  
THE RESURGENCE OF THE NON-  
ALIGNED MOVEMENT — *he Editors of  
Monthly Review*



The Editors of Monthly Review

In September 2022, the journal Foreign Policy, one of the most influential establishment outlets for the articulation of the U.S. imperial grand strategy, published a column by C. Raja Mohan entitled “Why Non-Alignment Is Dead and Won’t Return.” Mohan’s argument was that the

*The positions adopted by countries throughout the Global South with respect to the Ukraine War point to the deep divisions that exist today between the Global North and the Global South.*



Yet, contradicting his own argument that the Non-Aligned Movement is dead, Mohan was chiefly concerned in his article with decrying its sudden resurrection and the growing threat that this represents to the U.S. dominated rules-based international order. The positions adopted by countries throughout the Global South with respect to the Ukraine War point to the deep divisions that exist today between the Global North and the Global South. Not only has most of

TSCACommentarySD (C034) April 2023/Editors M9

## Half-Earth Socialism and the Path Beyond Capital

Brian M. Napoletano

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



<sup>1</sup> Frequent references to our current biotic crisis as a "Sixth Extinction" relate the present to five (or six) previous instances where the fossil record indicates a period in which multiple taxa rapidly disappeared over large, often global, ranges. In addition to the issues already mentioned, scholars have cautioned against referring to the current biotic crisis as another mass extinction because current trends are not readily comparable to estimates from the fossil record, and it is not yet clear whether the loss of species known to us is comparable to the mass extinctions recorded in the fossil record. See John C. Avise, Stephen P. Hubbell, and Francisco J. Ayala, "The Impact of Evolution, Bi-Diversity and Extinction," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 97 (1999): 11453-57; Anthony D. Barnhisel et al., "Has the Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?" *Nature* 471, no. 7336 (2011): 51-57; Douglas H. Swain, *Extinction* (Princeton University: Princeton University, 2008); Rita Palombo, "Thinking about the Biodiversity Loss in This Changing World," *Geosciences* 11, no. 9 (2021): 370; Tefno Pevani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction," *Rendiconto Lincei* 25, no. 1 (2014): 85-93.

TJSCA/Essay/SD (F155) August 2023/Brian M. Napoletano

These trends have already intensified to the point of posing the possibility of significant and irreversible alterations to the future of life on the planet. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the chief mechanism of so-called global environmental governance tasked with addressing this crisis, has consistently reported failures over the last three decades to meet even its modest conservation goals, thus intensifying long-running debates over the methods and objectives of conservation. Against calls for a “new conservation” that is effectively subsumed by economic development, some conservationists have advocated a drastic scaling up of protected areas to cover at least half the planet, championed by E. O. Wilson as the Half-Earth approach in a book by that title. Any attempt to resolve rather than merely postpone the biotic crisis must confront multiple interdependent factors operating at three general levels: (1) what the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) refers to as direct drivers (land/sea-use changes, resource extraction, pollution, invasive alien species, climate change); (2) what it refers to as

In September 2022, the journal Foreign Policy, one of the most influential establishment outlets for the articulation of the U.S. imperial grand strategy, published a column by C. Raja Mohan entitled "Why Non-Alignment Is Dead and Won't Return." Mohan's argument was that the Non-Aligned Movement in the Global South died with the end of the Cold War some thirty years ago.

Today, the Non-Aligned Movement, he argued, can be characterised as a mere ghost or spectre, "the Cold War's shadow," haunting the U.S./NATO imperium, but ultimately posing "little threat to the West.... Third Worldism—with its offspring ideologies of pan-Asianism, pan-Arabism, and pan-Islamism [Mohan leaves out pan-Africanism, no doubt due to its continuing salience for Black radicals in the United States]—was a big failure" (C. Raja Mohan, "Why Non-Alignment Is Dead and Won't Return," Foreign Policy, September 10, 2022).

Yet, contradicting his own argument that the Non-Aligned Movement is dead, Mohan was chiefly concerned in his article with decrying its sudden resurrection and the growing threat that this represents to the U.S. dominated rules-based international order. The positions adopted by countries throughout the Global South with respect to the Ukraine War point to the deep divisions that exist today between the Global North and the Global South. Not only has most of the rest of the world outside of the imperialist triad of the United States/Canada, Europe, and Japan, comprising more than 80 percent of the global population, refused to join Washington's sanctions against Moscow, but countries representing a majority of the world's population have refused, in a series of UN votes, either to support NATO's proxy war in Ukraine or to condemn Russia for its military intervention there. Likewise, the Global South as a whole is strongly opposed to U.S. military provocations aimed at generating a crisis with respect to Taiwan's position as part of China. All of this has brought the Non-Aligned Movement, with its 120 members worldwide, back into the center of geopolitical discussions (Pawel Wargan, "NATO and the Long War on the Third World," Jus Semper, April 2023; Mark Green, "The Countries that Have Sanctioned Russia," Wilson Center, May 10, 2022).

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## NUCLEAR FUSION, ICARUS AND TECHNO-MAGICAL THINKING —

**Antonio Turiel – Juan Bordera** — *The unbridled enthusiasm with which the recent experiment has been received in the media shows the obsession with the search for an unlimited source of energy*

I am sure you have heard or read about the new technological promise set to save everything: nuclear fusion. A historic milestone. Unlimited energy within reach in just a few years; energy created out of nothing (screw

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yourself, thermodynamics!). These are just a few niceties with which the breakthrough is garnished in most media. But has there really been such a spectacular breakthrough? Short answer: no. The only solution is to get rid of this kind of blind faith in technology that dominates our societies as soon as possible. And fast. The higher the faith in the power to fix problems with the same cultural frameworks we have generated grows, the more the distance to the ground will also increase. We must realise that many of the stories we regularly read in the media are more about hope than experience, faith than reason, and despair than poise.



## Nuclear Fusion, Icarus and Techno-Magical Thinking

*The unbridled enthusiasm with which the recent experiment has been received in the media shows the obsession with the search for an unlimited source of energy*

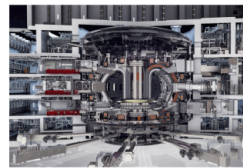
Antonio Turiel – Juan Bordera

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But has there really been such a spectacular breakthrough? Short answer: no. It was a progression in the long-running experiments at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) in the United States. For the first time, the energy produced by the nuclear fusion of pinhead-sized deuterium and tritium pellets was greater than the energy carried by the emitted laser beams.

They fired 192 laser devices in unison to compress the material and fuse the nuclei of the two hydrogen isotopes. Specifically, the small nuclear explosion produced an energy of 3 megajoules (MJ), while the laser beams carried an energy of 2.1 MJ, a gain of almost 50%. This breakthrough shows that inertial confinement fusion (as this method is called) can work because if fusion generates a net gain, a chain reaction could occur in a larger sample

TSGACommentarySD (C330), April 2023A, Turiel J., Bordera



Deposition of Tokamak ITER ONE BEIGE NATIONAL LABORATORY

This situation is reminiscent of the nuclear (fission) energy furore of the 1950s when everything was to be powered by small reactors when it was said that electricity would become too cheap to charge for. Nuclear fission is the energy that has led us - after Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl and Fukushima - to this winter, in which France, the biggest nuclear reactor powerhouse, has warned of rolling blackouts to its population mainly because a good part of its power plants are shut down. What surprises will there be when we open this new Pandora's box of technology if we ever manage to do so?

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## IS DEGROWTH THE FUTURE? — Jorge Pinto

As the flaws in the currently prevailing paradigm of unfettered growth become ever more apparent, degrowth is increasingly regarded as a tangible alternative. Far from a radical notion confined to the realm of abstract debates, it may hold the key to a more just and sustainable world. An ambitious new book, *The Future is Degrowth: A Guide to a World beyond Capitalism* (Verso, 2022), sets out to be a roadmap towards a future without growth.



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The climate breakdown, the growing gap between the wealthiest and the poorest, the gap between the Global North and South, and the ongoing pandemic have proved that the mainstream growth-based economic model is not fit for purpose. But what is the alternative?

The pandemic turned out to be a major moment for the degrowth debate. On the one hand, advocates of economic growth used lockdowns as evidence of what a degrowth society might look like, even though our growth-dependent economic model was at least partly responsible for driving the pandemic. Degrowth supporters, on the other hand, took the opportunity to clarify their proposal and stress the urgent need to move to a post-growth economy. Degrowth entered the mainstream debate like never before. As scholar *Timothée Parrique* shows, it is even present in the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

The critique of an economic system based on economic growth is not new. In 2022, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the seminal report *The Limits to Growth*. Published in 1972, a team of scientists led by Donella Meadows warned that the resource consumption of an ever-growing economy was unsustainable. In the decades since, various alternatives to a growth-based economy have been put forward including a steady-state economy, post-growth, doughnut economics, and degrowth.

TSGACommentarySD (C330), May 2023B, Pinto



Photo by Madras Spikes on Unsplash

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## THE FALLACY OF RENEWABLES AND CLIMATE CHANGE – Manuel Casal Lodeiro

*Between the fallacious positioning of "they are indispensable" and a complete opposition of the "we should not install any" type, there is a huge gap between rationality and, above all, true democracy.*

In Claiming that renewable energies are the solution to climate change has become commonplace. However, in the face of the accelerated expansion of their installation, it is worth asking ourselves whether there is a verifiable reality behind this commonplace or whether we are, on the contrary, faced with yet another myth of what has come to be called the decarbonisation of our societies.





## The fallacy of renewables and climate change

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Because it is not only our political class that we hear telling us that "we need to install renewable energies", but even more than a few sectors of environmentalism assert that we need to "massively and rapidly" install large structures of what they call renewables, but which it would be better to call, to be precise and avoid dangerous self-deception, non-renewable systems of temporary capture of renewable energy flows (NRSRE or simply pseudo-renewables). If we don't do this, says a well-known disseminator, the consequences will be "droughts, fires, extreme weather" that will devastate "our fields and our biodiversity".



TJSCACommentarySD IC3317 May 2023/MA. Casal Lodeiro

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## GENETIC DRIVERS OR HOW TO CIRCUMVENT THE LAWS OF BIOLOGICAL INHERITANCE — Isabel Bermejo — The Biodiversity summit in Canada should decide on the use of the controversial technology

The Convention on Biological Diversity summit in Canada from 7-19 December is due to decide on a proposed moratorium on the use of gene drives, a controversial technology that is about to leap from the laboratory into the environment. Gene drives allow the laws of biological inheritance to be circumvented, forcing laboratory-created genetic modifications to spread rapidly in nature, even if they are lethal to a species. Their development and use are of enormous significance, as for the first time in history, humankind would have a tool that makes it possible to interfere with the evolutionary process of living organisms fundamentally and to permanently eliminate species.



## Genetic drivers or how to circumvent the laws of biological inheritance

The Biodiversity summit in Canada should decide on the use of the controversial technology

Isabel Bermejo

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A single GM trait - herbicide tolerance - is overwhelmingly dominant in this first generation of GM crops.

The first generation of GM crops has revealed the fallacy of the great promises of genetic engineering controlled by the big agrochemical industry. Given that we are talking about almost 30 years of technological development, it is almost surprising that a single GM trait - herbicide tolerance - is overwhelmingly dominant in this first generation of GM crops. Of the approximately 190 million hectares of GM crops in the world in 2019, more than 166 million (88%) were herbicide-tolerant varieties. The advantage of these varieties is that they allow herbicides to be used without damaging the crop, making it easier to manage large monocultures, even if this means increasing dependence on agrochemicals. The next most important feature, far behind in terms of hectares, would be the



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## THE INVISIBLE HEART: POSTGROWTH ECONOMY AS CARE — Tim Jackson — Care is an anathema to capitalism. Its virtues are capitalism's vices. Its employment-rich foundation for wellbeing is capitalism's 'productivity crisis'. Yet, without care we are nothing, our progress is nothing. Without care there is no economy. A talk delivered by Tim Jackson at the #BeyondGrowth conference at the European Parliament, Brussels 15 May 2023.

Care is an anathema to capitalism. Its virtues are capitalism's vices. Its employment-rich foundation for wellbeing is capitalism's 'productivity crisis'. Yet, without care we are nothing, our progress is nothing. Without care there is no economy. A talk delivered by Tim Jackson at the #BeyondGrowth conference at the European Parliament, Brussels 15 May 2023.

For me, the care economy is more than just a side panel in the 'beyond growth' debate. It is the blueprint for a post growth economy. Let me try to explain why—with a very simple question. What can prosperity possibly mean on a finite planet? This question has been the guide for our work at the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity for more than a decade. The conventional answer of course is that prosperity is about wealth and in particular about accumulating wealth, about having more.

And when you don't have enough to survive, when the harvest has failed again, the sanitation is non-existent, the house is falling down, the well has run dry or become polluted, then having more—having anything—makes a lot of sense.

But what next? When do the 'fairytale of eternal economic growth' as Greta Thunberg has called them stop being a reliable formula for wellbeing and become a recipe for disaster? What is prosperity, when the climate changes, nature reels and human lives become cluttered and meaningless?

When you ask people, as we did when I was economics commissioner at the Sustainable Development Commission, you find,

fascinatingly, that 'health' is what comes out at or near the top of most people's lists. Our own health. The health of our families. The health of our communities. The health of the environment.



## The invisible heart: postgrowth economy as care

Care is an anathema to capitalism. Its virtues are capitalism's vices. Its employment-rich foundation for wellbeing is capitalism's 'productivity crisis'. Yet, without care we are nothing, our progress is nothing. Without care there is no economy. A talk delivered by Tim Jackson at the #BeyondGrowth conference at the European Parliament, Brussels 15 May 2023.

Tim Jackson

Thank you for inviting me here, in particular to this session. For me, the care economy is more than just a side panel in the 'beyond growth' debate. It is the blueprint for a post growth economy. Let me try to explain why—with a very simple question.

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And when you don't have enough to survive, when the harvest has failed again, the sanitation is non-existent, the house is falling down, the well has run dry or become polluted, then having more—having anything—makes a lot of sense.



TJSCACommentarySD IC3411 August 2023/Tim Jackson

What would happen if we thought of prosperity systematically as health—rather than as wealth?—where health is conceived, as the World Health Organisation has defined it, as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing—and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.

What difference would this make? Well perhaps first, in place of 'always more' we might be tempted to think more deeply about the concept of 'enough'. To return to what Aristotle described as the 'virtuous' balance between deficiency and excess—where the word virtuous is meant here in the sense of virtuosity, or skill or perfection as much as it is about moral virtue.

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## THE IRRELEVANCE OF ANIMALS — Pedro M. Herrera — How the path of intensification leads inexorably to laboratory meat

So-called "laboratory meat" is expectations and concerns. The huge investment and research efforts of economically powerful private initiatives have uncovered an important economic niche waiting to be exploited. The promoters of the market for laboratory meat or meat derived from vegetable products have seen in their ethical and ecological foundations the great lever that will mobilise consumers on a massive scale towards their products. The growth in supply and speculation around these products responds, among other factors, to two very different pressures: on the one hand, the climatic behaviour of meat production. On the

other hand, the growing pressure from animal and vegan groups on the living and dying conditions of the animals that are raised for their consumption.



## The irrelevance of animals

*How the path of intensification leads inexorably to laboratory meat*

Pedro M. Herrera

So-called "laboratory meat" is simultaneously generating great expectations and concerns. The huge investment and research efforts of economically powerful private initiatives have uncovered an important economic niche waiting to be exploited. The promoters of the market for laboratory meat or meat derived from vegetable products have seen in their ethical and ecological foundations the great lever that will mobilise consumers on a massive scale towards their products. The growth in supply and speculation around these products responds, among other factors, to two very different pressures: on the one hand, the climatic behaviour of meat production. On the other hand, the growing pressure from animal and vegan groups on the living and dying conditions of the animals that are raised for their consumption.



Photo by SILL/REUTERS/GETTY IMAGES

This situation has set off alarm bells in the sectors linked to the meat industry and animal production. Agricultural organisations, interprofessional organisations and many livestock farmers are very concerned about an emerging reality that is putting pressure on the current model of production and distribution of animal products and generating additional uncertainty about its future. And this concern is well-founded because, in the medium term, it could have an enormous impact on the global food system.

The paradox of this scenario is that the leap to laboratory meat is the latest step in the process of technologicalisation, industrialisation and intensification, of which the same production, market and political structures that now see it

TSCA/Commentary/SD (C348) July 2023/Pedro M. Herrera

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## LET THE CITIES MOVE BY PEDALLING —

**Samuel Romero Aporta** — *The way urban space is designed has an immediate effect on our quality of life. In Spain there are more than 30,000 premature deaths associated with poor air quality. Let's put bikes on our streets.*



## Let the cities move by pedalling

*The way urban space is designed has an immediate effect on our quality of life. In Spain there are more than 30,000 premature deaths associated with poor air quality. Let's put bikes on our streets*

Samuel Romero Aporta

Changes in and the effects on city mobility are undergoing an evolutionary process. Years ago, lane extensions on the main roads of our cities were supposed to solve traffic problems. Everything would be wonderful: cars would drive without restriction, without anyone slowing them down, and in the meantime, they filled our cities with asphalt. Despite warnings from mobility professionals, the experiment resulted in more cars, traffic jams, pollution and public space devoted to cars. Dietrich Braess, a German mathematician, warned in the late 1960s about this phenomenon known as the Braess paradox, which stipulates that, as the road network expands, the accumulation of individual decisions about the best route to take leads to more congestion. Induced traffic, they call it nowadays: the knowledge of the existence of a new road or an existing road with more capacity provokes a summoning effect on several levels: car users who change their route, users of other modes of transport who decide to try the car because of its supposed speed, new residences in the surroundings of that road which guarantees access to the city centre in a fast and agile way (sic) and new businesses in its surroundings because of its fantastic communication. In a short time, the traffic on this road is worse than before the extension and, as a result, the air quality and the quality of life in the city also worsen.



Ciclo Sur de Capel de Moller-Bonafant

WIKI/2022

TSCA/Commentary/SD (C344) September 2023/Samuel Romero Aporta

I think something is crucial: those who defend a car-centred urban model today are mortgaging the future of our future generations, condemning their health and ours, and

destroying our planet. They are advocating cruelty. Those who condemn the transformation of public space towards a more sustainable way of life, who argue in favour of new traffic jams or longer journeys to our destinations, not to mention the need to inform themselves and observe the development of many of the cities already mentioned, are direct participants in the destruction of the planet's health and the depletion of its resources.

Today, most cities have embarked on a very positive path, imitating trends already well established in many European cities: taking space away from cars and giving it to pedestrians, public transport and cycling. Focusing on the space allocated to cycling, this distribution of public space is crucial for two fundamental reasons: it creates a pull effect, as it begins to be seen as the only viable option, and it reduces the space available for cars. Very important.

Surely it is time to look back and see how we moved more than 60 years ago when pedestrians and cyclists occupied a priority space in our cities, which are, after all, our social environment, where we build our lives, relate to each other and associate with each other.

"The bicycle is not just another means of transport. Its use produces value for society, not only in terms of mobility but also in terms of habitability, health, the environment, equity, sociability, etc. And it benefits those who use it and the rest of the population by freeing up space and reducing air and noise pollution."

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## ONLY THE POSSIBLE BEGETS THE IMPOSSIBLE —

**Neus Crous Costa** — *Using our creative capacity to generate utopias is not a useless act, it is a way of analysing our reality and projecting ourselves towards a better future.*

In November 2019, as covid began to spread, we were living in the era in which Blade Runner, filmed in 1982, was set. In some respects, the film is a far cry from our reality: we have neither flying cars nor artificially intelligent humanoid. On the other hand, there is a kind of anachronism in the future: there is no internet and smoking is allowed in offices. But there are also those aspects that are very reminiscent of our current landscape: a city as far as the eye can see under a smog-covered sky. Neon lights and industrial towers glow, blotting out the stars. There is a dense web of corporate interests, security forces at the service of the elite and a complete lack of respect for the environment.

A whole range of dystopias is often compared to the reality we are drawing. We know dystopias well: possible but undesirable futures. Our contemporary culture (already dominated by

large platforms) seems to rely exclusively on dystopias (always, or almost always, engendered by chance events). But where are the utopias?



## Only the possible begets the impossible

*Using our creative capacity to generate utopias is not a useless act, it is a way of analysing our reality and projecting ourselves towards a better future.*

Neus Crous Costa

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A whole range of dystopias is often compared to the reality we are drawing. In 1921 Yevgeny Zamyatin wrote the novel *We* (Мы). In it, the One State conscientiously monitors all citizens, going to such extremes that all buildings are made of glass. Numbers designate people, and reason, shaped by the state, underpins all behaviour. The plot begins with the construction of a rocket to expand this form of organisation to other planets.

The film *Metropolis* (1927), directed by Fritz Lang and based on the novel of the same name by Thea von Harbou, sets us in a 21st-century metropolis, where the oppressed working class is confined to the underground, where the



El jardín del Edén (1920)

THOMAS COLE

TSCA/Commentary/SD (C342) August 2023/Neus Crous Costa

Utopia refers to that which does not exist anywhere (u- negation; -topos, physical place). Despite this, between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, various social reformers, urban planners and architects materialised ways of living that sought to improve the quality of life of the society of the time, especially of the working classes.

Using our creative capacity to generate utopias is not a useless act; quite the contrary. It is a way of analysing our reality and projecting ourselves towards a better future, even if "better" is an adjective that will necessarily change as we move forward. However, drawing a horizon takes us out of paralysis. Hence the relevance of imagining examples for the future.

This is why some activist movements have started to work on this issue. In 2022, for example, the art group of the Milan node of Extinction Rebellion organised the collaborative exhibition *Dystopia/Utopia*, whose aim was to reflect on how to communicate the climate crisis by transforming dystopian scenarios into utopian proposals. On the other hand, the Xarxa per la Justícia Climàtica (Network for Climate Justice) organised two editions of the event *Reclaiming the Future*. The name is self-explanatory: in the face of the ecosocial crisis and the constant mistreatment of the territory (for example, in the form of mega-infrastructure), different groups came together to lay the foundations for a collective transformation.

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**"NECROPOLITICS IS ABOUT LETTING PEOPLE DIE IN ORDER TO KEEP A PREDATORY ECONOMY ALIVE" — David Roca Basadre**



"Necropolitics is about letting people die in order to keep a predatory economy alive"

David Roca Basadre

**A**t 63, Eduardo Gudynas (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1960) is the youngest person on the list of 75 key development thinkers of the last 150 years, compiled by geographer David Simon of the University of London. There are only eight Iberian Americans on the list. As a researcher at the Latin American Centre for Social Ecology (CLAES), a discipline in which he holds a master's degree, he has been following the issues of development, the environment and social movements in Latin America for more than three decades, and has written several books on these topics.



Eduardo Gudynas.

Image provided by the interviewee

His most recent publications include an assessment of human and natural rights violations in Bolivia's extractivism and an analysis of the impacts of the war in Ukraine on Iberian America's political ecology. He also collaborates with South American citizens' organisations and university institutions.

Despite focusing his studies on his native continent, Gudynas was the first Iberian American to receive the Arne Naess Chair in Environment and Global Justice at the University of Oslo (Norway); he is also a Research Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Munich (Germany) and has recently joined the Club of Rome's Commission for the Transformation of the Global Economy.

Here we talk to him about socio-environmental conflicts, the rights of nature, and politics.

## 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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At 63, Eduardo Gudynas (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1960) is the youngest person on the list of 75 key development thinkers of the last 150 years, compiled by geographer David Simon of the University of London. There are only eight Iberian Americans on the list. As a researcher at the Latin American Centre for Social Ecology (CLAES), a discipline in which he holds a master's degree, he has been following the issues of development, the environment and social movements in Latin America for more than three decades, and has written several books on these topics.

His most recent publications include an assessment of human and natural rights violations in Bolivia's extractivism and an analysis of the impacts of the war in Ukraine on Iberian America's political ecology. He also collaborates with South American citizens' organisations and university institutions.

Despite focusing his studies on his native continent, Gudynas was the first Iberian American to receive the Arne Naess Chair in Environment and Global Justice at the University of Oslo (Norway); he is also a Research Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Munich (Germany) and has recently joined the Club of Rome's Commission for the Transformation of the Global Economy. Here we talk to him about socio-environmental conflicts, the rights of nature, and politics.

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