The Jus Semper Global Alliance

In Pursuit of the People and Planet Paradigm

Sustainable Human Development

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ESSAYS ON TRUE DEMOCRACY AND CAPITALISM

Show COP26 and Ecology

Alejandro Teitelbaum

Introduction

he outcome of the Glasgow COP26 show confirmed once again what we wrote in our September 2019 article "The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment"¹

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 Consumption² 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



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partially when it should be approached from an ecological point of view, i.e. in a multidimensional and global way.

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^{1 -} 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 https://blogs.mediapart.fr/aleteitelbaum/blog/071021/degradation-acceleree-de-lenvironnement

² "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).

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Ecology is the branch of <u>biology</u> that studies the relationships of different <u>organisms</u> within each other and with their environment: «the <u>biology</u> of <u>ecosystems</u>». It studies how these interactions between organisms and their <u>environment</u> affect properties such as distribution or abundance. The environment includes physical and chemical properties that can be described as the sum of local abiotic factors, such as <u>climate</u> and <u>geology</u> and the other organisms that share that

This accounting does not consider the relocation from rich countries to other poor countries of highly polluting industries; nor does it take into account the pollution caused by the transfer of goods manufactured in countries where wages are meagre by local companies or companies that have relocated from the core countries.

habitat (biotic factors). Ecosystems are composed of parts that interact dynamically along with the organisms, the communities they integrate, and the non-living components of their environment.³ We have left behind a conception of the environment according to which it is the biophysical system in which human communities are immersed. Now, a broader notion of the environment also includes social and cultural factors. That is to say that the environment, according to this

last idea, is the set of physical, chemical, biological elements and social and cultural factors in reciprocal interaction with human beings or other living beings, grouped or considered individually.⁴

Inequality Through Exploitation of the Global South

The list of the most polluting countries is regularly published, headed by China (28% of world emissions) and followed in decreasing order by the USA (15%), the European Union (10%), India (7.3%), Russia (4.6%) and Japan (3.4%). But if per capita emissions are taken into account, the order of priority in the list of emitting countries changes significantly. Qatar, with 2,900,000 inhabitants, obviously has a lower total emission figure than China, with a population 500 times larger. Qatar's per capita emission figure is followed by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Canada, the United States, Germany, and China.

This accounting does not consider the relocation from rich countries to other poor countries of highly polluting industries such as aluminium and the export in the same direction of industrial wastes that are also polluting. Nor does it take into account the pollution caused by the transfer of goods (textiles, electronics, medicines, food, etc.) manufactured in countries where wages are meagre (Bangladesh, China, Morocco, Mexico, Pakistan, Tunisia and others) by local companies or companies that have relocated from the core countries. These goods are exported to rich countries for sale at prices well above the cost of origin. Thus, the low cost of the labour force makes it possible to increase the profits of manufacturers and large-scale distribution:

Hence, big capital benefits from the difference (in euros) in the minimum wage, which ranges from 3.5 times between the United States (1024) and China (280) to 100 times between France (1554), Germany (1585), the United Kingdom (1583) and Bangladesh (15.7). (ILO, Global Wage Report 2020-21- 5.5

The social impact of the relocation of production to low-wage countries also has major negative consequences regarding wages and employment in the United States and Europe. And in terms of low wages, women are the hardest hit worldwide.⁶ To which we must now add that wages have fallen with the COVID pandemic. Meanwhile, the profits of the

³ ightarrow(esp.:<u>https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecolog%C3%ADa</u>; engl.:<u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecology</u>; fr.:<u>https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cologie</u>).

^{4 🕰 &}lt;u>Teitelbaum , El papel de la educación ambiental en América Latina, pág. 27</u>. UNESCO, 1978.

⁵ Otos Macro: SMI - Salario Mínimo Interprofesional Informe Mundial sobre Salarios 2020-21 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo

⁶ Amarlène Thomas: <u>Depuis 9h22 ce mercredi, les femmes «travaillent gratuitement</u>; Mirta Teitelbaum, <u>La condición de la mujer, en: Alainet</u> y en: *Selección de escritos sociopolíticos y literarios*, editorial Dunken, 2021.

large laboratories and a tiny minority of the richest people have increased exponentially and obscenely.⁷ One wonders whether we should continue to accept a system that produces such intrinsically perverse results.

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The Deforestation and Plundering of Flora and Fauna

It is promised -but not fulfilled- to finance the slowdown of deforestation by 2030. Deforestation to which the poorest local population contributes to a lesser extent, who use the wood for their domestic needs (cooking and protection from the cold) and obtain some income by selling it in its natural state or transformed into charcoal.

But there is no talk - or minimal talk - of the massive deforestation long practised by the core countries of the system in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

At first glance, it is not easy to link hamburgers and steaks with the disappearance of animal and plant species and the deforestation of the tropics. In Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala and other Central and Latin American countries, tropical forests are being burned to make room for cattle ranching. In 1980, it was estimated that 72% of Brazil's Amazon region was deforested for cattle pasture. The United States imports 33% of all beef on the world market and, therefore, almost all of the meat produced by tropical pastures; Europe also imports meat from tropical America and Africa. Producing the meat for just two hamburgers in a tropical forest involves an area of approximately 24 square meters, which is as much as the surface area of your classroom. This area, which produces 100 g of minced meat, houses on average more than 500 kg of living matter: plants, flowers, butterflies, birds, monkeys.⁸⁻⁹

The contribution of rich countries, not just to slow down deforestation but also to reforest the world's regions that these countries have long devastated, is not a voluntary donation but an obligation to repair the damage caused. The cost in health and lives caused by the use and spread of pesticides - among other sites and regions - in the banana plantations of Central America and the West Indies also remains to be repaired.

Energy

In all his activities, both material and intellectual, the human being consumes energy. He must, therefore, produce energy and, in most cases, distribute it and, if possible, store it. The world's energy consumption is soaring. Yet, there are hundreds of millions of people in the world who have minimal access to different energy sources.

On a planetary scale, the proportion of resources used to produce energy (approximate figures) are as follows: non-renewable and polluting 85.45% (oil 32.89%; coal 29.16%; natural gas 23.40%); renewable and non-polluting 10.12% (hydroelectric 6.78%; wind 1.45%; solar 0.43%; biofuels 0.57%; nuclear power plants 4.43%; other resources 0.89%).

These figures have changed slightly up to the present in favour of greater use of renewable and non-polluting energy sources: solar, hydro, wind, biomass, and geothermal. There are notable differences in the efforts made by countries to

^{7 🕹} Informe Mundial sobre Salarios 2020-21 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo

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Chiscuola: <u>Hamburger Connection</u>; Aures zbresil: La « connexion hamburger » et la déforestation de l'Amazonie; UNRISID: <u>The Social Dynamics of Deforestation</u> in Developing Countries; <u>Africa Bosques en peligro Movimiento Mundial por los Bosques Tropicales</u>

^{9 ↔} Solon Barraclough and Krishna Ghimire, <u>The social dynamics of deforestation in developping countries : principal issues an research priorities</u>. UNRISD. Discussion paper 16. Novembeer 1990.

adopt non-polluting energy sources. For some, the general interest seems to be paramount. For the vast majority, the fundamental rule of capitalism of maximum profit at the expense of human life, health and welfare reigns supreme.

In addition to not being pollutants, solar radiation, wind, rivers, and seas are free since they do not need to be extracted

Except for the indigenous peoples, who consume very little energy and produce it ancestrally, the vast majority of other peoples are major consumers and producers of energy that predominantly uses fossil fuels. or transported to be used as energy sources, and the facilities necessary for that purpose only need maintenance. And their renewal is only required after long periods of operation. In contrast, fossil fuels must be extracted and transported permanently to feed the facilities that transform them into usable energy. Their extraction and transportation have a high environmental and

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financial cost that only benefits the large companies that own these industries and services.

Except for the indigenous peoples, who consume very little energy and produce it ancestrally, the vast majority of other peoples and countries - albeit with profound inequalities - are major consumers and producers of energy through systems that predominantly use fossil fuels and, to a much lesser extent, renewable resources.

We should bear in mind that the consumption of energy sources is not the same in every part of the planet. There are countries where energy production is based mainly on renewable sources while others remain anchored in the consumption of fossil and non-renewable energies. This depends on the geophysical conditions of each place and the political and economic decisions of governments. The latter are generally dictated by large national and international capital. For example, in Latin America, Costa Rica produces its energy with close to 100% from clean sources: hydroelectric contributes 75% of the electricity, geothermal 12%, wind 10% and the rest from biomass and solar energy. This is possible because its economy is based on agriculture and tourism, which require little electricity, and it has a geophysical configuration that facilitates the use of these renewable sources.¹⁰

Other Latin American countries also have favourable geophysical conditions, such as Argentina and Brazil. The latter has

The sun is the fundamental source of energy available on Earth.... between one and two hours of solar radiation represents the world's annual consumption of electricity. taken advantage of them with considerable investments, and currently, more than 80% of the energy sources in that country are renewable.¹¹Argentina, on the other hand, has opted for a policy of favouring foreign investments in polluting energy sources, such as oil and gas obtained through fracking. Thus, in Argentina, 63% of

the national energy matrix comes from fossil fuels.¹²

These differences also exist between African countries: while in Nigeria, 62% of electricity is produced using gas, in Kenya, 46% of electricity is generated by hydropower, and 19% is geothermal.

The sun is the fundamental source of energy available on Earth. Leaving aside the fact that fossil fuels (coal and oil) are the result of millions of years of solar energy captured by the globe and that it is involved in the development of all living beings, solar energy can be captured and used immediately and by different means as a source of electrical or thermal energy.

¹⁰ Ceffry Garza: Costa Rica genera más del 98% de su electricidad de forma renovable por sexto año consecutivo, La república, 18 de diciembre de 2020.

¹¹ Cluciano Nascimento: <u>Fuentes renovables generaron el 88% de la energía en Brasil en junio</u>, Agencia Brasil,16 agosto 2018.

¹² Wikipedia: <u>Sector eléctrico en Argentina</u>, (visitado el 25/11/2021).

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The amount of solar energy captured by the Earth annually is equivalent to approximately 4,500 or 7,000 times, depending on the scientific sources, of the energy consumed in the same period. In other words, between one and two hours of solar radiation received by the Earth represents the world's annual consumption of electricity. Solar energy reaches the Earth's surface in two ways: by hitting bright objects, called direct radiation, or by the reflection of solar radiation absorbed by air and atmospheric dust, called diffuse radiation. The former can be used directly, while photovoltaic cells use the latter. There are two systems for harnessing solar energy: those that convert solar radiation into electricity using **photovoltaic technology** and those used to produce **thermal energy**.

There is constant progress in techniques for harnessing solar power, both on a large scale for electricity generation in urban and rural areas and on a small scale for buildings and domestic tasks. Despite its abundance, the use of solar energy is mainly conditioned by three aspects: the intensity of solar radiation received by the Earth, the daily and annual cycles to which it is subjected, and the climatic conditions of each location.

These conditions raise the problem of storing solar energy, as there is not always enough sunshine to harness its power. Various solutions are being considered. One of them is to store the heat in tanks containing nitrate salts, and another is to store it in solids formed by ceramics made from industrial waste. Another is by directly heating water for individual or collective use. In China, studies are relatively advanced to install photovoltaic panels in orbit that would receive solar energy uninterruptedly (24 hours a day) and forward it to terrestrial reception centres. China is far ahead of other countries in the growth rate in the use of solar energy and the percentage of solar energy worldwide.¹³

The other renewable energy sources are hydro (dams, waterfalls and tidal), wind, geothermal and biomass. All of them need to be used in a way that avoids ecologically adverse effects. For example, the proximity of windmills causes disturbances of various kinds that can be avoided by installing them floating in the sea—as is already beginning to be done—far from the coast. In the case of hydropower, this can be done without harming river and sea fauna and without affecting the irrigation of agricultural land or the preservation of lakes, which is not always the case at present.

Nuclear Energy

Arguments favouring nuclear energy as a non-polluting solution to the energy deficit are once again gaining ground. In France, President Macron announces the construction of new nuclear reactors. Even mini atomic reactors. Those in favour of nuclear power plants as the best solution for non-polluting energy production do not take into account three decidedly negative factors: 1) the working and safety conditions in nuclear power plants; 2) the frequent "incidents" and accidents in these plants, and 3) the enormous accumulation of radioactive waste from nuclear power plants.

1. Working and safety conditions in nuclear power plants

Nuclear power plant maintenance teams are almost always subcontracted. These teams are assigned to work where they receive radiation. At least in Europe, a maximum dose of radiation has been determined that a worker can receive in a given period without risk to health. At least in theory. But the subcontracting of this work prevents strict control of the radiation doses received by workers, who frequently travel to different sites where radiation is present. In addition, there is the possibility that they may receive heavy doses of radiation all at once in the case of so-called "incidents". To ensure that workers do not exceed the permissible dose when they reach the limit, they cannot continue working in the nuclear power plants until the dose is lowered and they can start again. In the meantime, they remain unemployed, but the

¹³ ↔Wikipedia: Energía solar en China, (visitado el 25/11/2021).

nuclear power plant assumes no responsibility because the employment contract is with the subcontracting company, which can move them to other plants without waiting for the decontamination period.

In France, the number of maintenance tasks involving radiation exposure carried out by subcontractors has increased from 20% to 80% in some years, implying a significant reduction in costs for EDF (which manages the nuclear power plants). This policy is aimed at ensuring high productivity and keeping production costs competitive.

This is achieved by:

a) reducing the time of maintenance and safety control of the installations (during which production is stopped), which the subcontractors, unlike the nuclear power plant's permanent staff, carry out on a seasonal basis, thus reducing the wage cost of such maintenance and control. Some specialists think that subcontracting may affect the quality of such maintenance and control tasks.

b) externalising, as mentioned above, the risks to workers' health and labour obligations.

As can be seen, in this case, subcontracting or "outsourcing" not only affects the working conditions and health of the workers involved but can also pose a threat to the safety of the general public.¹⁴

2. Accidents in nuclear power plants

Since December 1952, when the first severe nuclear accident occurred at the Chalk River plant in Ottawa (Canada), when the core partially melted, until March 2011 (Fukushima), 15 major nuclear accidents have been recorded in Canada, the United Kingdom, the former USSR, Russia, the United States, Japan, Pakistan and France (Tricastin, July 23, 2008). Regarding the number of victims, the largest ones were Chernobyl in Russia and Fukushima in Japan.¹⁵

3. Radioactive waste

The term "radioactive waste" covers various substances characterized by their radioactivity, which can be weak, medium or intense and range from short to very long-lived. Most radioactive wastes come from the nuclear industry and include very high activity and long and very long duration. Most modern atomic reactors operate with enriched uranium, which leaves behind depleted uranium waste.

The best known **nuclear fue**l is uranium because it is the most commonly used in fission nuclear reactors. Currently, all nuclear reactors in production for electric power generation are fission reactors. Depleted uranium is a residue resulting from the production of fuel for nuclear reactors. The material used is uranium U-235, which is the isotope that can be fissioned. As this isotope is found in meagre proportions in nature, the uranium ore has to be enriched, i.e. its proportion of the U-235 isotope has to be industrially increased. This process produces a large amount of radioactive waste of *depleted uranium* because it is composed mainly of the other non-fissile uranium isotope, U-238, and a small proportion of U-235. U-238 (depleted) uranium takes about 4.5 billion years to disintegrate and become completely harmless. There is then the problem of what to do with the radioactive waste of U-238, the quantity of which is constantly increasing. The three countries with the largest stocks of depleted uranium are the United States (480,000 tons), Russia (460,000) and France (315,000). They are followed by the United Kingdom (30,000), Germany (16,000) and Japan (10,000).

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^{14 ↔} See: de Annie Thébaud-Mony : Rationalité instrumentale et santé au travail : le cas de l'industrie nucléaire, en La Gazette Nucléaire, N° 175-176, junio 1999 ; L'industrie nucléaire : sous-traitance et servitude, Inserm & EDK Editeurs, Año 2000 ; Travailler peut nuire gravement à votre santé. Sous-traitance des risques, mise en danger d'autrui, atteintes à la dignité, violences physiques et morales, cancers professionnels. La Découverte, coll. « La Découverte/Poche », 2008).

¹⁵ See: François Diaz Maurin: Sobre la viabilidad de la energía nuclear. Implicaciones de los accidentes de Fukushima-Daiichi, Ecología Política, 1 junio 2011.

The depleted uranium is either permanently stored at great depth or used by its primary holders in the military industry and sold to other states for use in their military sectors. States save money and empty their stockpiles by giving it to domestic and foreign arms companies. In addition to the USA, countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Russia, Greece, Turkey, Israel, the Gulf monarchies, Taiwan, South Korea, Pakistan and Japan buy or manufacture weapons with depleted uranium.

Depleted uranium is used to coat projectiles because it significantly increases their penetration capacity in the chosen targets. They were used extensively in the first Gulf War, in the war against Iraq and the Balkan War. When a depleted uranium-coated projectile hits a target, most coating burns and oxidizes, volatilizing into highly toxic and radioactive microparticles. These particles, being so small, can be ingested or inhaled after being deposited on the ground or transported miles away through the air, food chain or water. Their use in the wars mentioned above has seriously affected military personnel and the civilian population.¹⁶

Another problem posed by nuclear power plants is their decommissioning: it is a process that takes many years, is extremely costly and can lead to radioactive leaks.

Finally, the construction of new nuclear power plants, because - like everything else - it is also subject to capitalist costbenefit calculations, can be a nightmare in terms of construction defects, delays and enormous additional costs, as in the case of Flamanville in France: initially planned in 2006 at the expense of 3 billion euros and four years of work, it is now costing 12 billion euros and 15 years of work due, among other things, to the fact that it has been built in a very short time and has not yet been completed.

It has been necessary to redo sections that were built with various construction defects. This is a combination of the inexperience of poorly qualified staff and state officials' negligence and bureaucratic management that turns out to be cheaper for the subcontractors. At the Tricastin plant (France), a senior technician has recently complained in court about "hidden" incidents.¹⁷ All this is complemented by the uncontrollable greed for profit of the private companies involved.¹⁸ Thus, nuclear power plants do not seem to be the best solution to produce energy without generating environmental pollution. At least as long as the capitalist disorder persists.

Nature and Human Involution to Pithecanthropus Erectus

We said at the beginning that the environmental question is approached in a unilateral and partial way when it should

Since the first industrial revolution, humans have played a decisive role, which has been exacerbated over the last few decades, and which is responsible for the ecological disaster. be approached from an ecological point of view, i.e. in a multidimensional and global way, taking into account all the physical, chemical and biological elements and the social and cultural factors in reciprocal interaction. **This implies approaching the issue by analysing the question of human**/

nature interaction as it exists today and in its historical perspective.

^{16 -} Diario Le Monde, Uranium appauvri : ce que les états-majors de l'OTAN savaient; Gestion de l'uranium appauvri. Rapport conjoint de l'OCDE et de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique.

^{17 🕹} La Depche: Centrale nucléaire de Tricastin : un cadre dénonce des incidents "dissimulés" et porte plainte, 12/11/2021

¹⁸ ↔ Véase: Matthieu Pelloli: <u>Fiasco de l'EPR de Flamanville : l'Etat lance un ultimatum à EDF</u>, Le Parisien, 28/11/2019.

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For tens of thousands of years, humans and nature have been interacting on the planet, but since the first industrial revolution, humans have played a decisive role, which has been exacerbated over the last few decades, and which is responsible for the ecological disaster - in accelerated progression - that we are currently experiencing. This was not always the case. It was the environment—nature—that contributed decisively to the differentiation between the great apes and the first hominids. Changes in nature led some species of apes, in order to survive, to adopt the upright position and begin to use their upper limbs as tools, thus establishing a link between this new aptitude and the development of the brain.¹⁹

In this interaction with the environment, from the hominid to homo sapiens sapiens, intelligence developed, the size of the brain grew, but not uniformly, with some regions of the brain growing faster than others, according to their functions, and increasing in complexity, until it reached its current volume and functionalities, including self-awareness.

Neanderthal Man, whose first archaeological traces date from around 230000 years ago and disappeared around 30000 years ago, had a slightly larger brain in total than the contemporary human being, but differentiated according to its areas: larger in the areas related to the robustness of the body and to purely physical activities and less voluminous in the areas related to the first intellectual activities, such as the use of utensils. In homo sapiens-sapiens, the former has been reduced and the latter has increased in volume. However, brain volume is not only the material basis for the development of the intellect but also the increase in the number and complexity of inter-neuronal synaptic connections. But this biological evolution of the human being in interaction with nature can become involution because of the unconsidered and unlimited use of electronic devices (portable telephones, electronic games, GPS, etc.). This may lead to the progressive stiffening - through non-use - of brain areas and their interconnections specialised in intellectual activity and to humanity - or a large part of it - regressing from homo sapiens-sapiens to *Pithecanthropus Erectus*.

Supercomputers can process billions of data per second, making them useful for virtually all kinds of tasks: from predicting a tsunami to finding a cure for the coronavirus, searching for planets, and so on. They are generally used for special research, whether in laboratories, education, industrial design, drug research. But they cannot take the place of human imagination and creativity - of which these very artefacts are the result - or let these unique attributes of homo sapiens sapiens evaporate.

Marx, imagining the possibilities of human fulfilment in a society where capitalist exploitation does not prevail, wrote in *the Grundrisse* (1857-58) that technological progress, applied science and the automation of production would **finally free human beings from necessity, from physical labour and alienated labour in general, which would allow their full fulfilment, making disposable time, and not labour, the measure of value (emphasis added). And he added:**

The free development of individualities and thus not a reduction of the necessary working time with a view to the creation of surplus-labour, but in general, a reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, to which then corresponds the artistic, scientific, etc., training of individuals thanks to the time that has become free and the means created for all.²⁰

^{19 🕹} Federico Engels, El Papel del trabajo en la transformación del mono en hombre, 1876; John Eccles, premio Nóbel de Medicina, La evolución del cerebro. Creación de la conciencia, 1989

^{20 🕹} Carlos Marx, Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política (Grundrisse), Siglo XXI Editores, 12ª edición, 1989, tomo 2, págs. 227 y ss. [Contradicción entre la base de la producción burguesa (medida del valor) y su propio desarrollo. Máquinas, etc.]).

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From birth, people possess an enormous cognitive potential revealed in the first years of life and up to the age of 15, in the speed with which new neurones appear and new synaptic connections are established. This process takes place in a permanent exchange with the physical, family and social environment that determines an "epigenesis by selective stabilisation of synaptic connections", which means the elimination of neurones and synaptic connections and the consolidation and formation of others, depending on the nature of the exchange with the environment (brain plasticity). This will lead each individual to have their personality, one trade, several or no vocation, depending on their genetic capital and epigenetic brain plasticity.²¹ A process that may be hindered in part by prevailing environmental conditions: cultural and linguistic deficits, undernourishment, stress caused by armed conflicts, forced migrations and their psychosocial consequences.²² And especially by the profoundly negative influence of an omnipresent instrumental environment, to which Schrödinger and Morozov, quoted below, allude.

Erwin Schrödinger, one of the leading figures in quantum physics, wrote in 1956: "I now think that the increasing mechanisation and 'stupidisation' of most manufacturing processes pose a serious danger of general degeneration for our organ of intelligence".²³

Evgueni Morozov, Professor at Stanford University, responded to a report published in El Pais.²⁴ Some of Morozov's comments in the report:

Silicon Valley²⁵ made a kind of alliance in the seventies with intellectuals. There will always be people, I'll call them useful idiots, who will try to capture the zeitgeist. There will be books, conferences and lectures so that these intellectuals can act as spokespersons for the cause. Silicon Valley promotes mini-narratives. It tells us about web 2.0 and, when it runs out, it talks about the Internet of Things, the collaborative economy... They identify small fragments, occupy the debate for two years and then come out with a new story. There's not a lot of content in those narratives. I've worked long enough on this to say it's nonsense. After the collaborative economy will come the sharing economy, the care economy. What these companies tell us is bogus. When I go around saying that to understand Silicon Valley you have to look at Wall Street,²⁶ the Pentagon, finance, geopolitics or imperialism, they find it uncomfortable to listen to because they prefer to talk about venture capital funds, entrepreneurs, Steve Jobs' garage, LSD...

These so-called smart devices we use, can they make us more stupid? The word "smart" should be refuted. I like to apply a historical perspective. Many of the smart devices around us reflect the interests and commitments of the people who make or configure them. The reason people keep checking their Google²⁷ or Twitter²⁸ on their phone is that the systems are designed to create those dependencies. The business model for these kinds of services is like this. The more clicks I get, the more valuable I am; it's almost like Pavlov's conditioning. The more clicks they get from me, the more money they make from me, so they design the services to maximise those clicks. I have a cynical, banal, rational perspective that money rules the world. That this system distracts us and makes it difficult for us to focus? Absolutely. Is it a problem with smart devices? No. It's a business model issue. I refuse to believe

²¹ $\stackrel{
m O}{
m P}$ Jean Pierre Changeux, El hombre de verdad . L'homme de verité, Odile Jacob, 2002

^{22 ┙} Valentín González Calvo: El duelo migratorio, Dialnet

²³ • Schrödinger, Mente y Materia, pág. 50 de la edición en español.

^{24 🕂} Evgeny Morozov: <u>"Los datos son una de las más preciadas mercancías"</u> El Pais semanal (España) el 21/12/2015 (

²⁵ ↔ Nicholas Carr: La ilusión de Silicon Valley, El País, 25/10/2015.

²⁶ → Paul Krugman: Los magnates de Wall Street toman partido, El País, 17/10/2015.

²⁷ Arosa Jiménez Cano: Google ya puede buscar dentro de Facebook, El País, 18/11/2015.

²⁸
← <u>Cuenta Twitter de Evgeny Morozov</u> (visitada el 25/11/2021).

that there is no other way to generate communication between people without generating distraction. It would be the ultimate defeat of the imagination.²⁹

Michel Desmurget, PhD in neurosciences, specialising in cognitive sciences and Director of Research at INSERM (National Institute of Health and Medical Research - France), provides statistics on the extremely harmful effects of overconsumption of television and the use of Twitter language on French children and teenagers.³⁰

The latest development is the metaverse, a parallel digital world that large corporations are trying to develop. The

The question of the environment should not be limited to assessing and trying to remedy damage to the natural environment, but should also take into account the interaction between human beings and the environment in its economic, political, social and cultural aspects. metaverse will comprise myriad virtual worlds connected to each other and to the physical world, write the experts in the recent "Bank of America Thematic Report: The 14 Technologies That Will Revolutionise Our Lives". They will generate a robust economy that spans from work to play while

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transforming long-established industries and markets such as finance and banking, retail and education, health and fitness, and adult entertainment.³¹

In reality, the metaverse is something like the universalisation of video games, so people will believe they are in two places simultaneously (the virtual and the real). This will mean huge profits for some corporations at the cost of tens or hundreds of millions of people with schizophrenia.³²

Thus, in the conflictive interaction between humans and nature that is currently the subject of intense debate and different approaches, it is unavoidable to introduce the question that the evolution or involution of the human being is also at stake. We, therefore, believe that the question of the environment should not be limited to assessing and trying to remedy damage to the natural environment - spontaneous or caused by human action - and its physical effects on

Environmental degradation results from a social order – capitalism – where waste and unsatisfied basic needs coexist for a large part of the world's population. human beings, but should also take into account the interaction between human beings and the environment in its economic, political, social and cultural aspects, to have an overall view of the

problems and to clear the way in the search for solutions.³³

Conclusion

This approach inexorably leads to the conclusion that environmental degradation results from a social order - capitalism - where waste and unsatisfied basic needs coexist for a large part of the world's population. All of this is imposed by the greed of the economic elites and their need to produce and sell - however they can - more and more, encouraging

^{29 -} Morozov, autor de Pour tout résoudre cliquez ici : L'aberration du solutionnisme technologique [« To Save Everything, Click Here: Technology, Solutionism, and the Urge to Fix Problems that Don't Exist.

³⁰ - Desmurget, TV Lobotomie, la vérité scientifique sur les effetts de la televisión.Edit J'Ai Lu, Paris, reedición septiembre 2013 y La fabrique du crétin digital-Les dangers des écrans pour nous enfants. Edit du Seuil, septembre 2019

^{31 🕹} Cristina J. Orgaz: Qué es la economía del metaverso y cómo puede explotar en los próximos años, BBC News Mundo, 18/11/2021

^{32 🕹} Fabrice Flipo, Débat : <u>Métavers, taxis volants et autres armes de destruction massive de la planète</u> 25 novembre 2021, 00:20 CET

³³ - En el Folleto informativo nº 38 de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos Año 2021- Preguntas frecuentes sobre los derechos humanos y el cambio climático, las páginas 20 a 22 están especialmente dedicadas a los derechos culturales.

irrational consumerism, while at the same time, contradictorily, cutting the purchasing power of the popular classes (wage earners and pensioners).

True Democracy and Capitalism

This social order is imposed on the people through the mass media, through official and private institutions and organisations, through intellectuals of different shades and currents at the service of the system, through the ruling political elites and, when persuasion and consensus do not work, through repression.

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- About Jus Semper: The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.
- About the author: Alejandro Teitelbaum is a Fellow Associate with Jus Semper since 2010. He worked for many years on the issue of human rights in the realm of global corporations and other business enterprises. As the former Permanent Representative, successively from 1985 to 2006, to the United Nations Office in Geneva, for the International Federation of Human Rights and the American Association of Jurists, he spent time toiling with the bureaucracies of the UN and member



states in pursuit of an international legal framework that would harness the business activity so that it would stop violating a wide array of human rights in its sphere of influence, as is customarily the case today. As such, he witnessed how, time and time again, the bureaucracies succumbed to the will of the leading economic powers, that were adamant at maintaining the preeminence of corporate interests over their responsibility for their infringement on human rights. Alejandro Teitelbaum is a Lawyer, a graduate of the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and a Postgraduate in International Economic Relations at the Institute of Economic and Social Development Studies, Université Paris I.

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