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## THE DECEPTIVE DELUSIONS OF GREEN CAPITALISM — Álvaro J. de Regil – Why Endless Consumption of Our Finite Planet Will Take Us to Our Cliff of Doom ...and How We Can Prevent



### The Deceptive Delusions of Green Capitalism

Why Endless Consumption of Our Finite Planet Will Take Us to Our Cliff of Doom  
and How We Can Prevent It

Álvaro J. de Regil

#### Abstract

Pundits and apologists of “green capitalism”, an oxymoron, are working strenuously to deceive people. They want people to think that technology will solve all the problems associated with climate change and the planetary rift created by the Anthropocene geological epoch. With the full and enthusiastic cooperation of governments around the world, all underlying social structures such as educational systems, mass media, government public messaging, advertising, corporate public relations and many NGOs are conveying the narrative that the technological prowess of twentieth-first century capitalism will solve all the problems of the increasingly catastrophic planetary events. In this way, the messaging continues to be business as usual. People are led to presume that capitalism and its inherent and unsustainable consumer society will continue by making capitalism more efficient, more ecologically and socially responsible and sustainable as if it were already ecologically and socially sustainable to some extent. We just need to transition to new energy sources and become more efficient in resource consumption. Nonetheless, science has demonstrated that a safe and just transition to make the planet sustainable for the future generations of humans and non-



Photo by Shuang Duan on Unsplash

TSCA/Eu/SD 83091 March 2022/Álvaro J. de Regil

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## LITHIUM AND THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION THAT DEVASTATE THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN FAVOUR OF THE GLOBAL NORTH – Nubia Barrera Silva

*Contexts and contradictions of the lithium-ion  
from Argentina, Chile and Bolivia to the Global  
North.*

The energy transition led by the European Union (EU) is condensed in the European Green Pact (EGP) from the continental strategy of becoming the global market leader in green growth. This is happening at the same time as US imperialism is competing with the rise of Chinese supremacy. From the geopolitical sphere, the extraction of lithium has intensified in the countries of Argentina, Chile and Bolivia, ignoring the finite capacity of the mineral and the water used in its extraction from the natural

reservoirs of the basin of the so-called "Lithium Triangle" (LT) in South America.



### Lithium and the Contradictions in the Energy Transition that Devastate the Global South in Favour of the Global North

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Photo by Francisco Schirone on Unsplash. Lithium salt harvest in the Uyuni Desert in Bolivia

The literature on artificial needs consumption is lavish in praising lithium's chemical qualities: lightweight and a low fusion point.<sup>1</sup> It has multiple uses and by-products,<sup>2</sup> and in

<sup>1</sup> +2 Allion Pérez. Factos verdes en tiempos de pandemia. Icaria Editorial El futuro se discute ahora. ISBN: 978-84120139-2. 2020. The EGP is a programmatic framework of reform with a broad sectoral scope, a massive mobilisation of economic resources, and concerns the world's largest single market. Its founding document of 11 December 2019 opens with a diagnosis that many other green pacts could share. It proposes to reduce GHG emissions in the face of the risk of biodiversity extinction, forest destruction and rising sea levels. It includes initiatives, strategies and policies. pp. 34-25.

<sup>2</sup> +3 SE. Secretaría de Economía. "Perfil del mercado de litio", México. Diciembre de 2018. P. 4.

<sup>4</sup> +4 Such as in the glass and ceramic industry, the production of batteries for mobile phones, iPods and personal computers. The market for batteries for electric vehicles is constantly on the rise. Finally, there are lubricating greases, followed by aluminium alloys, air conditioning, continuous casting, rubber and thermoplastics, pharmaceuticals, industrial processes and chemical processing, and other products: Juliana Ströbele-Creger. "El proyecto estatal del litio en Bolivia. Expectativas, desafíos y dilemas". Marzo-Abril 2013.

TSCA/Eu/SD 83091 November 2021/Nubia Barrera Silva

The literature on artificial needs consumption is lavish in praising lithium's chemical qualities: lightweight and a low fusion point. It has multiple uses and by-products, and in less than five years, world demand will exceed the reserves in natural deposits. Lithium is being hoarded - mainly - by the electric car industry within the framework of the global energy economy or green capitalism. Lithium also represents the most efficient reservoir in the renewable generation of wind, solar, hydro and tidal electricity in the energy mix, under the International Energy Agency (IEA) guidelines, the World Bank (WB) and multilateral development agencies.

We know that transnational corporations have a proven track record of deception, delays and denials, and a financial interest in continuing to pollute at any cost for the people or the planet. To this end, the World Bank creates the strategy of green capitalism within the framework of



wealth concentration and the opening of markets for emission rights and other so-called green and clean offsets with environmental and sustainable rhetoric. Similarly, underneath the energy transition lie ambiguous expressions: sustainable capitalism, sustainable agriculture, sustainable use of energy and resources, among others. Thus, as capital reproduces itself, consumption intensifies, emissions increase and the global North's energy transition is proposed. Hence, the green economy hoax, an essential component of the policy of the European Green Pact (EGP) policy, emerges. Ulrich Brand reviews the two traps of green capitalism: In the first, it shifts the responsibility to humans as the main carbon emitters. In the second, euphemisms under the label of the energy mix prevail, with fossil energy in the first place, its false promises and arguments on emissions reduction. Just 100 corporations are responsible for 70 per cent of historical emissions. This includes the fossil fuel industry - a leading member - agribusiness, logging, aviation, technology and the financial bodies that support them.

By 2050, if the global rulers and leaders of corporations and their financiers have not taken concrete actions towards implementing policies of economic degrowth, there will be no physical or digital army to stop the fury of migration towards the predatory countries of the North, dedicated to the plunder of wealth in more than two centuries of history in the Global South. Any system change is violent, as capital is sustained by dispossession of biophysical and material goods, unlimited profits, war and other forms of violence. In this war, nature's fury is already emerging as a new force with totally unprecedented events. And here we have the difference with already-known confrontations and disputes. However, we must recognise a fact inherent to human nature that could make a difference: its enormous capacity to remake itself with unusual reinventions.

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## LEAKED IPCC REPORTS— *The Editors of Monthly Review*

On August 9, 2021, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. This was Part I of its Sixth Assessment Report.

It is a sign of just how serious matters have become—with the UN COP26 talks on climate in Glasgow this November now regarded by many as a last-ditch effort to achieve a global solution on behalf of humanity as a whole—that the early draft versions of both Part II and Part III reports were leaked during the summer. In late June, Part II of AR6 was leaked to the French news agency *Agence-France Presse* (AFP), which then proceeded to publish an article

based on the leaked report (“Crushing Climate Impacts to Hit Sooner than Feared,” June 23, 2021).



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The Editors of Monthly Review

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Photo by Agathe Laiton on Unplash

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Days before the publication of Part I, the key section of Part III, a “Summary for Policymakers,” was leaked by scientists associated with Scientist Rebellion and Extinction Rebellion Spain. An article announcing the leak, entitled “IPCC Sees Degrowth as Key to Mitigating Climate Change,” was published on August 7 by journalist Juan Borda and ecologist Fernando Prieto in the Spanish online magazine *Contexto y Acción* (CTXT). The leaked “Summary for Policymakers” for Part III was the draft document accepted by Working Group III, before the various participating governments—which in the IPCC formal adoption process are able to make changes to the “Summary for Policymakers” prior to its publication—could excise key elements of the report and water it down.

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Near the end of August, there was a second leak from Part III of the Sixth Assessment Report emanating from the same sources—this time of Chapter One of the third report. This leak was announced in an article by Borda, Prieto, and three others published in CTXT, entitled “Leaked Report of the IPCC Warns that the Growth Model of Capitalism Is Unsustainable” (MR Online, 23 August 2021).

As the report indicates at one point, referring to the analysis of Malm and others: “The character of social and economic development produced by the nature of capitalist society” is viewed by many political-economic critics “as ultimately unsustainable.” Indeed, a close, critical reading of the leaked Chapter One leaves little doubt that radical system change is now the only

remaining path to a sustainable future for humanity. As UN secretary-general António Guterres exclaimed in a statement accompanying the release of the new IPCC report, this is “a code red for humanity.” There is simply no hope for the world unless people everywhere are determined to surmount the main barrier to human survival: the barrier of capital itself.

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## EPIDEMIC RESPONSE —THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM — *Jennifer Dohrn and Eleanor Stein*



## Epidemic Response

—The Legacy of Colonialism

Jennifer Dohrn and Eleanor Stein

As we head into year two of the coronavirus pandemic, we ourselves are haunted by the spectre of the social dimension of what looks on the surface—and is presented to us by government

The COVID-19 pandemic is at its root a crisis of globalisation, a crisis of racial capitalism, a crisis of colonialism, a crisis of the social organisation of our public health system. It is a crisis of treatment and care versus demonisation and wall building. And it is the latest pandemic in a long line of modern ones—from SARS to swine flu to HIV to Ebola—a predictable and predicted outcome, not the mysterious unforeseeable lightning strike as it is often portrayed.

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Photo by Shalea Sankar on Unplash

TSCA/BR/SD 38018: September 2021 Jennifer Dohrn and Eleanor Stein

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double that of white people. Indigenous people account for more than double (2.3 times) the number of deaths. Whites in the United States have two to three times the vaccination rates of people of colour, and still have far greater access to vaccines. Of those who have been vaccinated so far, two-thirds are white and only 2 per cent are Black people.

[Download the full document here!](#)

## COVID-19 AND MARKETOCRACY — Álvaro J. de Regil

*Confronting the pandemic in the context of the market's supremacy over the welfare of people and planet.*



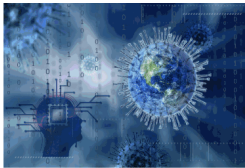
### COVID-19 and Marketocracy

*Confronting the pandemic in the context of the market's supremacy over the welfare of people and planet*

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#### Introduction

This paper is an excerpt of "Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet", published in June 2021, which provides a holistic assessment of the unsustainable trajectory that humanity has been following since the First Industrial Revolution and the capture of democracy by capitalism.



An innate feature of capitalism has been the endless pursuit of an ethos with the least possible intervention of the state in its unrelenting quest for the reproduction and accumulation of capital, at the expense of all other participants in the economic activity prominently including the planet. Capitalism always demands to be in the driver's seat of the economy. Only when its activities are threatened by communities and nations opposing the expropriation of their natural resources and the imposition of structures that extract the vast majority of the value of labour—the surplus value—capitalism demands the intervention of the state; these include their armed forces, to protect the exploits of the owners of the system. This is all the more evident in the global South. Across centuries of imperialism and colonialism, the practice of invasion, conquering, expropriation and exploitation by capitalist enterprises—with the full support of their states—has always been more vicious and predatory in the system's periphery than in its core. Labour exploitation and resource depredation also occur systematically in the system's metropolises, albeit under less pernicious and predatory practices. Hence, as the norm, capitalism demands from the state the establishment of a sheer *laissez-faire* ethos, to leave everything to Adam Smith's naïve idea of the

This work assesses the criteria that governments around the world have applied to manage COVID-19 infections, the development of vaccinations and the programs for vaccinating the population, always in the context of a market-driven paradigm, where shareholder value of global corporations supersedes the protection and welfare of the Demos (the citizenry). It also covers the many questions that scientific communities across the world have raised on the criteria applied on the diagnosis and treatment of the illness and vaccine development, as well as the systematic repudiation and ostracism that governments are applying to questions coming not from so-called conspiracy theorists but from medical scientists specialised in a diversity of fields that directly deal with epidemiological events.

There is currently a global debate on the need to ask the citizenry to get a third dose of a vaccine as a booster shot, given the steep increase in contagions and hospitalisations caused by the Delta mutation SARS-CoV-2. While the U.S. government and rich countries are pushing for a third dose, many in the medical practice feel the best strategy is to put more pressure on people to get vaccinated in the U.S. and everywhere, and, to accomplish this, to support poor countries with massive supplies of vaccines instead of giving a third dose to those who have been vaccinated. This, coupled with the systematic use of masks and restrictions for circulation, work, travel, and daily activities against those who reject vaccinations, appears to be the most sensible and effective strategy to defeat the virus and all its mutations.

Lastly, given the fluid state of the pandemic, this excerpt updates the latest VAERS data available for adverse reactions, two recent vaccine adverse reactions recently identified for the mRNA vaccines and the Janssen vaccine, as well as a new vaccine (Coronavax), developed using traditional methods, that is currently in its process of approval, again in a market-driven context.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION: MYTHS AND REALITIES — Caroline Zickgraf

Awareness has grown of the intimate link between climate change and migration in past years but it remains a complex and contentious issue. In a debate fanned by the media and populist politicians, University of Liège researcher Caroline Zickgraf separates myth from reality. Explaining how our changing environment is making people move, she calls for evidence-based preparation rather than fear-based reactions and crisis responses. As climate change escalates, such understanding is a first step on the way to a much-needed political response.



### Climate Change and Migration: Myths and Realities

Caroline Zickgraf

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Photo by Silvestre Collado on Unsplash

The global impacts of climate change threaten to reshape the world in a dramatic fashion. From sea level rise, coastal erosion, land degradation, droughts, floods, and temperature increase to intensifying and more frequent storms, any number of detrimental impacts caused by a rapidly warming planet fundamentally changes how and where we live. Sudden-onset events and slow-onset processes combine to damage and destroy homes and assets, decrease crop productivity and biodiversity, forcing people from their lands and livelihoods. While some people are forced to flee in a rapid fashion, others move preemptively or in response to the gradual changes that make living – and earning – in situ ever more difficult, forming a complex spectrum of human mobility related to climate change.

This article intentionally takes a rather wide view of this spectrum, in order to tackle some of the most common questions about how migration and climate change collide – and what should be done about it.

TCGA/ISS/SD 23073 February 2022C. Zickgraf

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## MANIPULATIONS OF FREEDOM — Sumona Gupta

The gig economy has grown rapidly over the past decade and is nearly ubiquitous. It is broadly defined as work on app-based platforms wherein workers set their own hours and complete individual jobs at will. This includes some professional services and clerical work, but is mostly comprised of driving and food delivery services.





## Manipulations of Freedom

*The Dirty Fight for Prop 22  
and the Gig Economy [of Modern Slave Work]*

Sumona Gupta

An air of uncertainty hung above the United States on November 3, 2020—no one knew how the presidential election would play out, how long it would take to decide, when the backlash against the winner would begin, or if it would turn into violence. One thing was relatively certain, though: California would vote overwhelmingly for Joe Biden. Indeed, Biden won the state with 64.6 percent of the vote, a historically large margin.<sup>1</sup> However, there were also several propositions on the 2020 California ballot, the results of which were not as easily predictable. In California, ballot initiatives are a significant part of election season. California ballot measure campaigns take second place to U.S. presidential campaigns in global political spending. This is likely because of the state's wide influence in U.S. politics and the size of its population.<sup>2</sup>



Photo: Bobbi Lieke / iStock

On last November's ballot there were some contentious and important issues, including restoring voting rights for people on parole (Proposition 17), an increase on commercial property taxes for education funding (Proposition 13), and allowing affirmative action policies in public institutions (Proposition 16). Two of the most closely watched around the

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> "California Presidential Election Results," New York Times, December 5, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> Data from "25 Notably Different Ballot Items Inside Uber and Lyft's Fight over Gig Worker Status," CNN, August 28, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> TBCA/Resep/SD 01072 August 2020 Sumona Gupta

Some of these companies are behemoths, especially Uber. It alone claims to have 91 million active customers and 3.9 million drivers across the world. And although the company's revenue is soaring, the company's losses are also staggering. Upon its initial public offering in 2019, it was revealed that it lost \$2.2 billion in 2018 and \$1.8 billion in 2019. While this would normally hinder valuation and scare off investors, Uber's initial public offering remained the largest in 2019.

The reason for this lies in the company's initial public offering prospectus. Uber envisioned a future in which it has dominated the delivery and driver space, expanding into trucking and shipping as well. It hoped to be the replacement for a crumbling public transport infrastructure, building its own private infrastructure of cars, scooters, and bikes. This would require some initial losses, of course. It would require undercutting their competitors and lowering fares to take full control of their desired markets. But the company planned to go further, investing over \$1 billion in driverless car technology. Ridding themselves of their drivers, their main workforce, was the key to future profitability, they believed.

Uber ended up scrapping most of these plans in late 2020 because driverless car technology is still not viable for widespread use and these ventures did not look promising. However, they retain the foundational ideas behind the prospectus: that the company should attempt to unburden itself of its responsibilities to workers to keep afloat and gain dominance.

This is key to understanding the gig economy. Its flexibility is a double-edged sword for its workers. Though flexibility allows workers the convenience of choosing their hours, it also offers their employers the chance to disown

them, to treat them as independent and undeserving of minimum benefits. After all, workers are a means to an end for large gig companies like Uber—monopolisation.

In this light, it is revealed that the gig economy is merely a new slick of paint on an old phenomenon. It is one of the many manifestations of precarious labour, otherwise known as casualisation or flexibilisation. In the Global South precarious work is widespread, particularly among migrant workers, seasonal workers, and women. In recent decades, the United States and European Union have also seen an increase in the number of the working poor. Though workers seem to have quite a high degree of autonomy, they are completely dependent on their employers. This distinguishes it from true self-employment or independent contractor status.... Gig economy companies were not true pioneers. Their primary innovation, their app-based interface, was being developed for use by taxi drivers in 2010. Workers push themselves to work more hours and longer shifts as the burden of earning a minimum wage is not their employers', but theirs.... Two centuries ago, Karl Marx described this type of wage, the piece wage, as the most advantageous form of payment for employers.

The hold of the private sphere on voters—with Proposition 22—was exerted both on the deeply personal and broad, structural levels. A reflection from Theodor Adorno puts it simply: "People have so manipulated the concept of freedom that it finally boils down to the right of the stronger and richer to take from the weaker and poorer whatever they still have." As has been demonstrated many times during this pandemic, many may link capital's and business's freedom to go on unimpeded with their own.

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## THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THE GREAT RESET AND THE END OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT —

Álvaro J. de Regil

The "Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Great Reset" contains three sections. The first one covers the trajectory that humankind has been following between the First Industrial and The Third Industrial Revolution, with the emergence of capitalism and its creation of the gradual metabolic rift with the environment that greatly accelerated during the Third Industrial Revolution in the Twentieth Century. The second section proceeds with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), touted to maximise efficiency and effectiveness in materialising with great precision all results. To accomplish this, it would radically change the way humankind lives as the result of a fusion of technologies that blurs the lines between the physical,

digital, and biological spheres. The 4IR is a marketocratic driven phenomenon that will have tremendous repercussions in every realm of human life, on the life of all living things and on the capacity of our planet to remain a liveable planet. The 4IR will impact the way we go about our public and private lives profoundly. It will also affect the lives of all living things to various degrees, with many already on the brink of extinction, finding their ecosystems no longer adequate for their reproduction.



## The Fourth Industrial Revolution, the Great Reset and the End of Life as We Know it

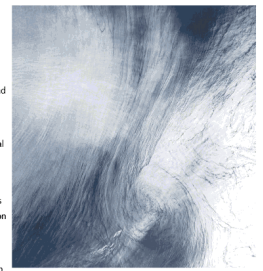
*How Capitalism in the 21st Century will take  
all species to the brink of extinction*

Álvaro J. de Regil

### Prologue

This paper is an excerpt of "Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet", published in June 2021, which provides a holistic assessment of the unsustainable trajectory that humanity has been following since the First Industrial Revolution and the capture of democracy by capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

An innate feature of capitalism has been the endless pursuit of an ethos with the least possible intervention of the state in its unending quest for the reproduction and accumulation of capital, at the expense of all other participants in the economic activity, prominently including the planet. Capitalism always demands to be in the driver's seat of the economy. Only when its activities are threatened by communities and nations opposing the expropriation of their natural resources and the imposition of structures that extract the vast majority of the value of labour—the surplus-value—, capitalism demands the intervention of the states;



A giant windmill cloud, carved into steps by high-altitude winds, marks above the way between Spain and Morocco. Photo by USGS via iStock

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Álvaro J. de Regil: Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet – The acceleration of Twenty-First Century Monopoly Capital Facies through the pandemic and the Great Reset — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, June 2021

TBCA/Resep/SD 01072 November 2021/Álvaro J. de Regil

The last section assesses the so-called Great Reset, touted as the solution to humanity's existential problems (caused by the marketocratic paradigm). It is positioned by the World Economic Forum (WEF)—and supported by the metropolises of the system—as the way societies should deal with our existential problems of sustainability. The pretence is to completely reset the structures of society towards a new capitalist paradigm anchored in the 4IR. The goal of the Great Reset, using the COVID-19 pandemic as *carpe diem*, is to offer insights to help inform all those determining the future state of global relations, the direction of national economies, the priorities of societies, and the nature of business models and the management of a global commons. Drawing from the vision and vast expertise of the leaders engaged across the Forum's communities, the Great Reset initiative has a set of dimensions to build a new social contract that honours the dignity of every human being.<sup>9</sup> However, as I will expose, this is a preposterous and cynic initiative to accelerate the implementation of the 4IR strictly from the perspective of the less than 1% global elite to maximise their wealth and power.

Needless to say that the Great Reset downplays the tremendous negative impacts that will have

on the life of our planet, which is already in a perilous situation where we may have already crossed a tipping point that disables preserving life as we know it. Indeed, three significant realms of life will endure a colossal impact with the advance of the 4IR through the Great Reset. From a societal perspective, labour and human rights are being profoundly impacted, with dire consequences. However, overarching every sphere of life, the health of our home, Planet Earth—to which we belong as just another species of it—will be impacted to the point that it is exceedingly likely to cross the threshold of no return, as the unrelenting quest for growth, accelerated by the 4IR, continues unabated. If this happens, it would mean that we had reached the end of our existence.

Hence, this is my contribution to raising the questions and finding the answers to critical events that we are witnessing as I write. This should help the common citizenry gain knowledge, take consciousness, and empower themselves to make well-informed decisions that can contribute in turn to organise and put in check the agenda pursued by the global elite of the less than one per cent. The current events must make saving our species and our planet the fundamental issue and the overarching and quintessential cornerstone of our effort to transition to a new sustainable paradigm. It cannot be one of many vital issues, but the single element that drives our vision to achieve sustainability that fundamentally determines how we draft our new paradigm. It is in our self-interest to become cognisant about the damning catastrophe that we are facing, stop our numbness and individualism and coalesce to change the current doomed trajectory and veer to what Paul Burkett calls an eco-revolutionary tipping point. This is the cross-sectoral defensive struggles of ecological, communitarian and urban movements coalescing as an ecological socialist movement against this system of monopoly-finance capital and its state functionaries,<sup>8</sup> the tiny elite who thinks it owns our planet.

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## EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE WE WANT — Stephen Sterling

Our ability to achieve a liveable future for all depends on whether we can foster an unprecedented degree of social learning. There is no change without learning, and no learning without change. But with the stakes higher than ever before, time is worryingly short. How, under such urgency, do we effect such a large-scale paradigm shift?

Formal education systems have—or should have—a critical role in the global social learning process underpinning the Great Transition. On the face of it, the challenge seems straightforward. If current educational policies

and practices insufficiently address ecological, social, and economic sustainability, we can just do some tweaking and add on some key ideas. Job done. Except it is not so simple. If education is to be an agent of change, it has itself to be the subject of change. Our educational systems are implicated in the multiple crises before us, and without meaningful rethinking, they will remain maladaptive agents of business as usual, leading us into a dystopian future nobody wants.



## Educating for the Future We Want

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

Stephen Sterling

### Introduction

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Over the past few decades, new movements have championed social change education centred on such themes as the environment, peace, human rights, anti-racism, multiculturalism, alternative futures, and global citizenship. For compactness, this diverse constellation will be referred to as “sustainability” education. Despite this array of efforts and the common values of social justice and ecological integrity, the fragmentation of energy and effort has limited the potential for significant progress.

<sup>1</sup> See the forum page: <https://transition.org/gti-Forum/pedagogy-transition>

TBCA Brief 05/SD October 2021 Stephen Sterling

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## THE CAPITALINIAN — THE FIRST GEOLOGICAL AGE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE — John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark

The geologic time scale, dividing the 4.6 billion years of Earth history into nested eons, eras, periods, epochs, and ages, is one of the great scientific achievements of the last two centuries. Each division is directed at environmental change on an Earth System scale based on stratigraphic evidence, such as rocks or ice cores. At present, the earth is officially situated in the Phanerozoic Eon, Cenozoic Era,

Quaternary Period, Holocene Epoch (beginning 11,700 years ago), and Meghalayan Age (the last of the Holocene ages beginning 4,200 years ago). The current argument that the planet has entered into a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, is based on the recognition that Earth System change as represented in the stratigraphic record is now primarily due to anthropogenic forces. This understanding has now been widely accepted in science, but nevertheless has not yet been formally adopted by the International Commission on Stratigraphy of the International Union of Geological Sciences, which would mean its official adoption throughout science.



## The Capitalinian

*The First Geological Age of the Anthropocene*

John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark

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Photo by David Haskins / iStockphoto.com

We propose the term *Capitalinian* as the most appropriate name for the new geological age, based on the stratigraphic record, and conforming to the historical period that environmental historians see as commencing around 1950.

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Under the assumption that the Anthropocene will soon be officially designated as the earth's current epoch, there remains the question of the geological age with which the Anthropocene begins, following the last Holocene age, the Meghalayan. Adopting the standard nomenclature for the naming of geological ages, we propose, in our role as professional environmental sociologists, the term Capitalinian as the most appropriate name for the new geological age, based on the stratigraphic record, and conforming to the historical period that environmental historians see as commencing around 1950, in the wake of the Second World War, the rise of multinational corporations, and the unleashing of the process of decolonisation and global development.

TBCA Essay 05/SD October 2021, Bellamy Foster and B. Clark

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In the Anthropocene Epoch, it is clear that any designation of ages, while necessarily finding traces in the stratigraphic record, has to be seen, in part, in terms of human socioeconomic organisation, not purely geologically. The most widely accepted social-scientific designation for the predominant world economic Earth System on a geological scale of millions of years system over



the last few centuries is capitalism. The capitalist (or perhaps tens of millions) of years system has passed through various stages or phases, the most recent of which, arising after the Second World War under U.S. hegemony, is often characterised as global monopoly capitalism. Beginning with the first nuclear detonation in 1945, humanity emerged as a force capable of massively affecting the entire Earth System on a geological scale of millions (or perhaps tens of millions) of years. The 1950s are known for having ushered in “the synthetic age,” not only because of the advent of the nuclear age itself, but also due to the massive proliferation of plastics and other petrochemicals associated with the global growth and consolidation of monopoly capitalism.

The designation of the first geological age of the Anthropocene as the Capitalinian is, we believe, crucial because it also raises the question of a possible second geological age of the Anthropocene Epoch. The Anthropocene stands for a period in which humanity, at a specific point in its history, namely the rise of advanced industrial capitalism following the Second World War, became the principal geological force affecting Earth System change (which is not to deny the importance of numerous other geological forces, which are not all affected by human action, such as plate tectonics, volcanism, erosion, and weathering of rocks, in shaping the Earth System's future). If capitalism in the coming century were to create such a deep anthropogenic rift in the Earth System through the crossing of planetary boundaries that it led to the collapse of industrial civilisation and a vast die-down of human species ensued—a distinct possibility under business as usual according to today's science—then the Anthropocene Epoch and no doubt the entire Quaternary Period would come to an end, leading to a new epoch or period in geological history, with a drastically diminished human role.<sup>4</sup> Barring such an end-Anthropocene and even end-Quaternary extinction event, the socioeconomic conditions defining the Capitalinian will have to give rise to a radically transformed set of socioeconomic relations, and indeed a new mode of sustainable human production, based on a more communal relation of human beings with each other and the earth.

Such an environmental climacteric would mean pulling back from the current crossing of planetary boundaries, rooted in capital's creative destruction of conditions of life on the planet. This reversal of direction, reflecting the necessity of maintaining the earth as a safe home for humanity and for innumerable other species that live on it, is impossible under a system geared to the exponential accumulation of capital. Such a climatic shift would require simply for human survival the creation of a radically new material-environmental relation with Earth. We propose that this necessary (but not inevitable) future geological age to succeed the Capitalinian by means of ecological and

social revolution be named the Communian, derived from communal, community, commons.

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## SHOW COP26 AND ECOLOGY — Alejandro Teitelbaum



Show COP26 and Ecology

Alejandro Teitelbaum

### Introduction

The outcome of the Glasgow COP26 show confirmed once again what we wrote in our September 2019 article “The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment”

*In conclusion: the capitalist system and a healthy environment are incompatible. That is why Foster, Clark and York are right when in the final part of the Ecology of Consumption<sup>2</sup> they write: A true ecology of consumption - the creation of a new system of enduring needs and the satisfaction of those needs is only possible by incorporating it into a new ecology of production which requires for its emergence the destruction of the capitalist system.*

On the other hand, at the Glasgow meeting, or better yet to call it the Hypocrisy Summit, all or almost all of the participants approached the problem as “climate change”, i.e. unilaterally and partially when it should be approached from an ecological point of view, i.e. in a multidimensional and global way.



Photo by Mike Baumann on Unsplash

<sup>1</sup> +4 Alejandro Teitelbaum: *The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment* — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, September 2019; en castellano: *La Degradación Progresivamente Acelerada del Medio Ambiente* — La Alianza Global Jus Semper, Septiembre 2019; en francés: *Dégradation accélérée de l'environnement* — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, September 2019; en español: *La Alianza Global Jus Semper, Septiembre 2019*.

<sup>2</sup> +16 “The Ecology of Consumption” Excerpt from “The Ecological Rift — Capitalism's War on the Earth”, John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2010 (pp. 205-217).

TSGA Essay SD 02911 March 2022/Alejandro Teitelbaum

## NOTES ON UKRAINE — The Editors of Monthly Review



### Notes on Ukraine

In light of the current events in Ukraine we have decided to make the Notes from the Editors for the April 2022 issue of Monthly Review immediately available. — Eds.

The Editors of Monthly Review

As we write these notes at the beginning of March 2022, the eight-year limited civil war in Ukraine has turned into a full-scale war. This represents a turning point in the New Cold War and a great human tragedy. By threatening global nuclear holocaust, these events are also now endangering the entire world. To understand the origins of the New Cold War and the onset of the current Russian entry into the Ukrainian civil war, it is necessary to go back to decisions associated with the creation of the New World Order made in Washington when the previous Cold War ended in 1991. Within months, Paul Wolfowitz, then undersecretary of defence for policy in the George H. W. Bush administration, issued a Defense Policy Guidance stating: “Our policy [after the fall of the Soviet Union] must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor.” Wolfowitz emphasised that “Russia will remain the strongest military power in Eurasia.” Extraordinary efforts were therefore necessary to weaken Russia's geopolitical position permanently and irrevocably, before it would be in a position to recover, bringing into the Western strategic orbit all of those states now surrounding it that had formerly been parts of the Soviet Union or that had fallen within its sphere of influence (“Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: ‘Preventing the Re-Emergence of a New Rival’,” New York Times, March 8, 1992).



The War in Eurasia. Image credit: “Twilight: The End of US Control and the Multipolar World,” October 26, The Theoreticalist, January 6, 2021.

TSGA Commentary/SD 02911 March 2022/Editors MR

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## NOT A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS — *Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz*



### Not a Nation of Immigrants

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

On George Washington's birthday, 2018, the Donald Trump administration's director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, L. Francis Cissna, changed the agency's official mission statement, dropping the language of "a nation of immigrants" to describe the United States. The previous mission statement had said the agency "secures America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system."<sup>1</sup> The revised mission statement reads: "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the nation's lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honouring our values."<sup>2</sup>



Edison Christopher Columbus statue outside the Minnesota State Capitol after a group led by American Indian Movement members tore it down in St. Paul, Minnesota on June 10, 2020. By Tony Velozes / Photo CC BY 4.0, Wiki Commons

The Trump administration's official negation of the United States as a nation of immigrants was unlikely to change the liberal rhetoric. During Joe Biden's 2020 bid for the presidency, the campaign issued a statement on his immigration plan, titled "The Biden Plan for Securing Our Values as a Nation of Immigrants," asserting that "unless your ancestors were native to these shores, or forcibly enslaved and brought here as part of our original sin as a nation, most Americans can trace their family history back to a choice—a choice to leave behind everything that was familiar in search of new opportunities and a new life."<sup>3</sup> Unlike the previous "nation of

<sup>1</sup> "Sally Kame Ali, 'U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Drops 'Nation of Immigrants' from Mission Statement,'" NBC News, February 22, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> "Mission and Core Values," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed July 26, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> "The Biden Plan for Securing Our Values as a Nation of Immigrants," Biden-Harris, accessed July 26, 2021.

TSO/Alison SD 6080 February 2022 Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

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new rhetoric continues to mask the settler-colonial violence that established and maintained the United States and turns immigrants into settlers.

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## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: "THEIR CONTRADICTIONS AND OURS" — *Alain Bihr*



### The Covid-19 Pandemic: "Their Contradictions and Ours"

Alain Bihr

Abstract

Since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared at the end of 2019, all governments have handled it in a seemingly haphazard, even chaotic manner, whatever the choices made, which in turn often differed from one another. This is attributed as much to inexperience, amateurism, lack of vision, insight or even cynicism, factors that combine, in varying doses, most of the time. However, the very generality of this situation leads us to question the presence of more structural factors: solid contradictions whose roots lie at the very heart of capitalist relations of production.<sup>1</sup>



On the Art of Making Waves

From the outset, in managing the epidemic, governments faced the imperatives of maintaining economic activity and protecting the population. On the one hand, they had to ensure as much as possible the former, which guarantees the production and distribution of essential goods and services necessary for social life and for life itself, without which capital cannot ensure its reproduction: its valorisation and accumulation. For, like a vampire, the dead body of capital can only keep itself alive by constantly absorbing living labour, and above all, the dose of surplus labour it contains.<sup>2</sup> But, on the other hand, governments could not leave their populations unprotected against the risks of contamination by SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus responsible for the pandemic), not so much out of compassion or greatness of spirit as out

<sup>1</sup> "I am grateful to Yannis Thanassoulas for his suggestions, which allowed me to improve the first version of this article."

<sup>2</sup> "Crisis as semiotic of its capital," 4-9-2021.

TSO/Alison SD 6108 January 2022 Alain Bihr

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## HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE — *Access Now*



### Human Rights in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Access Now

Executive Summary

As artificial intelligence continues to find its way into our daily lives, its propensity to interfere with human rights only gets more severe. With this in mind, and noting that the technology is still in its infant stages, Access Now conducts this preliminary study to scope the potential range of human rights issues that may be raised today or in the near future.

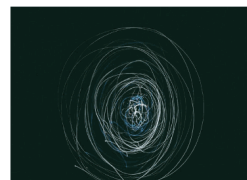


Photo by Carolina Valenzuela on Unsplash

Many of the issues that arise in examinations of this area are not new, but they are greatly exacerbated by the scale, proliferation, and real-life impact that artificial intelligence facilitates. Because of this, the potential of artificial intelligence to both help and harm people is much greater than from technologies that came before. While we have already seen some of these consequences, the impacts will only continue to grow in severity and scope.

The potential of artificial intelligence to both help and harm people is much greater than from technologies that came before. While we have already seen some of these consequences, the impacts will only continue to grow in severity and scope.

However, by starting now to examine what safeguards and structures are necessary to address problems and abuses, the worst harms—including those that disproportionately impact marginalised people—may be prevented and mitigated.

There are several lenses through which experts examine artificial intelligence. The use of international human rights law and its well-developed standards and institutions to examine artificial intelligence systems can contribute to the conversations already happening, and provide a universal vocabulary and forums established to address power differentials.

TSO/Alison SD 6104 September 2021 Access Now

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There are several lenses through which experts examine artificial intelligence. The use of international human rights law and its well-developed standards and institutions to examine artificial intelligence systems can contribute to the conversations already happening, and provide a universal vocabulary and forums established to address power differentials. Additionally, human rights laws contribute a framework for solutions, which we provide here in the form of recommendations. Our recommendations fall within four general categories: data protection rules to protect rights in the data sets used to develop and feed artificial intelligence systems; special safeguards for government uses of artificial intelligence;



safeguards for private sector uses of artificial intelligence systems; and investment in more research to continue to examine the future of artificial intelligence and its potential interferences with human rights.

Our hope is that this report provides a jumping-off point for further conversations and research in this developing space. We don't yet know what artificial intelligence will mean for the future of society, but we can act now to build the tools that we need to protect people from its most dangerous applications. We look forward to continuing to explore the issues raised by this report, including through work with our partners as well as key corporate and government institutions.

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## 1862 PREFACE TO AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTRY — Justus Von Liebig



### 1862 Preface to Agricultural Chemistry

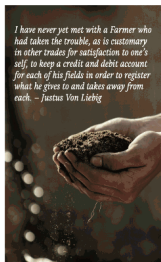
*[And the Roots of the Robbery Economy Inherent in Capitalism]*

Justus Von Liebig

In 1862, Justus von Liebig published the seventh edition of his *Organic Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture and Physiology*, more commonly known as *Agricultural Chemistry*. It was standard for Liebig's work to be immediately translated into English. However, the first volume of the 1862 edition of *Agricultural Chemistry*, particularly its long and incendiary introduction, included an extensive critique of British high farming. Liebig's English publisher, Walton, declared it "libellous" and destroyed his copy. Hence, the complete work was never published in English.

However, in 1863, the second volume was translated by the Irish scientist John Blyth as *The Natural Laws of Husbandry* and published by Appleton in New York. That book included the preface to the 1862 edition, but in an abridged and subdued form, with Liebig's references to the "robbery economy" and "Rob-Culture" (or "robbery culture") missing or presented in Aesopian terms.

Nevertheless, an English translation of both Liebig's preface and introduction had been completed in January 1863 by Maria Gilbert, the wife of Joseph Henry Gilbert, one of Britain's leading agricultural chemists—a former pupil of Liebig, and director of the agricultural experiment station at Rothamsted. Maria Gilbert's translation, written in her elegant longhand, is held in the archives of the Rothamsted Experiment Station (now Rothamsted Research). What follows is Maria Gilbert's complete translation of the 1862 preface, transcribed by André Toshio Villela lamamoto. Brackets indicate text introduced by the editors for clarity. We publish it here with the



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In the mid-nineteenth century, English agriculture was dominated by a system of large landowners receiving prodigious rents from numerous tenant farmers, each of whom usually worked less than fifty acres of land. Many of these tenants, while incorporating forms of crop rotation, were practical farmers, working out of tradition or following earlier practical guides to English husbandry as handed down by Sir Humphry Davy and others, and were reluctant to embrace scientific agricultural chemistry as it had developed by the mid-nineteenth century. Nevertheless, more and more agriculture was coming to be dominated by large landowners, who guided the operations. British agriculture was becoming increasingly intensive, importing large amounts of fertiliser and emphasising the maximum commercial output. This system of high farming was, in Liebig's terms, an advanced "robbery economy." All these concerns are thus reflected in his preface, designed to highlight the reasons for the polemic in his introduction and much of the rest of the work.

Liebig had been writing of the robbery economy since the late 1850s, notably in his *Letters on Modern Agriculture* (1859). Concerns over English-style commercial and industrial agriculture and its extraction of fertiliser resources (bones, guano) from the rest of the world had increasingly come to dominate his thinking. As he notes in the preface, he had been "reproached on many sides for describing modern Agriculture as a system of Plunder/Robbery." An example of such criticisms was the New York magazine *The Cultivator*, which in its January 1860 issue sharply criticised Liebig's notion of a "robbery system," declaring rather that "the soil is given to man to use. The materials from which it is made exist certainly in inexhaustible quantity, and for the most part the soil is inexhaustible." It was in the face of such resistance that Liebig placed renewed emphasis on the growing problem of the robbery of the soil and the constant need for its replenishment through nutrient recycling. This is now understood as one of the great early developments in modern ecology, leading to the development of contemporary theories of soil metabolism.

—John Bellamy Foster

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## WELFARE SYSTEMS WITHOUT ECONOMIC GROWTH: A REVIEW OF THE CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS FOR THE FIELD — Christine Corlet Walker, Angela Druckman, Tim Jackson



### Welfare Systems Without Economic Growth: A review of the challenges and next steps for the field

Christine Corlet Walker, Angela Druckman, Tim Jackson

#### Abstract

Welfare systems across the OECD face many combined challenges, with rising inequality, demographic changes and environmental crises likely to drive up welfare demand in the coming decades. Economic growth is no longer a sustainable solution to these problems. It is therefore imperative that we consider how welfare systems will cope with these challenges in the absence of economic growth. We review the literature tackling this complex problem. We identify five interconnected dilemmas for a post-growth welfare system: 1) how to maintain funding for the welfare system in a non-growing economy; 2) how to manage the increasing relative costs of welfare; 3) how to overcome structural and behavioural growth dependencies within the welfare system; 4) how to manage increasing need on a finite planet; and 5) how to overcome political barriers to the transformation of the welfare state. There is now need for further research investigating the macro-economic dynamics of post-growth welfare systems; trialling preventative, relational, low-resource models of welfare provision; and seeking to better understand political barriers to a post-growth welfare transition. We also make the case for considering post-growth welfare studies as a field in its own right, with the aim of improving coherence and cross-fertilisation between disciplines.



Photo: Instagram: @protestlondon. Credits: Alan Denney CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

18CGARH0SD-08040 March 2022/Christine Walker et al.

Welfare systems across the OECD face many combined challenges, with rising inequality, demographic changes and environmental crises likely to drive up welfare demand in the coming decades. Economic growth is no longer a sustainable solution to these problems. It is therefore imperative that we consider how welfare systems will cope with these challenges in the absence of economic growth. We review the literature tackling this complex problem. We identify five interconnected dilemmas for a post-growth welfare system: 1) how to maintain funding for the welfare system in a non-growing economy; 2) how to manage the increasing relative costs of welfare; 3) how to overcome structural and behavioural growth dependencies within the welfare system; 4) how to manage increasing need on a finite planet; and 5) how to overcome political barriers to the transformation of the welfare state. There is now need for further research investigating the macro-economic dynamics of post-growth welfare systems; trialling preventative, relational, low-resource models of welfare provision; and seeking to better understand political barriers to a post-growth welfare transition. We also make the case for considering post-growth welfare studies as a field in its own right, with the aim of improving coherence and cross-fertilisation between disciplines.

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Nevertheless, an English translation of both Liebig's preface and introduction had been completed in January 1863 by Maria Gilbert,

## BUEN VIVIR: A CONCEPT ON THE RISE IN EUROPE? — *Gustavo Hernández and Henkjan Laats*



### Buen Vivir: A Concept on the Rise in Europe?

Gustavo Hernández and Henkjan Laats

The concept of *buen vivir* has gained visibility in Latin America in recent years. Rooted in indigenous worldviews, *buen vivir* rests on an understanding of humanity's relationship with nature that is fundamentally at odds with the anthropocentrism of modernity. Gustavo Hernández and Henkjan Laats trace the concept's rising trajectory and its influence and echoes in Europe. While *buen vivir*'s inclusion in formal bi-regional dialogue and its resonance with local initiatives emerging around Europe are promising, much more can be gained from further knowledge exchange.



In June 2015, an Urgent Resolution on the position of Europe and Ibero-America on issues related to climate change was formally approved in Brussels.<sup>1</sup> The legislative session that gave rise to this agreement took place at the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly – EUROLAT, a parliamentary institution of the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership in the framework of the Presidential Summits between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The resolution was the result of a joint initiative of civil society and the Greens political group in the European Parliament.

Adopted just a week before the second Presidential Summit of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Resolution stresses the importance of finding a "new paradigm of human well-being."

<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> This agreement emerged from the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLAT), a parliamentary institution of the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership.

TJSCAD-0050-00401 December 2015C: Hernández and Laats

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## IDENTIFYING A SAFE AND JUST CORRIDOR FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET — *Johan Rockström, Joyeeta Gupta, Timothy M. Lenton, Dahe Qin, Steven J. Lade et al*

For the first time in human history, we are now forced to consider the real risk of destabilising our home, planet Earth. This is an existential risk, as we all need a planet that can sustain life and provide the basis for the well-being of all people. Here, we outline a conceptual framework for a global-scale "safe and just corridor" that delivers on these goals for people and the planet. The recently formed Earth Commission will use this framework to map key functions that regulate the state of the Earth

system and provide life support to us humans, including processes such as biodiversity and nutrient cycling. It will also analyse the related justice components, for each of these Earth system target domains, in terms of how such ranges can be defined and how nature's contributions to people can be justly shared. Furthermore, social transformations that meet safe and just targets for all people and how the global-scale targets can be translated to targets for actors at other scales will be explored.



## Identifying a Safe and Just Corridor for People and the Planet

Johan Rockström, Joyeeta Gupta, Timothy M. Lenton, Dahe Qin, Steven J. Lade ET AL

### Abstract

Keeping the Earth system in a stable and resilient state, to safeguard Earth's life support systems while ensuring that Earth's benefits, risks, and related responsibilities are equitably shared, constitutes the grand challenge for human development in the Anthropocene. Here, we describe a framework that the recently formed Earth Commission will use to define and quantify target ranges for a "safe and just corridor" that meets these goals. Although "safe" and "just" Earth system targets are interrelated, we see safe as primarily referring to a stable Earth system and just targets as being associated with meeting human needs and reducing exposure to risks. To align safe and just dimensions, we propose to address the equity dimensions of each safe target for Earth system regulating systems and processes. The more stringent of the safe or just target ranges then defines the corridor. Identifying levels of social transformation aimed at meeting the safe and just targets and challenges associated with translating the corridor to actors at multiple scales present scope for future work.

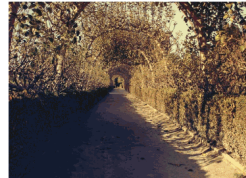


Photo by Neil Stanton on Unsplash

### Plain Language Summary

For the first time in human history, we are now forced to consider the real risk of destabilising our home, planet Earth. This is an existential risk, as we all need a planet that can sustain life and provide the basis for the well-being of all people. Here, we outline a conceptual framework for a global-scale "safe and just corridor" that delivers on these goals

TJSCAD-0050-00401 January 2020C: Rockström ET AL

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## AGAINST DOOMSDAY SCENARIOS: WHAT IS TO BE DONE NOW? ...an interview — *John Bellamy Foster, John Molyneux and Owen McCormack*

Given the extreme summer weather and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, just how bad are things now? What do you believe the time scale is for catastrophe and what do you think that catastrophe will look like? Are things worse than the IPCC report claims? Some, including Michael Mann, have warned against "doomsday scenarios" that might deter people from acting. In your view, are doomsday scenarios the truth that needs to be told?..



## Against Doomsday Scenarios: What Is to Be Done Now?

John Bellamy Foster, John Molyneux and Owen McCormack

John Molyneux and Owen

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We should of course avoid promoting "doomsday scenarios" in the sense of offering a fatalistic worldview. Still, the word catastrophe is scarcely adequate in the present age of catastrophe capitalism. Catastrophes are now ubiquitous, since extending to climate change, it is now "code red for humanity." This is not a doomsday forecast but a call to action.

John Bellamy Foster: We should of course avoid promoting "doomsday scenarios" in the sense of offering a fatalistic worldview. In fact, the environmental movement in general and ecosocialism in particular are all about combating the current trend toward ecological destruction. As UN general secretary António Guterres recently declared with respect to climate change, it is now "code red for humanity." This is not a doomsday forecast but a call to action.

Still, the word catastrophe is scarcely adequate in the present age of catastrophe capitalism. Catastrophes are now ubiquitous, since extending to the scale of the planet itself. We are experiencing throughout the globe a series of

TJSCAD-0050-00401 March 2022 (B Foster, J Molyneux, O M McCormack)

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## THE ENERGY-EXTRACTIVES NEXUS AND THE JUST TRANSITION — *Nicholas Bainton, Deanna Kemp, Eleonore Lèbre, John R. Owen, Greg Marston*



## The Energy-Extractives Nexus and the Just Transition

Nicholas Bainton, Deanna Kemp, Eleonore Lèbre, John R. Owen, Greg Marston

### Abstract

The concept of a 'just transition' to a low-carbon economy is firmly embedded in mainstream global discourses about mitigating climate change. Drawing on Karl Polanyi's political economy elaborated in *The Great Transformation*, we interrogate the idea of a just transition and place it within its historical context. We address a major

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contradiction at the core of global energy transition debates: the rapid shift to low-carbon energy-systems will require increased extraction of minerals and metals. In doing so, we argue that extractive industries are energy and carbon-intensive, and will enlarge and intensify social and ecological injustices. Our findings reveal the importance of understanding how the idea of a just transition is used, and by who, and the type of justice that underpins this concept. We demonstrate the need to ground just transition policies and programmes in a notion of justice as fairness.



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TJSCAD-0050-00401 December 2021 (N. Bainton ET AL)

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*I get to have the benefits of air conditioning and air travel and all the other environmentally expensive amenities that the prime victims of climate change will not have. And the same holds for the overlapping case of global economic justice. 'The Beneficiary' (Robbins, 20171)*

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## FERTILISERS: ON THE VERGE OF A MAJOR FOOD CRISIS? — Antonio Turiel and Juan Borda



### Fertilisers: on the verge of a major food crisis?

*Making agriculture so dependent on fossil fuels was a dangerous mirage rather than a revolution.*

Antonio Turiel and Juan Borda

With the price of the benchmark oil barrel (Brent) exceeding 90 dollars for the first time in eight years—coinciding with the announced end of the fracking boom/bubble—; the recent historic escalation in gas prices—which has quadrupled in price during 2021—and, consequently, in the electricity bill; or with the highest inflation in Spain in three decades—6.5% in 2021—anyone might think that the biggest problem we have is the energy problem. And they would probably be right, although the seriousness and depth of the climate problem, which in the long term is at least as serious, cannot be ignored. However, this crossroads is a ramification between scarce energy and an unstable climate whose severity is often not understood: we eat fossil fuels.<sup>1</sup>



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And not just because they are needed to transport or refrigerate both the food itself and the materials required in the strained supply chain, but because, directly, some of the fossil fuels we extract are also used in the production of

the highest inflation in Spain in three decades—6.5% in 2021—anyone might think that the biggest problem we have is the energy problem. And they would probably be right, although the seriousness and depth of the climate problem, which in the long term is at least as serious, cannot be ignored. However, this crossroads is a ramification between scarce energy and an unstable climate whose severity is often not understood: we eat fossil fuels.

And not just because they are needed to transport or refrigerate both the food itself and the materials required in the strained supply chain, but because, directly, some of the fossil fuels we extract are also used in the production of pesticides and, above all, fertilisers for "modern agriculture". About one-third of all energy used in the agricultural sector is used for manufacturing inorganic fertilisers.

Let's analyse the consequences of rising fertiliser prices. We discover that they are already causing severe problems in many countries. The high cost of soya has led Argentina to limit beef exports until 2023. Brazil has been experiencing a severe food crisis since 2018. The UN has just included Colombia among the "hunger hotspots", and not so far away, they are on the verge of a farmers' revolt in Greece. If we analyse the price escalation, we will discover a complex tangle that we had better untangle and understand well to clarify what should be done.

The number of factors involved is enormous: geopolitical, environmental, the recovery of demand, the pandemic... but above all, energy stands out very clearly. And the relationship is direct: if the price of energy rises, so does the cost of fertilisers, transport and almost all production processes. Ergo, the escalation of food prices is inevitable, which is why the FAO anticipates a global food crisis worse than that of 2011 this year. All this without considering the speculation of the financial markets, always as clever and reasonable in allocating resources as they have been to date.

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## THE PLANETARY RIFT ...an interview — John Bellamy Foster and Haris Golemis

With your pathbreaking article "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift" (American Journal of Sociology, 1999), you challenged the then prevalent view, even among non-dogmatic Marxists, that the effects of capitalist growth on nature was not of interest to Karl Marx. Could you briefly explain your thesis? ..



### The Planetary Rift

John Bellamy Foster and Haris Golemis

HG: With your pathbreaking article "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift" (American Journal of Sociology, 1999), you challenged the then prevalent view, even among non-dogmatic Marxists, that the effects of capitalist growth on nature was not of interest to Karl Marx. Could you briefly explain your thesis?

JBF: In "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift," I argued that the widespread view on the left that Marx had

the widespread view on the left that Marx had adopted a Promethean view of the human domination of nature—and hence had failed to perceive the natural limits to production and ecological contradictions—was contradicted by his theory of the metabolic rift, which played a key role in his overall analysis.



Flooding on California's Central Valley, 1987. (Bogdan, 1991, p. 101). By Bogdan Bogdanov. CC BY-SA 4.0.

limits to production and ecological contradictions in general, giving them at most only marginal attention—was contradicted by his theory of the metabolic rift, which played a key role in his overall analysis. Marx built on the German chemist Justus von Liebig's notion of the robbery of nature, in which nutrients were systematically removed from the soil and shipped hundreds and even thousands of miles to the new urban centres, polluting the cities, rather than being returned to the soil. Based on this, he constructed an ecological critique of capitalism, rooted in the concept of social metabolism, standing for the human relation to nature as a whole through production. Capitalism's disruption of this metabolism generated an "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself." For Marx, the labour and production process constituted nothing less than the social metabolism between humanity and the universal metabolism of nature, mediating between the two. But under capitalism this had become an alienated mediation, rupturing this metabolism, which needed then to be restored under

TBCA/Philly/SD-B0806 March 2022 (JBF Foster and H Golemis)

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## THE "METABOLIC RIFT" OF JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER: WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS FOR AN ECOMARXIST THEORY? — William Sacher



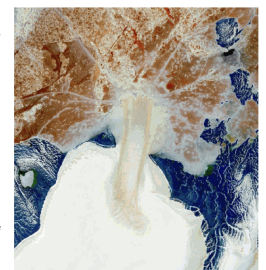
### The "Metabolic Rift" of John Bellamy Foster: What contributions for an ecomarxist theory?

William Sacher

#### Abstract

This article sets out to analyse the relevance and identify the eventual limits and shortcomings of J. Bellamy Foster's concept of "metabolic fracture". A series of criticisms from various branches of ecomarxism are compiled. Some criticisms reject the idea altogether, while others recognise its interest and consider refining it. Despite an obvious lack of empirical foundations and its "catastrophic" character, I propose the concept has several merits. It explicitly refers to the Marxist concept of "metabolism" and allows a much-needed debate in ecomarxism about the limits of nature to be started.

For several decades now, faced with the magnitude and scope of the problems of environmental destruction and the highly political character of ecology, there has been a need within Marxist thought to fill the existing gaps in this field. Numerous authors initiated the construction of a new Marxist ecological- or ecomarxist-theory, i.e. an ecologically sensitive Marxism that allows for the integration of the Marxist critique of capitalism on the one hand and the need to take into account the ecological dimension on the other. Among the most important contributors are Gunnar Skirbekk, André Gorz, Enrique Leff, Jacques Bidet, James O'Connor, Alfred Schmidt, Ted



Capitalist Investment. One glacier on the Russian island in the Arctic Ocean sagged several meters with its rapid change. After decades of normal, slow movement, a glacier that once flowed for centuries toward the sea, according to reports after 2015, it had retreated to a mere one to two hundred meters in 10 years. The glacier had lost its ice to the sea, and the sea level had risen. Photo by UNICEF on Unsplash

TBCA/Philly/SD-B0806 January 2022/06: Sacher

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## CONFRONTING INEQUALITY IN THE “NEW NORMAL”: HYPER-CAPITALISM, PROTO-SOCIALISM, AND POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY — Tim Jackson and Peter A. Victor



### Confronting Inequality in the “New Normal”: Hyper-capitalism, Proto-socialism, and Post-pandemic Recovery

Tim Jackson and Peter A. Victor

#### Abstract

Post-pandemic recovery must address the systemic inequality that has been revealed by the coronavirus crisis. The roots of this inequality predate the pandemic and even the global financial crisis. They lie rather in the uneasy relationship between labour and capital under conditions of declining economic growth, such as those who have prevailed in advanced economies for almost half a century. This paper explores the dynamics of that relationship using a simple stock-flow consistent (SFC) macroeconomic model of a closed economy. It examines in particular the role of two key factors—the savings rate and the substitutability elasticity of substitution between labour and capital—on the severity of systemic inequality under conditions of declining growth. The paper goes on to test the efficacy of three redistributive measures—a graduated income tax, a tax on capital and a universal basic income—under two distinct structural scenarios for an economy with a declining growth rate. We find that none of these measures is sufficient to control structural inequality when institutions aggressively favor capital over labour (hyper-capitalism). Taken in combination, however, under conditions more favorable to wage labour (proto-socialism), these same measures have the potential to eliminate inequality, almost entirely, even as the growth rate declines.



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TJCA/ISS/SD 8376/ October 2021/ Tim Jackson and Peter A. Victor

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## THE PARIS COMMUNE — Marx, Mao, Tomorrow — Alain Badiou



### The Paris Commune

Marx, Mao, Tomorrow

Alain Badiou

#### The Classical Interpretation

In 1871, Karl Marx proposed an account of the Paris Commune that is wholly inscribed in the question of the state. For him, it comprises the first historical case in which the proletariat assumes its transitory function of the direction, or administration, of the entire society. From the Commune's initiatives and impasses, he is led to the conclusion that the state machine must not be “taken” or “occupied,” but broken.



Image by Jean Louis Monod/istockphoto. Cover image: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0; reproduction — Linda Gelfand/istockphoto. Climate of Inequality, David White/istockphoto and Getty Images/istockphoto.

Let us note in passing that the chief fault of the analysis probably lies in the notion that, between March and May 1871, it was the question of power that was the order of the day. Thus, those tenacious “critiques” that have become commonplace: What the Commune supposedly lacked was decision-making capacity; if it had immediately marched on Versailles; if it had seized the gold of the Bank of France; and so on. To my mind, these *ifs* lack real content. In truth, the Commune had neither the means to address them properly, nor in all likelihood the means to arrive at them.

Marx's account in fact is ambiguous. On the one hand, he praises everything that appears to lead to a dissolution of the state and, more specifically, of the nation-state. In this vein, he notes: the Commune's abolition of a professional army in favor of directly arming the people; all the measures it took concerning the election and revocability of civil servants; the

TJCA/ISS/SD 0008/ January 2022/ Alain Badiou

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## GREEN POPULISM? – ACTION AND MORTALITY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE — Will Davies



### Green Populism?

– Action and Mortality in the Anthropocene

Will Davies

#### Abstract

The rise of ‘populism’, often conflated with authoritarianism, is frequently viewed as being antagonistic to environmental values, where the latter are associated with ‘liberal elites’. However, with a less pejorative understanding of populism, we might be able to identify elements within that can be usefully channelled and mobilised towards the urgent rescue of human and non-human life, in a non-exclusionary or territorial sense.

This paper seeks to illuminate a ‘green populism’, using Hannah Arendt’s analysis of the tension between science and politics. In Arendt’s account, Western philosophy and science is predicated on a rejection of the mortal realm of politics, in search of eternal laws of nature. However, the pressing mortality of nature has pushed it back into the political realm, turning it into a political actor in its own right. Where nature itself is defined by its mortality, environmentalism and political action acquire a common logic, that could fuel a participatory, egalitarian, green populism.



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TJCA/ISS/SD 8580/ February 2022/ Will Davies

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## THE IDEOLOGY OF LATE IMPERIALISM — THE RETURN OF THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL —

**Zhun Xu**



### The Ideology of Late Imperialism

*The Return of the Geopolitics of the Second International*

Zhun Xu

In 1990, when renowned Indian Marxian economist Prabhat Patnaik asked “Whatever Happened to Imperialism?,” once vibrant and influential schools of theories on imperialism were at a postwar historic low.<sup>1</sup> When he left the West to return to India in 1974, imperialism was at the center of all Marxist discussions. But when he came back to the West merely fifteen years later, imperialism already seemed out of fashion. After all, the end of the Soviet Union and liberals’ declaration of the end of history were near.

Marxists’ inquiries into the question of imperialism began in the early twentieth century. During the time of V. I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, Marxists focused on two related questions regarding imperialism: (1) inter-capitalist competition and war, and (2) the hierarchy within world capitalism and the relationship between the imperialist countries and the colonies/semi-colonies. Since then, the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, the postwar anticolonial wave, and the Cold War have profoundly changed the context of imperialism. Following the last inter-imperialist war in the core in the 1940s, and with most colonies having gained independence, the political-economic relationship between the imperialist and non-imperialist countries became the key to theorising imperialism.

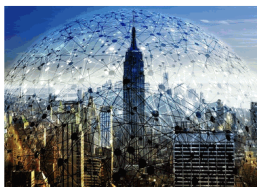


Image by Gerd Heilmann from Pixabay

<sup>1</sup> Prabhat Patnaik, “Whatever Happened to Imperialism?,” *Monthly Review* 42, no. 6 (November 1990): 1–7.

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Since the 1950s, Marxist scholars have greatly deepened our understanding of imperialism by exploring underdevelopment and the centre-periphery, or dependency relationship, in world capitalism. Paul Baran’s *The Political Economy*

of Growth is one of the earliest and best analyses of how feudal, imperialist, and comprador interests, as well as other unproductive uses of economic surplus, have kept back the third world. Later writers such as Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein each developed a distinct but related approach to the rise of capitalism. Instead of focusing on just Western Europe and the United States, they also explored how the global division of labour and the more general world system, or imperialist system, transferred surplus from the periphery to the center, thus creating both development and underdevelopment simultaneously.

Given this high tide of Marxist writings on imperialism in the 1960s and ’70s, the disappearance of imperialism from leftist discussion is quite remarkable. According to Google Books data (see Chart 1), the frequency of the term imperialism in a large sample of English-language books declined by more than 50 percent between 1974 and 1990. Even before the demise of the Soviet Union or neoliberal transitions in much of the world, analyses of imperialism were already disappearing in the United States and elsewhere.

Patnaik suggested that this waning might be because of the very strengthening and consolidation of imperialism after the Vietnam War. This was evident from the tyranny of the global division of labour as well as the destructive functions of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Besides these, there was also a more direct development among Western liberal and leftist intellectuals, which aimed politically to diminish anti-imperialist writings. Since the 1970s, well-known leftist writers such as Bill Warren, Robert Brenner, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and David Harvey have contributed to this kind of intellectual counterrevolution.

Aside from a change in research interests among scholars, the retreat from the question of imperialism has above all facilitated the rise of conservative ideology framed as leftist discourse. There has been a return of what we can call Second International politics, which essentially break from the Marxist traditions exemplified by Lenin and Mao Zedong, and severely limit revolutionary potential in the imperialist core.

With this kind of thinking dominant among liberals and many leftists, possible domestic resistance to the U.S. imperialist state is reduced. This particularly illuminates the ongoing conflicts between the United States and China. The image of a rising China, an imperialist (yet not quite civilised) China, interestingly caters to different groups in both China and the United States. For years, the nationalist media in China has been bragging about a powerful China as an effort to reduce militancy among working people. Chinese

leftists are mostly highly critical of such nationalist claims. At the same time, U.S. mainstream and the right wing have been successfully making their case based on the propaganda of an imperialist China. Utilising deep-rooted racism and anticommunist history, it serves the goal of scapegoating China and corrupting the U.S. working class. Even some leftist observers have uncritically argued that China now has become the number one enemy to the global working class. We are seeing the formation of a holy alliance in the imperialist United States dominated by reactionary Second International politics.

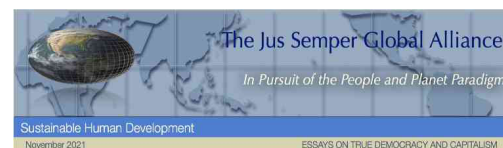
Prabhat Patnaik warned that the retreat of analyses of imperialism would only mean the strengthening of the right wing in the core countries and Global South, helping to spawn racist, fundamentalist, and xenophobic movements. These profound insights are increasingly relevant as we move into the 2020s.

The (Western) left in the imperialist center is at a historical moment. Without reconnecting with the anti-imperialist tradition, and without a careful analysis of the imperialism developed in the neoliberal era, it is likely the left will retreat further from its revolutionary past in the next decade or two. Whether to follow the Second International, or the traditions of the late Marx, Lenin, and Mao, is a vital question for all of us.

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## DEMOCRATIC REFORM, INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE LONG-TERM –

**Simon Caney**



### Democratic Reform, Intergenerational Justice and the Challenges of the Long-Term

Simon Caney

#### Abstract

Political life is dominated by ‘presentism’ and a focus on the short-term. This political myopia is harmful in two important ways. First, it leads governments to fail to discharge their duty to protect the long-term interests of current generations. Second, it results in governments’ failing to honour their responsibilities to future generations. Members of current and future generations are entitled to live in ecologically sustainable societies which realise their equal right to flourish. At present our political system is not well-designed to realise these ideals. In this Essay for TJCA, Simon Caney explores the nature of what he terms ‘Harmful Short-Termism’, and shows that it is pervasive in political life—contributing to environmental destruction and a failure to invest in the social, economic and structural preconditions of well-functioning societies. Simon argues that this short-termism stems from four separate factors. Together they result in a deep mismatch between, on the one hand, the timespan of many problems (such as climate change) and, on the other hand, the temporal horizons of citizens and politicians. He concludes by exploring what can be done to address these problems. Drawing on insights from Aristotle, de Tocqueville and Dewey, he outlines ways in which we can re-think and re-invigorate our political life so that we are better able to address Harmful Short-Termism.

#### Introduction

Contemporary political life is dominated by the short term. Yet the actions that our governments take have effects that reverberate far into the future, profoundly affecting people’s ability to flourish and to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

TJCA/Issue/SD 858/1 November 2021/Simon Caney



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The Political life is dominated by ‘presentism’ and a focus on the short-term. This political myopia is harmful in two important ways. First, it leads governments to fail to discharge their duty to protect the long-term interests of current generations. Second, it results in governments’ failing to honour their responsibilities to future generations. Members of current and future generations are entitled to live in ecologically sustainable societies which realise their equal right to flourish. At present our political system is not well-designed to realise these ideals. In this Essay for CUSP, Simon Caney explores the nature of what he terms ‘Harmful Short-Termism’, and shows that it is pervasive in political life—contributing to environmental destruction and a failure to invest in the social, economic and structural preconditions of well-functioning societies. Simon argues that this short-termism stems from four separate factors. Together they result in a deep mismatch between, on the one hand, the timespan of many problems (such as climate change) and, on the other hand, the temporal horizons of citizens and politicians. He concludes by exploring what can be done to address these problems. Drawing on insights from Aristotle, de Tocqueville and Dewey, he outlines ways in which we can re-think and re-invigorate our political life so that we are better able to address Harmful Short-Termism.

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## THE CAPTURE OF DEMOCRACY TO IMPOSE MARKETOCRACY – WHY DEMOCRACY IS A HOAX? — Álvaro J. de Regil

“The ‘Capture of Democracy to Impose Marketocracy’ debunks the myth that we live in democratic societies. It explains why, instead, what governments regard as democracy is a hoax. We will see that true democracy is an entirely different ethos to the one we are enduring under capitalism. Under the current marketocratic paradigm, instead of a societal edifice designed to procure the welfare of every rank of society—and with special emphasis on the dispossessed—we have a system of alienated, individualistic and disengaged from the public matter consumers. It is a system designed to maximise the shareholder value of the market’s overlords. This is the tiny elite of institutional investors of international financial markets and their corporations in this age of imperial monopoly capital. This is a system imposed at the expense of the vast majority of the world’s population and our home Planet Earth, to which we are only one among many species.

Hence, this is my contribution to raising the questions and finding the answers to critical events that we are witnessing as I write. This

should help the common citizenry gain knowledge, take consciousness, and empower themselves to make well-informed decisions that can contribute in turn to organise and put in check the agenda pursued by the global elite of the less than one per cent. The current events must make saving our species and our planet the fundamental issue and the overarching and quintessential cornerstone of our effort to transition to a new sustainable paradigm. It cannot be one of many vital issues, but the single element that drives our vision to achieve sustainability that fundamentally determines how we draft our new paradigm.



### The Capture of Democracy to Impose Marketocracy

—Why Democracy is a Hoax

Álvaro J. de Regil

#### Introduction

This paper is an excerpt of “Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet”, published in June 2021, which provides a holistic assessment of the unsustainable trajectory that humanity has been following since the First Industrial Revolution and the capture of democracy by capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

An innate feature of capitalism has been the endless pursuit of an ethos with the least possible intervention of the state in its unrelenting quest for the reproduction and accumulation of capital, at the expense of all other participants in the economic activity prominently including the planet. Capitalism always demands to be in the driver’s seat of the economy. Only when its activities are threatened by communities and nations opposing the expropriation of their natural resources and the imposition of structures that extract the vast majority of the value of labour—the surplus-value—, capitalism demands the intervention of the states; these include their armed forces, to protect the exploits of the owners of the system. This is all the more evident in the global South. Across centuries of imperialism and colonialism, the practice of invasion, conquering, expropriation and exploitation by capitalist enterprises—with the full support of their states—has always been more vicious and predatory in the system’s periphery

<sup>1</sup> = Álvaro J. de Regil, *Marketocracy and the Capture of People and Planet: The acceleration of Twenty-First Century Monopoly Capital Fascism through the pandemic and the Great Reset* – The Jus Semper Global Alliance, June 2021

TGCAN459D-8075 October 2021/Álvaro J. de Regil

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## “NO GOOD CHOICES LEFT”: OUR DILEMMA UNDER A WHITE SKY — TECHNO-FIXES WON’T CIRCUMVENT THE NEED TO CHANGE OUR LIFESTYLES ...an interview — Elizabeth Kolbert – Olaf Bruns

After her Pulitzer-winning *The Sixth Extinction*, Elizabeth Kolbert’s new book, *Under a White Sky*, describes the world of “techno-fixes” to the damage we have inflicted on nature. Today, the world faces the dilemma that even the most well-intentioned interventions risk making matters worse, though we may no longer have the luxury of refusing them. In a century that will be shaped by the climate crisis, learning to navigate humanity’s “mixture of hubris and cluelessness” when dealing with nature will be essential.

US climate envoy John Kerry recently said that Americans would not necessarily have to

change their lifestyles because there’ll be a techno-fix to all problems. What Kerry said played badly in Europe, but in US politics there’s a saying: you don’t touch our system of retirement payments and social security – the “third rail of US politics” – unless you want to get electrocuted. It would be the same to tell people they have to change their lives: you just never do that! On the very progressive wing of the Democratic party, there’s the proposal for the Green New Deal, a very optimistic project that tries to gather a large coalition: organised labour, communities of colour, the whole broad tent of the Democratic party. But nobody says people will have to change the way they live. It’s sort of an article of faith in the US. Even people much more progressive than Kerry wouldn’t say it. I don’t think anyone would be willing to say it, at least not for political purposes.



### “No Good Choices Left”: Our Dilemma Under a White Sky

—Techno-fixes won’t circumvent the need to change our lifestyles

Elizabeth Kolbert – Olaf Bruns

After her Pulitzer-winning *The Sixth Extinction*, Elizabeth Kolbert’s new book, *Under a White Sky*, describes the world of “techno-fixes” to the damage we have inflicted on nature. Today, the world faces the dilemma that even the most well-intentioned interventions risk making matters worse, though we may no longer have the luxury of refusing them. In a century that will be shaped by the climate crisis, learning to navigate humanity’s “mixture of hubris and cluelessness” when dealing with nature will be essential.

Olaf Bruns: Before delving into your new book, *Under a White Sky*, I’d like to go back to your previous one, *The Sixth Extinction*, which argued that we’re in the midst of a new, man-made wave of species extinction. Seven years later, the climate crisis has certainly entered public perception but does the biodiversity crisis receive appropriate attention?

Elizabeth Kolbert: Clearly not. The problem is that the biodiversity crisis is such a sweeping problem. It involves so many different components of our globalised world. And globalisation itself is a significant driver of extinction, for example by

TGCAN459D-8076 September 2021/Elizabeth Kolbert – Olaf Bruns

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## FROM PROFIT TAKING TO LIFE MAKING: QUALITY CARE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET ...an interview — Sara Farris



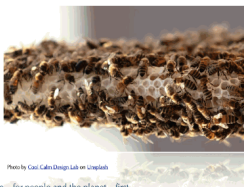
### From Profit Taking to Life Making: Quality Care for People and Planet

(An interview)

Sara Farris

#### Introduction

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic threw health and care workers into the spotlight. But as the applause and praise of heroes fades and is replaced by the buzz of returning to some degree of normality, where does this leave those who have carried societies through the crisis, often at huge personal cost? Sociologist Sara Farris explains how the lens of social reproduction offers a way to understand the structural under-valuing of the work that keeps society on its feet. It will take a shift in priorities from profit to life to guarantee a system that puts quality care – for people and the planet – first.



Green European Journal: What is social reproduction theory and how can it help us understand what we have witnessed during the pandemic?

Sara Farris: Social reproduction theory is a set of ideas that try to understand the role of what some scholars and activists call “life-making activities” within our economic and social systems: activities like childcare, elderly care, cleaning, providing food and shelter, education, and healthcare. We call these activities “life making” precisely because they restore life and enable the reproduction of human existence. Many of these activities have been in the spotlight during the pandemic. Jobs such as elderly care, childcare, and healthcare have been considered essential precisely because this work keeps people alive, it supports wellbeing, and it enables people to reproduce their existence.

Social reproduction theories can be very helpful for understanding the pandemic. For a long time, these theories have stressed the social importance of life-making activities in a context in which they have usually been stigmatised or undervalued. We live in a capitalist system that tends to emphasise the importance of other types of jobs, usually those

TBCA/BHSD-BH41: October 2021/Sara Farris

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## A final thought



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

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

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

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