



# JUS SEMPER NEWSLETTER

## The Living Wages North and South Initiative (TLWNSI)

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

#### HIGHLIGHTS

JUS SEMPER Newsletter – Autumn 2019

**The Underlying Causes of Immigration from Mexico to the US (Alvaro J. de Regil) – Structures of Deprivation.** Foreign direct investment, capital goods, technology, raw materials, parts, and finished goods secured free passage to circulate around the three countries but workers would remain restricted to working in their own country of residence. **Page 2**

**Global Commodity Chains and the New Imperialism (Intan Suwandi, R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster)** The lower the per-capita income of a U.S. trading partner, the higher the share of U.S. arm's length trade, indicating that this is all about low wages. **Page 2**

**What are We Saying When We Talk About Sustainability? (Victor M. Toledo)** A political ecological proposal. The political ecology ... transcends the dominant vision of a (techno-) science at the service of corporate capital, to adopt a science with conscience (environmental and social) that no longer seeks to only interpret the world or transform it but, to be more precise, emancipate it. **Page 3**

**The New Service Proletariat (Ricardo Antunes)** What might be called the "uberisation" of labour—a ruthless entrepreneurial modus operandi aimed at generating more profit and increasing the value of capital through the forms of precarious labour outlined above— has expanded to a global scale **Page 3**

**The Meaning of Work in a Sustainable Society (John Bellamy Foster)** The ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of man's energy by the reduction of labour to a minimum, but rather the reduction of pain in labour to a minimum, so small that it will cease to be pain. **Page 3**

**The Long Ecological Revolution (John Bellamy Foster)** To achieve these things, we will need to break with "business as usual," that is, with the current logic of capital, and introduce an entirely different logic, aimed at the creation of a fundamentally different social metabolic system of reproduction. **Page 4**



#### The Underlying Causes of Immigration from Mexico to the United States

Structures of Deprivation  
Alvaro J. de Regil



#### Global Commodity Chains and the New Imperialism

Intan Suwandi, R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster



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#### The Meaning of Work in a Sustainable Society

John Bellamy Foster



#### The Long Ecological Revolution

John Bellamy Foster

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**THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO TO THE US —Structures of Deprivation— (Alvaro J. de Regil)**



**The Underlying Causes of Immigration from Mexico to the United States**

*Structures of Deprivation*

Álvaro J. de Regil

**Preface** | To write about the underlying causes of immigration means addressing a paramount social issue that pervades the lives of most societies in the world, both in the periphery as well as in the metropolises of the global capitalist system. Immigration is inherent to human nature. Billions of people have travelled from their birthplace in search of a better life from the very moment homo “sapiens” began to wander around his primeval surroundings. At first, all humans were nomads. They constantly moved from one place to another, from cave to cave, from valley to valley, from region to region, from continent to continent, many times traveling thousands of kilometres in their quest for better conditions of survival. Thousands of years later, with the rise of civilisations and hundreds of sedentary settlements, people continued to move to lands inhabited by other civilisations, with different cultural and ethnical backgrounds, always in pursuit of a better life. As empires rose and destroyed competing civilisations, many people were forced to leave, or they were moved forcefully to other places to serve the interests of the conquerors as they pleased. The history of humanity is composed of the never-ending destruction and conquering of many peoples by stronger societies in their quest for power and wealth.



This has never changed despite thousands of years of human experience and “sophistication” in the organisation of societies, despite the rise of so called democratic nation states, human rights covenants and international law. Today, people continue to move from one place to another, many times escaping a high risk of death as a result of social conflicts, poverty, or, instead of the rule of law, a complete state of anomie —the loss of all the ethical social standards conceived to procure a dignified

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instead of the rule of law, a complete state of anomie —the loss of all the ethical social standards conceived to procure a dignified and harmonious coexistence among the members of society. In the vast majority of cases, as should be evident, there is also the effect —to a lesser or greater degree— of the actions of foreign actors that intervene in the lives of other societies in pursuit of their own vested interests, always associated with the pursuit of greater power and wealth. In the twenty-first century, we continue the same ancient patterns of power exertion and displacement of people all over the world. In this way, millions of people continue to migrate from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, from Africa to Europe, from Asia to North America and from Iberian America to North America as well, to name the major migration flows.

This paper focuses on the underlying causes of immigration from Mexico to the United States from a political and socio-economic viewpoint. However, the root causes behind the flows of emigrants in other regions of the world are consistently the same. They result from the impact of powerful geo-political interests on the general population of both the emitting and the receiving countries of the millions of migrants in their escape from unbearable conditions and in pursuit of a dignified life. From this perspective, we will uncover and review the underlying causes of immigration from Mexico to the US, which are structural, in an effort to shed light onto their real solution. That is, the only way to permanently solve the issue of Mexican migration to the US, is by addressing the structural causes that force people to leave their homelands. Addressing only the symptoms triggered by these causes will never solve the issue and instead would further consolidate the patterns regardless of how aggressive and inhumane the policies are designed to stop the flows of migrants. We also focus on Mexico because it has been for many decades the main source of immigrants to the US due to its proximity and even more so after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which has made Mexico the third largest US trading partner, after China and Canada, beyond being the main exporter of migrants forced to leave their communities.

[Download the full document "The Underlying causes..." here!](#)



**GLOBAL COMMODITY CHAINS AND THE NEW IMPERIALISM – (Intan Suwandi, R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster)**

Jus Semper’s core work has been from inception assessing the enormous disparities in hourly manufacturing labour costs, for equivalent work, between the metropolises and the emerging economies in the periphery of the global system. We have always performed our work for reasons of equity, using purchasing

power parity compensation costs, under the context of equal pay for equal work of equal value. We do this to expose the sheer exploitation of labour in peripheral economies for the maximisation of productivity and shareholder value of global corporations. In this way, we have published our annual reports on “Wage rate gaps for selected developed and emerging economies in manufacturing” since 2003, using data dating back to 1975. For this reason, we feel truly encouraged to continue our mission by now publishing a new essay that addresses the same issue of sheer labour exploitation of workers in the global South of the system from the perspective of productivity, using as the main indicator the unit labour costs of a select group of both Northern and Southern economies of the global system, namely Germany, Japan, United States and United Kingdom in the North and China, India, Indonesia, and Mexico in the South. Indeed, as the authors clearly explain and demonstrate in the following pages, the much higher rates of exploitation of workers in the global South has to do not simply with low wages, but also with the fact that the difference in wages between the North and South is greater than the difference in productivity. This paper further enlightens with rather strong evidence, anchored on theoretical and empirical research of commodity-chain analysis, our argument that the main driver of social inequality between North and South is the deliberate system of “Modern Slave Work”; a system imposed in the global South by the elites of both the centre and the periphery of the global capitalist system, to exploit the labour-value commodity chains to perpetuate what could best be described as a new global colonialism or imperialism.

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**WHAT ARE WE SAYING WHEN WE TALK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY —An ecological political proposal— (Victor M. Toledo)**

**THE NEW SERVICE PROLETARIAT — (Ricardo Antunes)**

In recent decades, the spread of information technology, industrial automation, and other innovations has inspired visions of a coming "postindustrial society of services," in which the proletariat as it existed in earlier eras would effectively disappear. However, even a cursory survey of the reality of contemporary global labour markets belies this myth. The emergence of a new class of educated, salaried workers in high-tech fields is predicated on the increasing invisibility of workers employed in sectors and settings ranging from call centres and telemarketing to hotels and cleaning companies to retail, fast food, and care services. The great majority of these jobs are precarious in one way or another: seasonal, part-time, temporary, informal, or freelance, with little or no security or benefits.

provide their own cars and pay for all expenses, including vehicle repairs, maintenance, insurance, and fuel. The Uber "app" is in fact a global private enterprise that uses wage labour masked as "independent" and "entrepreneurial" work to appropriate a larger share of the surplus value generated by the services of its drivers.

**Download "The New service proletariat" here!**

**THE MEANING OF WORK IN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY — (John Bellamy Foster)**

*Fie upon this quiet life. I want work. William Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Act II, Scene IV*



**The Meaning of Work in a Sustainable Society**

*Fie upon this quiet life. I want work.*

*William Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Act II, Scene IV*

John Bellamy Foster

If you consider 1987 (the Brundtland Report) as the official beginning of the idea of sustainability, the term has made a brilliant journey of almost three decades and is still alive. In its evolution, it has become at the same time a concept, paradigm, theoretical framework, technical instrument, utopia, pretext, ideology and many other things, but above all it has become the word that contains a vague desire of the educated and privileged masses of the planet for a better world in which the human race rediscovers itself ideally with nature and with social justice. Beyond the ideological dimension, and its multiple and ungraspable interpretations, this essay focuses on sustainability as a scientific concept that springs from an interdisciplinary vision of reality, and that for many authors achieves the status of a new paradigm. The essay attempts to show how the scientific concept of sustainability in the vast majority of its versions, is not but a techno-economic expression that explicitly or implicitly is aimed at convincing the "decision makers", and that seeks to apply solutions merely technical. Using a political ecological approach, based on the theory of the three powers, the essay identifies and develops a definition of sustainability as a social power, which turns the concept into a promising political instrument of social and environmental emancipation, in a legitimate version of a "science with conscience."

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**The New Service Proletariat**

Ricardo Antunes

In recent decades, the spread of information technology, industrial automation, and other innovations has inspired visions of a coming "postindustrial society of services," in which the proletariat as it existed in earlier eras would effectively disappear. However, even a cursory survey of the reality of contemporary global labour markets belies this myth. The emergence of a new class of educated, salaried workers in high-tech fields is predicated on the increasing invisibility of workers employed in sectors and settings ranging from call centres and telemarketing to hotels and cleaning companies to retail, fast food, and care services. The great majority of these jobs are precarious in one way or another: seasonal, part-time, temporary, informal, or freelance, with little or no security or benefits.

An emblematic example is the zero-hour contract, a perverse form of employment that thrives in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Instead of working a fixed number of hours or shifts, zero-hour employees must remain perpetually at their bosses' disposal, waiting for a call. Once they receive this call, they are paid only for the time they actually work, and not for the time—days, weeks, even months—spent waiting. Information technology firms in particular have embraced this method of complete flexibilisation of labour, which serves at once to make workers continually available for exploitation and to further normalise the regime of precariousness, leaving workers with ever fewer protections.

Uber is another example. The company's drivers, who are treated as independent contractors rather than formal employees, must provide their own cars and pay for all expenses, including vehicle repairs, maintenance, insurance, and fuel. The Uber "app" is in fact a global private enterprise that uses wage labour masked as "independent" and "entrepreneurial" work to appropriate a larger share of the surplus value generated by the services of its drivers.

Still another example of these disguised forms of labour exploitation can be found in Italy, where a novel form of occasional and intermittent work was recently introduced: voucher-based work. Workers were paid with vouchers whose value corresponded to the exact number of hours they worked. But precariousness was not the only problem with this form of labour, which relied on an even more



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The nature and meaning of work, as it pertains to a future society, has deeply divided ecological, socialist, utopian, and Romantic thinkers since the Industrial Revolution. Some radical theorists have seen a more just society as merely requiring the rationalisation of present-day work relations, accompanied by increased leisure time and more equitable distribution. Others have focused on the need to transcend the entire system of alienated labour and make the development of creative work relations the central element of a new revolutionary society. In what appears to be an effort to circumvent this enduring conflict, current visions of sustainable prosperity, while not denying the necessity of work, often push it into the background, placing their emphasis instead on an enormous expansion of leisure hours. Increased non-work time seems an unalloyed good, and is easily imaginable in the context of a no-growth society. In contrast, the very question of work is fraught with inherent difficulties, since it goes to the roots of the current socioeconomic system, its division of labour, and its class relations. Yet it remains the case that no coherent ecological mapping of a sustainable future is conceivable without addressing the issue of homo faber, i.e., the creative, constructive, historical role in the transformation of nature, and hence the social relation to nature, that distinguishes humanity as a species.



This essay is dedicated to Harry Magdoff, and was inspired by his article "The Meaning of Work," Monthly Review 34, no. 5 (October 1982): 1-13. For an important book on ecological-economic sustainability that nevertheless devotes only a small portion of its analysis to the subject of work, see Tim Jackson, Prosperity without Growth (London: Earthscan, 2011).

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production of all kinds of objects and products, some necessary and others not, as a result of what in economics is called «extended reproduction». This reproduction is inherent to the capitalist system. It is essential to know how it works in order to understand and explain the ecological disaster. Sweezy wrote: «It is inevitable to conclude that the simple reproduction implies the abstraction of the most essential thing in the capitalist: his interest in expanding his capital. He goes about it by converting a part —often the greatest one— of its surplus value into additional capital. His increase in capital allows him to appropriate even more surplus value, which in turn becomes additional capital and so on. This is the process, known as capital accumulation, that constitutes the force driving capitalist development».

The capitalist system and a healthy environment are incompatible. That is why Foster, Clark and York are right when in the final part of their article *The Ecology of Consumption* they write: ...A genuine ecology of consumption—the creation of a new system of sustainable needs-generation and satisfaction—is only possible as part of a new ecology of production, which requires for its emergence the tearing asunder of the capitalist system...

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**INVISIBLE EXPLOITATION —How Capital Extracts Value Beyond Wage Labour— (Eva Swidler)**



**Invisible Exploitation**  
How Capital Extracts Value Beyond Wage Labour

Eva Swidler

The Marxist analysis of work under capitalism has long been associated with a preoccupation with wage labour: waged workers as wage-slaves, industrial workers as the revolutionary proletariat, and factory workers as the vanguard. The labour theory of value has been widely seen as applying to the wage form of work and no other. But Marx's own writings describe other forms of labour under capitalism, and Marxist theorists have long pushed to expand our understanding of exploitation beyond the classic waged relations of production.



Capitalists have always used more than the wage form alone to extract surplus product from workers. However, this century is particularly distinguished by its growing reliance on alternate methods of extracting surplus. It's time for Marxists to rethink our preoccupation with the wage and develop a theory encompassing a common ground of exploitation across a wide variety of extractive relations under capitalism. A recognition of that shared exploitation may prove key if the exploited "class-in-itself" is to become a "class-for-itself," able to unite and act in solidarity.

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slaves, industrial workers as the revolutionary proletariat, and factory workers as the vanguard. The labour theory of value has been widely seen as applying to the wage form of work and no other. But Marx's own writings describe other forms of labour under capitalism, and Marxist theorists have long pushed to expand our understanding of exploitation beyond the classic waged relations of production.

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**VALUE TRANSFER AND HUMAN DEGRADATION IN AN AUTOMOTIVE ENTERPRISE CLUSTER IN MEXICO — (Carlos Jiménez Bandala and Jesús Contreras Álvarez)**



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phase, which allows enterprises with low organic capital composition to generate enough value to transfer it to enterprises with high organic composition. This work is carried out parting from the assessment of the working conditions of the operational workers of a company that supplies services to an automotive cluster in Mexico. Through a qualitative methodology it is demonstrated that the working conditions are not only precarious, but also inhuman. They degrade the essence of the work proper and all the attributes of the subject [worker], and they take it to the extreme point of deprecation, in such a way that they deny his/her physiological and biological characteristics.

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**THE DEGROWTH ALTERNATIVE — (Giorgos Kallis)**



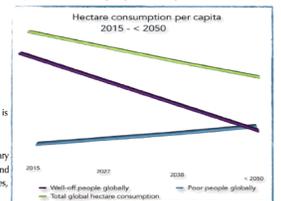
**The Degrowth Alternative**

Giorgos Kallis

Both the name and the theory of degrowth aim explicitly to re-politicise environmentalism. Sustainable development and its more recent reincarnation "green growth" depoliticise genuine political antagonisms between alternative visions for the future. They render environmental problems technical, promising win-win solutions and the impossible goal of perpetuating economic growth without harming the environment. Ecologising society, degrowthers argue, is not about implementing an alternative, better, or greener development. It is about imagining and enacting alternative visions to modern growth-based development. This essay explores such alternatives and identifies grassroots practices and political changes for facilitating a transition to a prosperous and equitable world without growth.

**Ecology vs. Modernity**

The conflict between environment and growth is ever-present. For "developers," the value of growth is not to be questioned: more mining, drilling, building, and manufacturing is necessary to expand the economy. Against developers stand radical environmentalists and local communities, who are often alone in questioning the inevitability of "a one-way future consisting only of growth." In this opposition to development projects, philosopher Bruno Latour sees a fundamental rejection of modernity's separation of means and ends.<sup>1</sup> Radical environmentalists recognise that ecology, with its focus on connecting humans with one another and with the non-human world, is inherently at odds with growth that separates and conquers.



<sup>1</sup> The phrase is from Linda Le Gaal, who used science fiction novel *The Displacement/Under Displacement* as a vivid metaphor of a degrowth world.  
<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour, "Is Modernity or to Ecologize? That's the Question," in *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium*, Noel Castree and Bruce Williams-Brann (New York: Routledge, 1996), 231-242.

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[Download "The Degrowth Alternative" here.](#)



**TO RADICALLY CHALLENGE THE PREVAILING SOCIAL ORDER — (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

*On the 200th anniversary of Marx's birthday, The 170th of the Communist Manifesto and the 160th of the Grundrisse*



**To Radically Change the Prevailing Social Order**

*On the 200th anniversary of Marx's birthday, The 170th of the Communist Manifesto and the 160th of the Grundrisse*

Alejandro Teitelbaum

In this paper we will refer to the method that Marx contributed to in order to have a coherent and objective view of today's society—and thus avoid a subjective and arbitrary vision of it—to the leading role that corresponds to the oppressed and exploited ones, for their radical transformation and the necessary confluence in the struggles for this transformation of all sectorial demands.

**I. Marx's favoured method**

In point 3 (The Method of Political Economy) of his Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1857) Marx wrote:

*When examining a given country from the standpoint of political economy, we begin with its population, the division of the population into classes, town and country, the sea, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, prices, etc.*

*It would seem to be the proper thing to start with the real and concrete elements, with the actual preconditions, e.g. to start in the sphere of economy with population, which forms the basis and the subject of the whole social process of production. Closer consideration shows, however, that this is wrong. Population is an abstraction II, for instance, one disregards the classes of which it is composed. (Quam is the undefined).*



ESCATIONS 166(5) B013 April 2019 Alejandro Teitelbaum

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**THE FATE OF GLOBAL CORPORATIONS IN AN ANTI-GLOBALIST WORLD — (Allen White)**

The world's roughly 80,000 multinational corporations (MNCs), long dominated by U.S., European and Japanese firms, have been joined by a growing number based in China, India, Brazil and other emerging economies. MNCs are the engine of a quarter of total world

production and their global supply chains represent about half of world trade. MNCs have played a major role in driving a tenfold increase since 1979, now totalling \$16 trillion, roughly the size of entire U.S. GDnsience of the unsustainability of the current ethos and of the urgency to build a new paradigm to bequest to future generations.

Is the post-war ascendance of multinational corporations irreversible?

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**THE YELLOW VESTS — (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

The mobilisation of the yellow vests raised expectations and rejections and also multiple interpretations. Among the latter, some deem that it is a new way of expressing the conflict between those who have more and those who have less, given the inability to assume it on the part of traditional organisations: unions, "left" parties, etc.

The fundamental and secondary conflicts cannot be solved without having as the objective to radically change the current social order, which is a titanic and long-term task. First of all, because the dominant classes completely have at their service the institutions of the State: Government, Parliament, Justice, Police, Armed Forces and international organisations: the UN, the WTO, the IMF, the European Union, etc. and its armed arms: NATO, the so-called "special forces" (paramilitary formations and others) and the fundamentalist and terrorist organisations and groups; the latter actual

pawns, occasionally or permanent, voluntary or involuntary, of these ruling classes. And they also have at their disposal the so-called "civil society": the big capital, the media controlled by the former, the part of the intelligentsia and the different social organisations at the service of the system, working together with the State but outside of it as apparatuses of economic domination, ideological hegemony and social control.



**The Yellow Vests**

Alejandro Teitelbaum

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Relative to the inability of traditional organisations to assume, organise and bring to a successful conclusion the struggles, first the Fordism, then the Welfare State and now the new "management" have been grinding off the level of consciousness of the workers, which has been reflected for a long time in trade union organisations and in the multicoloured arch of the "lefts".

Lars Svendsen writes: [the workers] "... ended up accepting the salary relationship and the resulting division of labour. Contrary to what revolutionary Marxism expected, they stopped questioning the capitalist paradigm, contenting themselves with the more modest ambition to improve their condition within the system. That also meant that their hope for freedom and personal fulfillment laid in their role as consumers. Their main objective was to increase their salaries in order to consume more (Lars Svendsen, Le travail, Gagner sa vie, à quel prix? Editions Autrement, Paris, September 2013, page 140).

To Svendsen's reflection it can be added that the trade union slogan of "the preservation of the sources of work" includes the armaments industry (the origin of gigantic benefits for its owners and the great powers and the system's lifeline in times of crisis) where its workers "earn a living" and many other people "earn their death". The old slogan expressed somewhat ironically: "to transform the swords into ploughs" has been forgotten. According to the last five-year report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China control three quarters of the market for arms sales in the world. Arms sales between 2013 and 2017 were 10% higher than those registered between 2008 and 2012; at the price of dislodged states, destroyed cities, hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of displaced people. <https://www.sipri.com/mandu/notes/tema-internacional-4749873>.

Henry Ford, at the start of the twentieth century, introduced into his factories Taylorism or the "scientific organisation of work" or chain work. This shifting work exhausted workers, many of whom chose to leave it faced with an extremely high turnover rate. Ford found the solution: to increase wages vertically to \$ 5 per day, which he could do without decreasing the benefits given the huge increase in productivity and the steep decline in production cost that resulted from the introduction of chain work. The new wages in Ford's factories allowed its workers to become consumers, including the cars Ford manufactured. The workers, who did not feel at all interested in a repetitive job that left no room for any initiative on their part, recovered outside of work their human condition (or believed to recover it as consumers, thanks to the relatively high wages that they perceived).

This situation became generalised in the most industrialised countries, especially after the Second World War and in a very circumscribed and temporary way in some peripheral countries. It is what was called "the Welfare State": "The state of Well-being is not, as one often hears it said, a state that fills the gaps of the capitalist system or heals the wounds inflicted by the system through social benefits. The welfare state is set as an imperative to maintain a growth rate, whatever it may be, provided

TICCATIONS 166(5) B013 April 2019 Alejandro Teitelbaum

This is how there are strategies that are designed to deal with specific real conflicts (relating to gender, environmental pollution, the organisation of education and its contents, those referring to the practices and policies of pharmaceutical monopolies and public health, conflicts between the right to information and its manipulation by media oligopolies conflicts between leaders and led ones in all types of organisations, those generated by representative democracy in terminal crisis, etc.) that sometimes evolve into campaigns and demonstrations to vindicate the rights of groups that are particularly stakeholders , but that, because they are not being articulated within the global questioning of the system and the need to end it, they end up fading away or being digested by the system.

In other words, social and group conflicts are multiple and varied but to give them a path to a resolution that overcomes their plight, it is necessary to be formulated within the struggles to resolve the main contradiction inherent to the capitalist system,

[Download "The yellow vests" here!](#)



**MEXICO'S WAGES 2018-2024: TO CHANGE SO THAT EVERYTHING REMAINS THE SAME —(Álvaro J. de Regil)**

*Real Wages appear to remain dwindling crumbs in an ethos of Neoliberal Populism — The rhetoric end of the Modern Slave Ethos advanced by the “progressive” wage policy of Mexico’s new government is a travesty of what it boasts to portray.*



**Mexico’s Wages 2018 - 2024: To Change So That Everything Remains The Same**

Real Wages appear to remain dwindling crumbs in an ethos of Neoliberal Populism — The rhetoric end of the Modern Slave Ethos advanced by the “progressive” wage policy of Mexico’s new government is a travesty of what it boasts to portray.

If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (1957)

Álvaro J. De Regil

**Background**

Mexicans workers, from colonial times to the present day, in the latest iteration of neo-colonialism, have suffered, through varying techniques, a customary system of exploitation imposed by the elites. Since the post-war era, the customary centre-periphery relationship has ensured that economic policy is always in line with the interests of the metropolises of the system in connivance with their peripheral elites. During the so-called golden years of capitalism, the first three decades after 1945, demand-side Keynesian economics increased the wellbeing of most workers in both central and peripheral economies through a consistent increase of real wages. In Mexico and the rest of the periphery, elites sought to increase foreign investment through a set of comparative advantages that guaranteed greater returns on investment to the institutional investors and their corporations than what they were obtaining in their home countries. Despite the fact that real wages were relatively increasing, comparative labour costs for equivalent jobs were consistently dramatically lower in the periphery, even if they were



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**Conclusions:**

- The campaign promise on wages was not fulfilled. The real wage increase was substantially smaller than what was offered during the electoral campaign.
- There is no political will to make a minimum wage recovering policy a firm commitment by passing specific legislation for that end.
- The general wage increase benefits only one-sixth of salaried people for it was strictly limited to the general minimum wage, relegating the 59 minimum wage rates for professional activities to an increase to offset CPI inflation, the same wage contention policy of the last 36 years.
- It would be a great mistake to eliminate minimum wage rates for the 59 professional activities; activities require greater physical and intellectual capacities and skills than those required for activities of the general minimum wage. Assigning the same compensation criteria to professional activities would not only be greatly unfair and further depress their purchasing power and quality of life, but they would have a profound and negative multiplying effect in many other activities that require greater capacities in the upper echelons

of skilled work, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which receives the highest labour compensations.

- López Obrador recanted on his commitment to recover real wages and returned to the neoliberal dogma, for he returned to conditioning any increase of wages to a concurrent increase in productivity. This sets a very ominous precedent that can only be construed as a recantation of his view on the need to address the fact that wages have lost 75% of their purchasing power as a result of a deliberate policy of wage pauperisation.
- López Obrador has established a strong partnership with the historic predators of real wages. The strong personal partnership of López Obrador with the business oligarchy, his old nemesis, can only be construed as an alliance to support the very group that has fervently worked with previous governments to deliberately pauperise wages for the last thirty-six years.

• From the global economy perspective, manufacturing wages will remain at their lowest level in the manufacturing sector, because if professional minimum wages remain losing value, higher skilled wages in the manufacturing sector, integrated with the global economy, will remain at the same level they have been since the 1990s after they were deliberately pauperised to become the main driver of foreign investment with NAFTA.

• Unless there is radical change, Mexico will lose manufacturing share under the new NAFTA. This is a particularly important issue, in light of the new NAFTA 2.0, which incorporated an agreement to increase the North American content.

• The above notwithstanding, López Obrador still has ninety-five percent of his term to amend his policies and attempt to truly transform the country by replacing the structures of exploitation and depredation with a radical new paradigm in pursuit of the welfare of people and the planet and NOT the market. We remain in hope.

[Download tMexico 's Wages 2018-2024... here.](#)



**ADAMS SMITH AND THE YELLOW VESTS MOVEMENT —(Eric Toussaint)**

*It is sad to see how completely misrepresented Adam Smith (1723-1790) is when pundits call upon him to vindicate neoliberalism and the status quo. It seems many have not really bothered to read his works*

Some passages in Adam Smith’s major work, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, published in 1776 provide

evidence that his social analysis clearly refers to class struggle and sheds light on the currently active Yellow Vest movement. Referring to Karl Marx would of course offer ample keys to understanding what is currently happening. But who would be surprised? On the other hand referring to Adam Smith may seem to be sheer provocation. We have to open our eyes even wider and comfort our arguments against those who consider that injustice is part of the way of the world. Examining the analysis of social classes carried out by Adam Smith also makes it possible to understand the elements of continuity in the system of capitalist exploitation and domination. Obviously society has changed but there are recurring features that it is interesting to highlight.

Adam Smith, the icon of the establishment as well as of the majority of those who support the capitalist system as a horizon society cannot trespass, exposed the action of the capitalist class and the support it receives from the law and parliament. This really deserves to be thrown into the face of self-appointed experts and main stream journalists who actually serve injustice and who’s only fuzzy knowledge of Adam Smith, is a vague idea about an ‘invisible hand’.

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**IS IT TIME TO REWRITE THE SOCIAL CONTRACT? —(Allen White)**

*In 2007, the author, being well aware of the overwhelming power and influence of corporations over societies, their governments, the daily lives of the citizenry and the sustainability of the planet, pondered over the need to pursue a new agreement that integrates*

corporations to the social contract between citizens and the governments they elect. A decade later, he revisits the issue, with the conviction that in a world fraught with ample discord in practically all spheres of human relations, a new social contract that integrates corporations to shape their influence is more than ever urgently needed. White argues that the asymmetry between the beneficiaries and the burdened of globalisation has catalysed rising discontent among those left behind. Nonetheless, he senses that a new tripartite social contract, built on an ethos of collaboration, civility and inclusiveness, is poised to emerge.

**IS IT TIME TO REWRITE THE SOCIAL CONTRACT?**

In the midst of BHP Billiton’s assessment of the consequences of its massive and dramatically successful effort to reverse malaria in the region surrounding its aluminum smelter in Mozambique, the general manager of the smelter commented, “you can imagine, it was huge disaster. We could not deal with that level of absenteeism, and we would have had more fatalities. If we didn’t treat malaria we could not operate.”

Not long ago, such an intervention on the part of a private firm in a traditionally governmental function like public health was a rarity. Today, interventions are increasingly commonplace, both in instances where a business case is evident (as in Mozambique) and in instances where the economics are less than compelling but the moral high ground is unambiguous.

Examples of corporate activities that impinge upon public goods abound: pharmaceutical

companies providing affordable HIV/AIDS drugs to battle the pandemic worldwide; beverage companies controversially extracting potable water resources in India; multinationals assuming control over public water supplies in Bolivia; and privatisation of mass transit in the UK and roadways in India.

[Download the "Is it time to rewrite..." here.](#)



**THE MISSING THIRD PARTY: CORPORATIONS AND THE NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT — (Allen White)**

A decade ago, in a moment of impatience with the progress of the sustainable business movement, I paused to ask: Is it time to rewrite the social contract? My response: an unequivocal “Yes.”

Why? Because the corporation cannot be ignored in defining the 21st century social order in a world fraught with geopolitical turbulence, multiple ecological crises, social discord, the question of the corporation as a party to the social contract looms larger than ever.

[Download "The missing third party..." here.](#)



**COLLAPSED PROGRESSIVISM IN IBERIAN AMERICA, BRAZIL’S CASE — (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

*How social democracy in Europe is leaving a perfect situation for ultraconservative and quasi fascist governments*

The electoral triumph of the far right in Brazil is due to multiple factors; yet the main factor, as the fundamental and priority task, is the failure of petismo (Workers Party), to transform the economic, political and social structures of the country. A failure attributable —as we will see in detail— to the fact that it never aimed at such a transformation, but, on the contrary, contributed to its strengthening and consolidation. This is how the gap between the poorest and the richest continued to increase: the richest continued to enrich themselves and the poorest continued to impoverish themselves. Even the publicised anti-poverty and indigence programs were a drop in the ocean of pauperism and destitution that persists in Brazil.

Other factors are the lack of class consciousness among the popular majorities that they failed to acquire due to the synergistic effects of their living conditions and the influence of social-democratic and "progressive" ideologies. And, incidentally, the unchallenged power of the dominant classes that contributed to the electoral result, which has used all the resources always at its disposal —media, judicial, political, economic, ideological, etc.— to ensure the continuity of the system, including in its most aberrant forms. Those who lament this use ignore —or pretend to ignore— that it is not circumstantial, but inherent to the dominant system, which includes pure and harsh violence when the system deems it necessary for its preservation.

Corruption has also exerted its weight, because regardless of the veracity of the accusations against Lula da Silva, corruption enjoyed total impunity during the PT (Workers' Party) governments and contaminated all the powers of the State and all or almost all the political parties. Dilma Rousseff was not dismissed because of corruption but for violating tax regulations, masking the budget deficit; a reason more than debatable to dismiss her, especially with the vote of parliamentarians who, for a good part, were notoriously corrupt, including Temer, who succeeded her in the Presidency. The issue of public sense of safety also influenced the decision of the voters, in a country where crime increases as a result, among others, of the increase —without any prospects for a solution— of unemployment and poverty.

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**ELECTORAL AUTHORITARIANISM-ELECTIVE DICTATORSHIP — (Javier López)**

Jair Bolsonaro will be President of Brazil. A homophobic soldier with authoritarian excesses, who has scorned democratic mechanisms and threatened his political rivals, will lead the greatest regional power in Latin America that is now a global giant. In fact, his profile, a caricature of a third-rate dictator, would be comical if it weren't for the fact that he amassed more than 50m votes. His election, with incalculable consequences, is the latest in a long line highlighting the battered fragility of democracy. What is happening to our societies when voters decide to put their destiny in the hands of eccentric authoritarians, while the

influence of the far-right multiplies election after election all over the planet?

Download "Electoral authoritarianism..." here.



**BRAZIL GOES BACK TO AN OLIGARCH PAST – Return to the fazenda and gaúcho whip — Post Lula, post Dilma Rousseff, power has shifted to powerful landowners aggressively asserting their rights over land they don't use but don't want to lose, and politically motivated violence is up — (Anne Vigna)**



**Brazil goes back to an oligarch past — Return to the fazenda and gaúcho whip —**

*Post Lula, post Dilma Rousseff, power has shifted to powerful landowners aggressively asserting their rights over land they don't use but don't want to lose, and politically motivated violence is up*  
Anne Vigna

Since Congress removed President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 – in what the left called a 'parliamentary coup' – Brazil seems to have reconnected with a past many hoped was consigned to history. It is that of a country run by colonists and bandeirantes, powerful local figures who used violence against all who crossed them: the left, the poor, and the 'landless' occupiers of unused land which, according to the constitution, should be redistributed through agrarian reform.



Brazil will commemorate the 130th anniversary of its abolition of slavery on 13 May, yet a hated symbol of that era, the whip, reappeared on television screens when landowners used them on 22 March against members of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) waiting to see former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's motorcade. Senator Ana Amélia Lemos of the rightwing Partido Progressista expressed unabashed support for these 'true gaúchos who raised their whips'.  
Lula, who has been in prison since 7 April, was able to travel throughout Brazil unimpeded during a political career of over 50 years. But this March he encountered blockades organised by armed militias using tractors, stones and rifles to hamper his campaign to mobilise opposition to his 12-year sentence for 'passive corruption'. The sentence has been

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during a political career of over 50 years. But this March he encountered blockades organised by armed militias using tractors, stones and rifles to hamper his campaign to mobilise opposition to his 12-year sentence for 'passive corruption'. The sentence has been condemned not only by the left, but also by 122 Brazilian legal experts, who have published articles suggesting the charge was based more on the judge's prejudices than hard evidence.

The police investigation into shots fired at Lula's motorcade on 27 March has revealed they came from Leandro Bonotto's fazenda (plantation). Since the 1990s, Bonotto has vehemently opposed the MST and land reclamation by the National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (Incra), a federal government body. The source of the gunshots was not a surprise: associations of big landowners openly advocate violence against the MST.

Gedeão Ferreira, who heads the agriculture federation in Rio Grande do Sul, said when he took office: 'We're going to confront the MST and Incra. The sole aim of their occupations is to deprive rural producers of their properties.' Ferreira denied Incra officials access to his property and was jailed in 2002 for ignoring the law and inciting criminal behaviour. He was released in 2003 by the regional federal court of Porto Alegre (TRF4), the body that convicted Lula on appeal.

**(Annex) Lunch with the ruralists A group of wealthy agribiz owners get to make self-enriching policy affecting millions because they backed the overthrow of Dilma Rousseff.**

Download "Brazil goes back..." here.



**THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS — (Alejandro Teitelbaum)**

The transnational corporation has been defined as "a company that tries to conduct its activities on an international scale, as if there are no national borders, on the basis of a common strategy run by the corporate centre". Its policies are established by the decisions of the corporate centre regarding the location of the plants and what each of them produces in the production chain and in terms of marketing and financing. But in addition and above all, transnational societies are the nucleus of the contemporary capitalist system, imperialist and uttermost exploitative. Thus, it can be concluded that the struggle to dismantle the power of transnational corporations is difficult and complex, it demands the exclusion of a naive optimism that can disorient public opinion and needs to be clearly framed in the objective of abolishing the

capitalist system. And whose main protagonist must be the working class of each country and constituted in a unique international front.

*A final thought*

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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).



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

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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.

