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

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

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

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

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

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The Underlying Causes of Immigration from Mexico to the United States

Alvaro J. de Regil

Places To write about the underlying causes of immigration means addressing a paramount social issue that pervades the lives of most societies in the world, both in the periphery as well as in the metropolises of the global capitalist system. Immigration is inherent to human nature. Billions of people have travelled from their birthplace in search of a better life from the very moment Homo “sapiens” began to wander around his primeval surroundings. At first, all humans were nomads. They constantly moved from one place to another, from cave to cave, from valley to valley, from region to region, from continent to continent, many times travelling thousands of kilometres in their quest for power and wealth. This has never changed despite thousands of years of human experience and “sophistication” of the organisation of societies, despite the rise of so-called democratic nation states, human rights covenants and international law. Today, people continue to move from one place to another, many times escaping a high risk of death as a result of social conflicts, poverty, or, instead of the rule of law, a complete state of anomy—the loss of all the ethical social standards conceived to procure a dignified and harmonious coexistence among the members of society. In the vast majority of cases, as should be evident, there is also the effect—to a lesser or greater degree—of the actions of foreign actors that intervene in the lives of other societies in pursuit of their own vested interests, always associated with the pursuit of greater power and wealth.

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

Download the full document "The Underlying causes..." here!

Global Commodity Chains and the New Imperialism

Intan Suwandi, R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster

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

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

What are we saying when we talk about Sustainability?

Victor M. Toledo

THE NEW SERVICE PROLETARIAT — (Ricardo Antunes)

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

The New Service Proletariat

Ricardo Antunes

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

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

The nature and meaning of work, as it pertains to a future society, has deeply divided ecological, socialist, utopian, and Romantic thinkers since the Industrial Revolution. Some radical theorists have seen a more just society as merely requiring the rationalisation of present-day work relations, accompanied by increased leisure time and more equitable distribution. Others have focused on the need to transcend the entire system of alienated labour and make the development of creative work relations the central element of a new productive society. In what appears to be an effort to circumvent this enduring conflict, current visions of sustainable prosperity, while not denying the necessity of work, often push it into the background, placing their emphasis instead on an enormous expansion of leisure hours. Increased non-work time seems an unalloyed good, and is easily imaginable in the context of a no-growth society. In contrast, the very question of work is fraught with inherent obstacles, ideological dimension, and its multiple and ungraspable interpretations, this essay focuses on sustainability as a scientific concept that springs from an interdisciplinary vision of reality, that for too many authors achieves the status of a new paradigm. The essay attempts to show how the scientific concept of sustainability in the vast majority of its versions, is not but a techno-economic expression that explicitly or implicitly is aimed at convincing the “decision makers”, and that seeks to apply solutions merely technical. Using a political ecological approach, based on the theory of the three powers, the essay identifies and develops an emancipation, in a legitimate version of a “scientific concept of sustainability.”

THE NEW SERVICE PROLETARIAT — An ecological political proposal — (Victor M. Toledo)

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difficulties, since it goes to the roots of the current socioeconomic system, its division of labour, and its class relations. Yet it remains the case that no coherent ecological mapping of a sustainable future is conceivable without addressing the issue of homo faber, i.e., the creative, constructive, historical role in the transformation of nature, and hence the social relation to nature, that distinguishes humanity as a species.

In these dire circumstances, it is dispiriting but not altogether surprising that some self-styled socialists have jumped on the ecomodernist bandwagon, arguing against most ecologists and ecosocialists that what is required to address climate change and environmental problems as a whole is simply technological change, coupled with progressive redistribution of resources. Here again, the Earth System crisis is said not to demand fundamental changes in social relations and in the human metabolism with nature. Rather it is to be approached in instrumentalist terms as a formidable barrier to be overcome by means of extreme technology.

No revolutionary movement exists in a vacuum; it is invariably confronted with counterrevolutionary doctrines designed to defend the status quo. In our era, ecological Marxism or ecosocialism, as the most comprehensive challenge to the structural crisis of our times, is being countered by capitalist ecomodernism—the outgrowth of an earlier ideology of modernism, which from the first opposed the notion that economic growth faced fundamental limits. If ecosocialism insists that a sustainable future is conceivable without alienation of nature and human labour, including the treatment of the global environment and most people—divided by class, gender, race, and ethnicity—as mere objects of conquest, expropriation, and exploitation, will require nothing less than a long ecological revolution, one which will necessarily entail victories and defeats and ever-renewed striving, occurring over centuries. It is a revolutionary struggle, though, that must commence now with a worldwide movement toward ecosocialism—one capable from its inception of setting limits on capital. This revolt will inevitably find its main impetus in an environmental proletariat, formed by the convergence of economic and ecological crises and the collective resistance of working communities and cultures—a new reality already emerging, particularly in the global South.

In the long ecological revolution before us, the world will necessarily proceed from one earthly struggle to another. If the advent of the Anthropocene tells us anything, it is that humanity, through a single-minded pursuit of economic gain benefitting a relative few, is capable of producing a fatal rift in the biogeochemical cycles of the planet. It is time therefore to find another path: one of sustainable human development. This constitutes the entire meaning of revolution in our time.

The Long Ecological Revolution

John Bellamy Foster

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

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

Download "The progressively accelerated..." here!

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

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

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

Download "Invisible exploitation" here.

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

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

Download "Value transfer and... here.

THE DEGROWTH ALTERNATIVE — (Giorgos Kallis)

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

Download "The Degrowth Alternative" here.

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

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

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

Download "To radically challenge..." here.

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

The world's roughly 80,000 multinational corporations (MNCs), long dominated by U.S., European and Japanese firms, have been joined by a growing number based in China, India, Brazil and other emerging economies. MNCs are the engine of a quarter of total world production and their global supply chains represent about half of world trade. MNCs have played a major role in driving a tenfold increase since 1979, now totalling $16 trillion, roughly the size of entire U.S. GDP.

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

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

Download "The yellow vests" here!
MEXICO’S WAGES 2018-2024: TO CHANGE SO THAT EVERYTHING REMAINS THE SAME — (Álvaro J. de Regil)

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

Conclusions:

- The campaign promise on wages was not fulfilled. The real wage increase was substantially smaller than what was offered during the electoral campaign.
- There is no political will to make a minimum wage recovering policy a firm commitment by passing specific legislation for that end.
- The general wage increase benefits only one-sixth of salaried people for it was strictly limited to the general minimum wage, relegating the 59 minimum wage rates for professional activities to an increase to offset CPI inflation, the same wage contention policy a firm commitment by the historic predators of real wages.
- Unless there is radical change, Mexico will lose manufacturing share under the new NAFTA. This is a particularly important issue, in light of the new NAFTA 2.0, which incorporated the sustainability of the planet, pondered over the daily lives of the citizenry and the corporations over societies, their governments, and main stream journalists who actually serve injustice and who's only fuzzy knowledge of the world. Examining the analysis of social classes carried out by Adam Smith also makes it possible to understand the elements of exploitation and domination. Obviously society has changed but there are recurring features that it is interesting to highlight.

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

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

Some passages in Adam Smith’s major work, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, published in 1776 provide evidence that his social analysis clearly refers to class struggle and sheds light on the currently active Yellow Vest movement. Referring to Karl Marx would of course offer ample keys to understanding what is currently happening. But who would be surprised? On the other hand referring to Adam Smith may seem to be sheer provocation. We have to open our eyes even wider and comfort our arguments against those who consider that injustice is part of the way of the world. Examining the analysis of social classes carried out by Adam Smith also makes it possible to understand the elements of continuity in the system of capitalist exploitation and domination. Obviously society has changed but there are recurring features that it is interesting to highlight.

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

In 2007, the author, being well aware of the overwhelming power and influence of corporations over societies, their governments, the daily lives of the citizenry and the sustainability of the planet, pondered over the need to pursue a new agreement that integrates
corporations to the social contract between citizens and the governments they elect. A decade later, he revisits the issue, with the conviction that in a world fraught with ample discord in practically all spheres of human relations, a new social contract that integrates corporations to shape their influence is more than ever urgently needed. White argues that the asymmetry between the beneficiaries and the burdened of globalisation has catalysed rising discontent among those left behind. Nonetheless, he senses that a new tripartite social contract, built on an ethos of collaboration, civility and inclusiveness, is poised to emerge.

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

Society is a union between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.
—(Mark Solms, 1998)

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

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

**Download “Is it time to rewrite...” here.**

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

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**Download "The missing third party..." here.**

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

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

**Is it time to rewrite the social contract?**

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

**The electoral triumph of the far right in Brazil is due to multiple factors; yet the main factor, as the fundamental and priority task, is the failure of petismo (Workers Party), to transform the economic, political and social structures of the country. A failure attributable —as we will see in detail—not to the fact that it never aimed at such a transformation, but, on the contrary, contributed to its strengthening and consolidation. This is how the gap between the poorest and the richest continued to increase: the richest continued to enrich themselves and the poorest continued to impoverish themselves. Even the publicised anti-poverty and indigence programs were a drop in the ocean of pauperism and destitution that persists in Brazil.**

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

PAST — Return to the fazenda and gaucho whip — 

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

— (Anne Vigna)

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

Download "Electoral authoritarianism..." here.

THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Alejandro Teitelbaum

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

**A final thought**

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.