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### Links

#### Redistributing income does not solve inequality because capitalism is the root cause – proposals like UBI rely on capitalist production being maintained, and does not challenge capitalism because it subsidizes corporate power

Matt **Bruenig 18** Rohan Grey & RaúL July 18, 2018 , "Do We Need a Universal Basic Income? A Debate.," No Publication, <https://inthesetimes.com/features/universal-basic-income-federal-jobs-guarantee-capitalism.html> [ak]

Like Matt, we oppose the concentration of wealth and ownership. However, his approach of redistributing capital income, rather than reducing it, stands to make a bad situation worse. Financial inequality is a symptom, not a cause, of capitalism. It exists because capitalists and managers control production while exploiting workers and the broader public for their own power and profit. This system scars communities and the environment in ways dividends cannot heal, causing death, disease and ecological collapse. Consequently, proposals that rely on ever-greater profits risk entrenching the current economy’s worst abuses. In particular, we oppose linking the performance of stocks, bonds and real estate to poverty reduction, as Matt’s social wealth fund proposal would do. Goldman Sachs, Monsanto, Halliburton, Facebook, Amazon and the rest of the Fortune 500 are not merely money-making machines; they are sprawling private governance regimes that warp the lives of billions. What’s good for General Motors is rarely good for the country (or planet). Furthermore, the hostility of central bankers to the working class, especially workers of color, should cause leftists to balk at reforms featuring a technocracy of fund managers. The Norwegian and Alaskan experiences also cause us concern rather than comfort. Norway’s sovereign wealth fund (SWF), for example, amassed its wealth by investing in fossil fuels. Today it invests in overseas real estate and earns passive income off the backs of workers in the Global South. The Alaska Permanent Fund (APF), still rakes in healthy profits from fossil fuel extraction, while Alaska remains plagued by poverty, unemployment and underinvestment in public services. Meanwhile, the highest dividend paid by the APF—$2,072 per person—is still far too low to provide substantial respite from work, the alleged advantage of a universal basic income (UBI) over a job guarantee (JG). Regardless of the size of the payout, we are concerned that mailing everyone an identical check will increase inequality, rather than reduce it. Early social dividend proponents, such as C.H. Douglas, envisioned an “aristocracy of producers and a democracy of consumers.” A standalone UBI, financed by a wealth fund or otherwise, does not challenge the capitalist system of production. **History demonstrates technocratic elites favor a standalone UBI precisely because it actually subsidizes corporate power, rather than threatens it.** Instead of a stock dividend, we should guarantee housing, healthcare, education, family and disability support, reparations, and other public goods through a full employment economy, undergirded by a JG. Rather than leaning into financialization, we should reduce our dependence on mega-corporations and money managers by establishing a right to a job, then building alternative systems of community-oriented production. The solution to capitalist-driven inequality is not making everyone a capitalist. It’s less capitalism.

#### UBI shifts debate away from questioning ownership of the means of production to who gets the profits from exploitation – this crowds out Marxist thinking and kills the chances of overcoming capitalism

Esteban **Mercatante 18** 8-7-2018, "Universal Basic Income: A Capitalist Fix to the Evils of Capitalism?," Left Voice, <https://www.leftvoice.org/universal-basic-income-a-capitalist-solution-to-the-evils-of-capitalism> [ak]

Universal basic income, a guaranteed, no-strings-attached income for the entire population, is presented as a progressive solution to the “end of work.” But those who promote a UBI are doing one of two things. They either entertain illusions in a top-down palliative measure for the miseries of the capitalist system, or they are searching for an impossible shortcut to the challenges of organizing the working class, **the only social force that can overcome capitalism**. In either case, they lack any sense of realism. The “end of work” narrative A widely held belief suggests that most jobs today are threatened by the so-called “fourth industrial revolution” which promises to extend robotics throughout production. Unlike previous waves of innovation, according to this line of thought, the fourth revolution will result in fewer replacement jobs. Yet in reality the number of workers exploited by capital around the world has grown as never before. According to the International Labour Organization, over 3.2 billion individuals are employed today. While this supposed “end of work” has escaped serious analysis, the idea that a UBI could secure an income for those who can no longer expect to find gainful employment has become more popular. It is not a new idea. But what gives it a new sense of urgency and more adherents is that, as Paul Mason suggests, it could solve the problem of “the disappearance of work itself.” 1 Talk of the “end of work” is permeated with a fetishism of robotics. But in the conditions of the “secular stagnation“ of modern capitalism, the use of robotics does not produce sufficiently high rates of capital accumulation to present a real threat to most people’s jobs. More generally, the idea that capitalism can impose generalized robotization clashes with capital’s need for ever increasing exploitation of the only source of its profits – labor power. Advocates of UBI also assume that growing job insecurity and precarity, faced by a large proportion of the world’s labor force, are irreversible. It is true that accessing formal employment, participating in the social security system, and so on, are unattainable for a growing sector of the working class. The ILO estimates that 42 per cent of workers suffer from “vulnerable employment”, including self-employment, temporary jobs etc., which has increased among young people and especially women. 2 People are working more and earning less than they did decades ago. The length of today’s workday is as long, or even longer, than it was 80 years ago, and in the United States, Germany and France it is being lengthened further. Contrary to what John Maynard Keynes imagined when he considered the economic possibilities of his grandchildren’s generation, we are not even a fraction closer to 15-hour workweek than we were in the 1930s – even though labor productivity has multiplied threefold. But as Leo Panitch points out 3, such generalized job insecurity, seen as inescapable by those who propose UBI, has much more to do with capital’s advance against the historic gains of the working class than it does with supposedly irreversible changes in capitalism’s material processes. Thirty years ago, the most left-wing proponents of UBI, Robert J. van der Veen and Philippe Van Parijs, considered it “A Capitalist Road to Communism.” 4 But what these proponents see as UBI’s “progressive” side is in fact its fatal flaw: accepting the premise of the “end of work” and sidestepping this problem by fighting not for socialism but rather for a UBI. To accept this idea is to accept that the working class has already lost half the battle. Money for Nothing Money here and now, because there is no time to wait for great social transformations – that is the slogan of UBI proponents. They want to give every person a sufficient income to acquire the essentials, whether or not they have a job, whether or not they want to work, with no strings attached. Such a decoupling of the income of citizens from the obligation to work seems to some to be the only viable alternative in a world where the system of production throws growing numbers of workers to the side of the road. A basic level of economic and social rights would be universally guaranteed – without the need to expropriate the means of production or storm the Winter Palace. Since the capitalist state already outlays considerable sums, which in some cases are universal, such as the cash transfers offered to families with children by many states in Latin America, what major roadblocks could stand in the way of taking one more step, however great, down the same path? UBI proponents are certain that it is within reach, and this feeling is reinforced by the growing number of experiments by public agencies and NGOs to test the effects of implementing a basic income. This has occurred even though there is a great abyss separating “progressive” proposals, meant to ensure a “dignified” income, and state practices that aim only to manage poverty without eliminating it. It is no surprise, then, that Rutger Bregman gave his book about UBI the title Utopia for Realists. 5 This book summarizes the experiences from different times and places and also examines the arguments for and against UBI. One of the main objectives of Bregman’s book is to disprove the claim that handing out money for nothing leads to laziness. The author presents the conclusions of a pilot scheme implemented in 2009 in London by the Broadway Cares organization, which delivered 3,000 pounds to 13 homeless people. According to this study, in each case the aid “empowered” the beneficiaries. Utopia also presents the results of a study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the performance of the NGO Give Directly, which collects money from donations and delivers it to beneficiaries in poor countries with no strings attached. This study shows a lasting increase in income (on average 38% higher than before the transfer) and an increase in assets and property, including homes (up 58%), as well as a 42% reduction in the number of days that children go hungry. Other examples abound. According to Bregman, there are different programs based on cash transfers that reach 110 million families in 45 countries (“from Brazil to India, from Mexico to South Africa”), the overwhelming majority of which have been implemented in the last 20 years. Focusing on the poorest sectors of society is of course not the same as implementing a UBI sufficient to lift everyone above the poverty line, regardless of their employment status, income and wealth. Bregman does refer to one experiment that took place from 1974 to 1978 in the Canadian town of Dauphin with 13,000 inhabitants. This program secured a basic income for the entire population and ensured that no one fell below the poverty line. Thirty percent of the population (one family in four) received monthly payments that in today’s currency amounted to $19,000 a year. With the arrival of a fiscally zealous new government, the program was canceled without any investigation of the results. Thirty years later, a study analyzed the program’s impacts on health statistics compared with similar populations that did not receive this benefit, and it showed that it was a success. There are currently trials that have been advertised as first steps toward a UBI in Canada, Holland, Scotland, Kenya and India. A “citizen’s wage” is even included in the program of the government coalition formed by the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S – Five Star Movement) and the xenophobic Lega Nord (LN – Northern League), part of a program that also calls for large company tax reductions. In their current stage, these proposals focus on the poor and the unemployed, just like many of the experiments that Bregman refers to. They also continue to run into similar difficulties over time. Finland announced a few months ago that its two-year program, in which 2,000 unemployed people between 25 and 28 years old received 560 euros a month tax-free, was ending on December 31, 2018. This decision was motivated by fiscal austerity as a result of a slowing economic growth, and has nothing to do with the program’s results, which, according to its organizers, can be assessed only after six years. Still, the amount of money provided was less than half of the 1,200 euros needed to avoid poverty in Finland. This fact shows that the proposals discussed by different nation-states are a long way from the paradise of free time without poverty that some leftists like to imagine. This basic income thus aims to be nothing more than a palliative measure. In the United States, for example, there is the SNAP program (“food stamps”) to provide food to people who cannot afford it. Payments such as this ameliorate the situation of the poorest sectors, but they do nothing to reduce income inequality between capitalists and workers, which has particularly exploded in the US since the 1980s. This type of program just allows this unequal income distribution to continue but with a bit less tension. Such a basic income that comes “from above” as a public social security policy will hardly be universal. Capitalist production is dependent on not only an active labor force, but also a pool of unemployed and underemployed that are ready to take up any vacancy. This “reserve army of labor” exerts a constant downward pressure on wages and has a disciplining effect on the employed sector of the working class. A government-provided allowance that enables workers to fully withdraw themselves from the labor market would dismantle this key mechanism of any capitalist system. For this reason, it will be focused only on very low-income sectors and will not even amount to a basic income, but be set at levels below the poverty line. This is the only way that a basic income can be compatible with the continued exploitation of labor in the conditions that modern capitalism in decline requires, especially in backward and dependent countries, but also in the richest imperialist economies. Basic income is a long way from being a progressive reform that ensures a decent income for all citizens. Public policies are caught between the demand for fiscal austerity and the need to contain discontent and make capitalism’s continued social degradation somehow bearable. As Michel Husson states, “Progressive partisans of an income of 1,000 euros per month may well serve as ‘useful idiots’ for the establishment of a universal income of 400 euros, for a final settlement that also advantageously reduces the operating costs of the welfare state.” 6 UBI or the Redistribution of Working Hours? Tens years after the Great Recession, some have proclaimed that the world has turned a corner, even if the turbulence of more the last couple years discredits such claims. The capitalist class is preparing new attacks on the living standards of the working class, which it must do in order to increase accumulation. A key part of this are the labor and pension (counter)-reforms being imposed around the world (from France to Brazil and Argentina). But UBI also has its part to play. The proposal for a UBI shifts debate from the terrain of class conflict to that of public policy and citizenry. This could be of great service to the capitalist class as it continues its attacks on the working class. After all, a dispute about the primary distribution of income always entails the danger that the exploited will question who controls social production and begin to organize. But if the debate is shifted to UBI, it becomes a question of secondary distribution, of income management and social security expenses. Some on the left defend UBI because it will supposedly “empower” the working class in its confrontation with capital. The logic is that an income that can cover the basic cost of living would give the working class greater bargaining power, since all workers would have a credible “exit” strategy. This position is defended by, for example, David Calnitsky in Catalyst. 7 However, this argument has some major weaknesses. All efforts by capital in recent decades have aimed at creating job insecurity, flexibility and fragmentation of the workforce. Calnitsky is right that working class power is today at a historic low. So, can we really expect the government to come up with a proposal for UBI that gets any closer to a livable income? Doing so would be naïve. Then, what we need to focus on is not a policy proposal that shifts the attention away from class struggle, but the task of organizing at workplaces, in the unions, for the working class to become again a force that needs to be reckoned with. Of course, the argument of those who propose a “dignified” basic income is not that it will come from state generosity, but that it must be achieved through struggle. However, as Alex Gourevitch and Lucas Stanczyk argue in Catalyst, There is consequently no prospect of the hoped for policy coming to pass until there is a working-class constituency that is organized and powerful enough to be able to extract it, in spite of the predictable resistance of superbly organized capital.8 Accepting the “end of work” and fighting for remuneration outside of employment does not bode well for a working class that aspires to become such a powerful social force. If anything, it can facilitate the new attacks of the ruling class. The “progressive” proponents of UBI are thus caught in a vicious circle. UBI is not a shortcut to the independent organization of the working class that its progressive proponents imagine. In contrast to these illusions, there is only one response to either neoliberal austerity or miserable handouts: the struggle to reduce the workweek to six hours a day, five days a week, and the redistribution of working hours among all those available to work. Around the world, the workload for those who have a job is increasing, while unemployment and underemployment grow alongside it. Data from the US show that, even though labor productivity has tripled from 1957 to today, the eight-hour day remains unchanged and businesses have found multiple ways to impose even longer hours. In the last decades, the time dedicated to work has increased. The same goes for Europe, and even more so for many dependent countries that have joined the networks of transnational production. Far from being “natural,” this is determined by capital’s need to increase its appropriation of surplus value at the expense of labor. Therefore we must raise the demand for the reduction of the working day by distributing the available work among all those who can work, without any loss in salary, thus guaranteeing all employed people an income based on the cost of living. This proposal seeks to question the seemingly “natural” character of the industrial reserve army. The conditions have been created for everyone to work fewer hours. But while capital is in power, some must continue working as many hours as workers did many decades ago while a growing part of the population is transformed into a “relative surplus population.” Thus, we have to question the private monopoly of the means of production. The IG Metall strike in Germany last year, in which hundreds of thousands of workers fought for the reduction of the working day,9 showed that this is an idea that can resonate deeply in important sectors of the working class (even if in this case the strike was called off by the union bureaucracy after it imposed a salary cut in exchange for a shorter working day). What stands in the way of distributing all available work among all those who want to work, decreasing everyone’s working day? Why should some of us have exhausting working days while others are condemned to unemployment and underemployment (with or without a UBI)? Why can’t we use technological advances to reduce the working day to everyone? Why do the workers who produce all the social wealth have to settle for crumbs from the capitalist state, while eight billionaires own the same wealth as 3.5 billion people? **Capitalism has created the conditions for reducing the time required to produce all socially necessary goods. But for the vast majority of the world population to benefit from this enhanced productive capacity, we need to question the mechanisms of exploitation that sustain the current mode of production. Then the only “realistic” thing to do is to fight to abolish the capitalist system. We must clear the path for a mode of production that is no longer based on private profit but rather on meeting the social needs of everyone.**

### Impact

#### Capitalism causes poverty, social exclusion, societal disintegration, violence and environmental destruction—threatens humanity

De La Barra, Chilean political activist, international consultant and former UNICEF Latin America Public Policy Advisor 07-- (Ximena, “THE DUAL DEBT OF NEOLIBERALISM”, Imperialism, Neoliberalism and Social Struggles in Latin America”, 9/1/09, edited by Dello Bueno and Lara, Brill Online)

**The currently prevailing neoliberal development model has brought with it** various technological advances and **economic and commercial growth**. However, these results ultimately benefit fewer and fewer people while augmenting social inequality, injustices, and promoting serious social and ethical setbacks. **It is definitely not eradicating poverty** On the contrary, **it creates conditions for a growing tendency towards political, economic and social exclusion for the majority of the world’s population. The model exacerbates poverty, social disparities, ecological degradation, violence and social disintegration.** Loss of governability flows from its systematic logic of emphasizing an ever cheaper labour force, the reduction of social benefits, the disarticulation and destruction of labour organisations,and the **elimination of labour and ecological regulation** (de la Barra 1997). Int his way, it consolidates a kind of cannibalism known as social dumping that seeks to lower costs below the value of social reproduction rather than organising a process of progressive social accumulation. For most of Latin America and the Caribbean, the present minimum wage levels only allow for a portion of the basic consumption package needed by working people (Bossio 2002).At present, the global income gap between the 10% poorest portion of the world’s population and the wealthiest 10% has grown to be 1 to 103 (UNDP2005). According to this same source, around 2.5 billion people, almost halfof humanity, lives on less than US$ 2. per day (considered the poverty level),while 1.2 billion of these people live on less than US$ 1. per day (considered the level of extreme poverty).Given its neoliberal character, globalisation failed to produce the benefits that were touted. Indeed, the process has greatly harmed the most vulnerable social sectors produced by the previous phase of capitalist development. The lack of social and ethical objectives in the current globalisation process has resulted in benefits only in those countries where a robust physical and human infrastructure exists, where redistributive social policies are the norm,and where fair access to markets and strong regulatory entities are in place. Where such conditions do not exist, globalisation has led to stagnation and marginalisation, with declining health and educational levels of its children, especially among the poor. Some regions, including Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Sub-Saharan Africa, and more recently, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as some countries within regions and some persons within countries (poor children and adolescents, rural inhabitants and urban slum dwellers, indigenous peoples, children of illiterate women, illegal immigrants, etc.) have remained mostly excluded (UNICEF 2001).

### Alternative

#### Thus the alternative is to affirm the model of the Communist Party – only democratic organizing can provide effective accountability mechanisms to correct unproductive tendencies, educate and mobilize marginalized communities, and connect local struggles to a movement for international liberation.

**Escalante 18**  
(Alyson Escalante, you should totally read her work for non-debate reasons, Marxist-Leninist, Materialist Feminist and Anti-Imperialist activist. “PARTY ORGANIZING IN THE 21ST CENTURY” September 21st, 2018 <https://theforgenews.org/2018/09/21/party-organizing-in-the-21st-century/> rvs)

I would argue that within the base building movement, there is a move towards party organizing, but this trend has not always been explicitly theorized or forwarded within the movement. My goal in this essay is to argue that base building and dual power strategy can be best forwarded through party organizing, and that party organizing can allow this emerging movement to solidify into a powerful revolutionary socialist tendency in the United States. One of the crucial insights of the base building movement is that the current state of the left in the United States is one in which revolution is not currently possible. There exists very little popular support for socialist politics. A century of anticommunist propaganda has been extremely effective in convincing even the most oppressed and marginalized that communism has nothing to offer them. The base building emphasis on dual power responds directly to this insight. By building institutions which can meet people’s needs, we are able to concretely demonstrate that communists can offer the oppressed relief from the horrific conditions of capitalism. Base building strategy recognizes that actually doing the work to serve the people does infinitely more to create a socialist base of popular support than electing democratic socialist candidates or holding endless political education classes can ever hope to do. Dual power is about proving that we have something to offer the oppressed. The question, of course, remains: once we have built a base of popular support, what do we do next? If it turns out that establishing socialist institutions to meet people’s needs does in fact create sympathy towards the cause of communism, how can we mobilize that base? Put simply: **in order to mobilize the base which base builders hope to create, we need to have already done the work of building a communist party.** It is not enough to simply meet peoples needs. Rather, we must build the institutions of dual power in the name of communism. We must refuse covert front organizing and instead have a public face as a communist party. When we build tenants unions, serve the people programs, and other dual power projects, we must make it clear that we are organizing as communists, unified around a party, and are not content simply with establishing endless dual power organizations. We must be clear that our strategy is revolutionary and in order to make this clear we must adopt party organizing. By “party organizing” I mean an organizational strategy which adopts the party model. Such organizing focuses on building a party whose membership is formally unified around a party line determined by democratic centralist decision making. The party model creates internal methods for **holding party members accountable**, unifying party member action around democratically determined goals, and for educating party members in communist theory and praxis. A communist organization utilizing the party model works to build dual power institutions while simultaneously educating the communities they hope to serve. Organizations which adopt the party model focus on propagandizing around the need for revolutionary socialism. They function as the forefront of political organizing, empowering local communities to theorize their liberation through communist theory while organizing communities to literally fight for their liberation. A party is not simply a group of individuals doing work together, but is a formal organization unified in its fight against capitalism. Party organizing has much to offer the base building movement. By working in a unified party, base builders can ensure that local struggles are tied to and informed by a unified national and international strategy. While the most horrific manifestations of capitalism take on particular and unique form at the local level, we need to remember that our struggle is against a material base which functions not only at the national but at the international level. The formal structures provided by a democratic centralist party model allow individual locals to have a voice in open debate, but also allow for a unified strategy to emerge from democratic consensus. Furthermore, **party organizing allows for local organizations and individual organizers to be held accountable for their actions.** It allows criticism to function not as one independent group criticizing another independent group, but rather as comrades with a formal organizational unity working together to sharpen each others strategies and to help correct chauvinist ideas and actions. In the context of the socialist movement within the United States, such accountability is crucial. As a movement which operates within a settler colonial society, imperialist and colonial ideal frequently infect leftist organizing. Creating formal unity and party procedure for dealing with and correcting these ideas allows us to address these consistent problems within American socialist organizing. Having a formal party which unifies the various dual power projects being undertaken at the local level also allows for base builders to not simply meet peoples needs, but to pull them into the membership of the party as organizers themselves. The party model creates a means for sustained growth to occur by unifying organizers in a manner that allows for skills, strategies, and ideas to be shared with newer organizers. It also allows community members who have been served by dual power projects to take an active role in organizing by becoming party members and participating in the continued growth of base building strategy. It ensures that there are formal processes for educating communities in communist theory and praxis, and also enables them to act and organize in accordance with their own local conditions. We also must recognize that the current state of the base building movement precludes the possibility of such a national unified party in the present moment. Since base building strategy is being undertaken in a number of already established organizations, it is not likely that base builders would abandon these organizations in favor of founding a unified party. Additionally, it would not be strategic to immediately undertake such complete unification because it would mean abandoning the organizational contexts in which concrete gains are already being made and in which growth is currently occurring. What is important for base builders to focus on in the current moment is building dual power on a local level alongside building a national movement. This means aspiring towards the possibility of a unified party, while pursuing continued local growth. The movement within the Marxist Center network towards some form of unification is positive step in the right direction. The independent party emphasis within the Refoundation caucus should also be recognized as a positive approach. It is important for base builders to continue to explore the possibility of unification, and to maintain unification through a party model as a long term goal. In the meantime, individual base building organizations ought to adopt party models for their local organizing. Local organizations ought to be building dual power alongside recruitment into their organizations, education of community members in communist theory and praxis, and the establishment of armed and militant party cadres capable of defending dual power institutions from state terror. Dual power institutions must be unified openly and transparently around these organizations in order for them to operate as more than “red charities.” Serving the people means meeting their material needs while also educating and propagandizing. It means radicalizing, recruiting, and organizing. The party model remains the most useful method for achieving these ends. The use of the party model by local organizations allows base builders to gain popular support, and most importantly, to mobilize their base of popular support towards revolutionary ends, not simply towards the construction of a parallel economy which exists as an end in and of itself. It is my hope that we will see future unification of the various local base building organizations into a national party, but in the meantime we must push for party organizing at the local level. If local organizations adopt party organizing, it ought to become clear that **a unified national party will have to be the long term goal of the base building movement.** Many of the already existing organizations within the base building movement already operate according to these principles. I do not mean to suggest otherwise. Rather, my hope is to suggest that we ought to be explicit about the need for party organizing and emphasize the relationship between dual power and the party model. Doing so will make it clear that the base building movement is not pursuing a cooperative economy alongside capitalism, but is pursuing a revolutionary socialist strategy capable of fighting capitalism. The long term details of base building and dual power organizing will arise organically in response to the conditions the movement finds itself operating within. I hope that I have put forward a useful contribution to the discussion about base building organizing, and have demonstrated the need for party organizing in order to ensure that the base building tendency maintains a revolutionary orientation. The finer details of revolutionary strategy will be worked out over time and are not a good subject for public discussion. I strongly believe party organizing offers the best path for ensuring that such strategy will succeed. My goal here is not to dictate the only possible path forward but to open a conversation about how the base building movement will organize as it transitions from a loose network of individual organizations into a unified socialist tendency. These discussions and debates will be crucial to ensuring that this rapidly growing movement can succeed.

## 2NC

### Link – Democratic Tranquilizers

#### There’s a direct trade-off between democratic politics and base-building for revolution – them trying to work with UBI in the context of the US government will fail because it does not address capitalisms material violence

Escalante 18 [Alyson, Marxist-Leninist, Materialist Feminist and Anti-Imperialist activist, writing for The Forge, a socialist newspaper in Knoxville, Tennessee providing socialist news and information for East Tennessee and the Southern US.] <https://theforgenews.org/2018/08/24/against-electoralism-for-dual-power/> ///ahsBC

Dual Power Today I am sure that at this point, the opportunists reading this have already begun to type out their typical objection: the world is different than it was in 1917, and the conditions of the United States in no way echo the conditions which enabled the Bolsheviks to achieve revolutionary success. To this tried and true objection, there is one simple answer: you are entirely correct, and that is why we need to abandon electoralism and working within the bourgeois state. What were the conditions which allowed the Bolsheviks to successfully revolt? The conditions were that of Dual Power. Alongside the capitalist state, there existed a whole set of institutions and councils which met the needs of the workers. The soviets, a parallel socialist government made up of individual councils, successfully took over many governmental responsibilities in some parts of Petrograd. In the radical Viborg district, the Bolshevik controlled soviets provided government services like mail, alongside programs that could meet the needs of workers. When a far right coup was attempted against the provisional government, it was troops loyal to the Bolshevik factions within the soviet who repelled the coup plotters, proving concretely to the workers of Petrograd that the socialists could not only provide for their needs, but also for their defense. In short: the Bolsheviks recognized that instead of integrating into the bourgeois state, they could operate outside of it to build dual power. They could establish programs of elected representatives who would serve the workers. They would not bolster the capitalist state in the name of socialism, they would offer an alternative to it. And so, when the time came for revolt, the masses were already to loyal to the Bolsheviks. The only party who had never compromised, who had denounced the unpopular imperialist wars, who had rejected the provisional government entirely, was the party who successfully gained the support of the workers. And so, many of us on the more radical fringes of the socialist movement wonder why it is the the DSA and other socialist opportunists seem to think that we can win by bolstering the capitalist state? We wonder, given this powerful historical precedent, why they devote their energy to getting more Ocasios elected; what good does one more left democrat who will abandon the workers do for us? The answer we receive in return is always the same: we want to win small changes that will make life for the workers easier; we want to protect food stamps and healthcare. And do this, we reply: what makes you think reformism is the only way to do this. When the bourgeois state in California was happy to let black children go to school unfed, the Black Panthers didn’t rally around democratic candidates, they became militant and fed the children themselves. In the 40s and 50s, socialists in New York saw people going without healthcare and instead of rallying behind democratic candidates, they built the IWO to provide healthcare directly. Both these groups took up our pressing revolutionary task: building dual power. Imagine if all those hours the DSA poured into electing Ocasio were instead used to feed the people of New York, to provide them with medical care, to ensure their needs were met. Imagine the masses seeing socialism not as a pipe dream we might achieve through electing more imperialists, but as a concrete movement which is currently meeting their needs? The fact is, we are not nearly ready for revolution. Socialists in the United States have failed to meet the needs of the people, and as long as their only concrete interaction with the masses is handing them a voter registration form, they will continue to fail the people. Our task now is not to elect representatives to advocate for the people; it is much more gruelingly laborious than that. Our task is to serve the people. Our task is to build dual power. The movement to do this is underway. Members of the DSA refoundation caucus have begun to move the left of the DSA in this direct, socialist groups like Philly Socialists have begun to build dual power through GED programs and tenants unions, many branches of the Party For Socialism and Liberation have begun to feed the people and provide for their concrete needs, and Red Guard collectives in Los Angeles have built serve the people programs and taken on a stance of militant resistance to gentrification. The movement is growing, its time is coming, and dual power is achievable within our life time. The opportunists are, in a sense, correct. We are not where we were in 1917, but we can begin to move in that direction and dual power can take us there. In order to achieve dual power we have to recognize that Lenin was right: there will be no socialist gains by working within state institutions designed to crush socialism. Furthermore, we must recognize that the strategies of the electoral opportunists trade off with dual power. Electing candidates drains resources, time, and energy away from actually serving the people.

### Link – Antiblackness

#### **The origins of antiblackness are results of capitalism - capitalists not only stole black people from Africa but also created whiteness by convincing white workers that black gains were at a white expense**

**Hart 18**

Constellations: Capitalism, Antiblackness, Afro-Pessimism, and Black Optimism Author(s): William David Hart Source: American Journal of Theology & Philosophy, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 2018), pp. 5- 33 Published by: University of Illinois Press Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/amerjtheophil.39.1.0005 Accessed: 05-05-2018 22:40 UTC [AK]

On my reading, the figures in the left column tend toward the more conventional view that racism, race, and antiblackness are, in the last analysis, **capitalist ideologies and practices**. They are tools of labor exploitation and management: capitalists undermine working-class solidarity by splitting workers along racial lines; they convince white workers that whiteness rather than class solidarity is the true guardian of their interests. Employing the tool of a racially stratified labor market, capitalists convince white workers, including the petit bourgeoisie (shopkeepers, police officers, firefighters, lower-level clerical workers, and others striving to become members of the upper middle class, that is, the very people who constitute the bedrock of President Trump’s support20), that any economic and status gains black workers make comes at their expense. In a competitive labor market, which reduces workers across racial lines to the same status, the metaphysics of whiteness is the only thing that stands between white workers and black workers in a society where honor and dishonor are racially coded.

### Perm

#### Realism DA – the perm’s politic of compromise confirms the system on the subjective level

**Reed 18**

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Petrified Futurity Capitalist Realism indexes not only our economic condition, but more pervasively, the 'atmosphere' of political resignation which denies the possibility for any other socio-economic structural scenario. This 'atmosphere' permeates both conscious and unconscious life, including the arena of cultural production (music, art, film, etc.) where instead of seeing boundless innovation (a capitalist premise), we seem caught in retroparalysis: loops of re-makes and pop-cultural revivalism,5 where substantial technological development devolves into trivial consumer gadgetry.' Within such an atmosphere, mental distress and illness has also proliferated as a debilitating symp- tom of the behavioral imperatives this naturalization entails. This is in the way one is compelled to 'govern from within' to adapt to the world successfully in full, entrepre- neurial self-reliance. Such naturalization is internalized as the only system compat- ible with 'innate' humanness, where this picture of 'innateness' is both self-referential and self-reinforcing, coercing the human into a narrow mold **wherein the incentive of accumulation through competition is isomorphic with our 'intrinsic' selfishness and self-interest** (those very social biases buttressing neoclassical economics, upon which neoliberalism is built). In this framing, capitalism is upheld as the only system com- mensurate with the 'nature' of the human; to suggest otherwise is to fall prey to folly, almost as nonsensical as fighting the fact of gravity on earth. The diagnosis Fisher puts forth, quite pointedly, is that **Capitalist Realism petrifies politics because it stifles our imaginative and perspectival horizons.** The axiom then gets extrapolated: if futurity is always a political project and politics is dead-locked, our future, as such, has become cancelled - a point to which we will return.

### AT: Green capitalism

#### The idea of a green economy fails -- tons of factors

**Hakkarainen, 15**- advocacy and policy officer at KEPA, a Finnish civil society organization, with an MA in development geography and sociology from the University of Helsinki (Outi Hakkarainen, 2015, “From Forced Growth to Sustainable Economy,”<https://www.kepa.fi/sites/kepa.fi/tiedostot/julkaisut/from-forced-growth-to-sustainable-economy-nov-2015.pdf>)

The United Nations Environment Programme UNEP launched the concept of green economy in 2008. The green economy model aims at promoting human well-being and social equality as well as at reducing environmental risks. Its goal is a low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive economy.39 The new model of growth proposed by the UNEP was expected to bring important changes. It was hoped to solve the global recession and ecological crisis. The green economy has given rise to various interpretations. Different attributes are often attached to it, such as an inclusive green economy that promotes employment, which is, for example, one of the priorities in Finland's Development Policy Programme.40 Civil society activists and researchers have also defined their ideal visions of the green economy.41 The green economy is based on the concept of ecological modernisation. It believes in solving environmental issues without significant changes to the current course of modern life and economic system through increasing efficiency. Environmental and climate problems are solved in a growthbased market economy, while sustainability is guaranteed by means of efficient institutions and green technology.42 The Financialisation of Nature **The green economy is criticised for its excessive growth orientation** and insufficient efforts towards social justice. The UNEP has suggested that decoupling of natural resources and environmental damage would provide conditions for a sustainable economic model. At the same time, it recognises that **so far we have not succeeded in implementing absolute decoupling** (see page 6 on decoupling). The **monetary valuation of nature** also **divides opinion.** The UNEP states that this is a means for protecting nature. Different calculation mechanisms are being devised for defining a market value for environmental services, i.e. for the benefits ecosystems offer to humans. For forests it can be calculated using the timber market price or carbon sequestration capacity. Biodiversity banks can be used for compensating for the loss of biodiversity. For example, a wetlands habitat cleared for an infrastructure project can be compensated for by producing a similar habitat in another place. After basic commodities, such as food and land, have been priced, they can be traded as derivatives in the financial markets. In the European Union Emissions Trading System, trading takes place with calculated emission values. A lot of criticism has been expressed against such systems. **Cost-benefit models have been found to be socially inequitable** since the market logics gives priority to the wishes of the wealthy over the wishes of the poor. Inequality has been observed in local communities because monetary rewarding produces winners and losers.43 Pricing results in a situation where the proprietary rights to resources will be transferred over time from the local community to investors or wealthy individuals. **Environmental commoditization means placing emphasis on market mechanisms instead of public regulation.**44 Some large Western environmental organisations, such as the IUCN and the WWF, see potential in the green economy and look for points in common between it and their own objectives, while many organisations from the Global South are often more critical about the pricing of nature. The international community and well-financed international NGOs have been in the forefront of advocating the green economy for poor countries.45 Companies also have a key position in the green economic system. Green technology companies can be strengthened by committing them to the objectives of green economy. Some of these companies have promoted the adoption of stricter emission standards to their own advantage. However, **the overall success of the actors promoting the green economy has been weak in challenging the development model based on fossil fuels and industrial agriculture.**46

### A2 Inevitable

#### “No alternative” rhetoric is what cements neoliberalism—reject it

Klein 14 (Naomi Klein is a Canadian author, award-wining freelance journalist, activist, and environmental researcher, January 1st 2014,Penguin House, “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate,” [https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Skb-ch\_k7psDm90Q/Naomi%20Klein%20-%20This%20Changes%20Everything\_djvu.txt, accessed 7-13-19)](https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Skb-ch_k7psDm90Q/Naomi%20Klein%20-%20This%20Changes%20Everything_djvu.txt))/sjp

At the end of the 1980s, after a decade of Margaret Thatcher at the helm in the U.K. and Ronald Reagan in the United States, and with communism collapsing, these ideological warriors were ready to declare victory: history was officially over and there was, in Thatcher's often repeated words, "no alternative" to their market fundamentalism. Filled with confidence, the next task was to systematically lock in the corporate liberation project in every country that had previously held out, which was usually best accomplished in the midst of political turmoil and large- scale economic crises, and further entrenched through free trade agreements and membership in the World Trade Organization. It had all been going so well. The project had even managed to survive, more or less, the 2008 financial collapse directly caused by a banking sector that had been liberated of so much burdensome regulation and oversight. But to those gathered here at the Heartland conference, climate change is a threat of a different sort. It isn't about the political preferences of Republicans versus Democrats; it's about the physical boundaries of the atmosphere and ocean. If the dire projections coming out of the IPCC are left unchallenged, and business as usual is indeed driving us straight toward civilization-threatening tipping points, then the implications are obvious: the ideological crusade incubated in think tanks like Heartland, Cato, and Heritage will have to come to a screeching halt. Nor have the various attempts to soft-pedal climate action as compatible with market logic (carbon trading, carbon offsets, monetizing nature's "services") fooled these true believers one bit. They know very well that ours is a global economy created by, and fully reliant upon, the burning of fossil fuels and that a dependency that foundational cannot be changed with a few gentle market mechanisms. It requires heavy-duty interventions: sweeping bans on polluting activities, deep subsidies for green alternatives, pricey penalties for violations, new taxes, new public works programs, reversals of privatizations — the list of ideological outrages goes on and on. Everything, in short, that these think tanks — which have always been public proxies for far more powerful corporate interests — have been busily attacking for decades.

### A2 Sustainable – General

#### Capitalism is unsustainable and will collapse

**Hutton 18** (Will Hutton writes for the Observer, is principal of Hertford College, Oxford, and chair of the Big Innovation Centre. “Ten years on, capitalism might not survive the shock of another Lehman” 9/9/18.<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/09/ten-years-after-2008-crisis-another-financial-crash>) ME.

Ten years ago this weekend, frantic efforts were being made to save one of the biggest banks in the world. When chancellor Alistair Darling overruled Barclays’ supreme stupidity in considering the takeover of the stricken Lehman Brothers investment bank – the extent and complexity of its debts would have brought down both it and probably the British banking system – the die was cast. Lehman collapsed and the shockwaves are still felt to this day. Suddenly, the proud buccaneers of high finance were exposed as “sapient nincompoops”, as the great economic commentator Walter Bagehot described the senior executives of Overend, Gurney & Co in the wake of its collapse 150 years earlier. All the assumptions made by a generation of free-market economists, conservative politicians and the financial establishment were shown to be ideological tosh propagated by today’s nincompoops**. Yes, markets could and did make vast, earth-shaking mistakes. Yes, shareholders were so disengaged from the companies in which they invested they, in effect, allowed ownerless banks to be run to create gargantuan, dynastic fortunes for their managers, assuming risks on a scale they did not themselves understand. Yes, the financial system had become a complex interrelated network no stronger than its weakest link – which was very weak. The bill for all these mistakes would be picked up by wider society, with perpetrators suffering nothing – nationalising losses and privatising gain. The whole effect was to transmute capitalism into a system of value extraction rather than value creation, with knock-on effects that depressed wages and contractualised work into short-term and zero-hour contracts. The financial system, based in London and New York, had become damnable – the nightmare of our times**. The cumulative costs of this have become so large they can scarcely be comprehended. The total cost across the west of recapitalising bust banks, offering guarantees and making good disappeared liquidity is estimated at $14tn. The recession that followed was the deepest since the 1930s, with the slowest subsequent recovery. Worse, conservative politicians – most successfully in Britain – succeeded in pinning the blame not on the architects and operators of modern finance but on the excesses of the state, the rationale for “austerity”. High government spending, alleged chancellor George Osborne and prime minister David Cameron, had caused the government budget deficit to balloon. Wrong. Rather, the deficit was caused by collapsing tax revenues during a monumental recession. The same nincompoopery that had created modern finance now proclaimed that the stock of public debt – despite it being proportionally higher for most of the previous three centuries and at times of higher interest rates – represented an existential threat. In the UK, public spending per head on services will have fallen by a quarter by 2020 as a result of the consequent spending cuts – tax increases could not be countenanced – with what remains of Britain’s social contract ripped apart. The distress and disaffection helped to fuel the margin that won the referendum for Leave. As profound was the rupturing of the Faustian bargain between finance and society that had defined the 30 years up to 2008. **The bankers made their fortunes, but wider society was offered boundless credit and booming property prices. Companies did not have to create value through innovation, investment and export; instead, they could ride the credit boom. The result: an overblown, featherbedded service sector delivering ungrounded productivity growth. Post 2008, the wounded system has been unable to deliver at the same pace, although it tries. The illusory productivity has stagnated; and trust in value-extracting business and capitalism, which continues to displace risk on to the shoulders of ordinary people, has fallen to new lows. Small wonder that Jeremy Corbyn did so well in the 2017 general election. Too little has been learned; too little has changed. Even the limited reforms set in train since 2010 have not been fully implemented. Worse, the essential amoral bargain remains in place. Finance can do more or less what it likes, with pay beyond the dreams of avarice for what Lord Adair Turner, former chair of the Financial Services Authority, calls activity that is no better than a system of wealth transference. It is zero-sum: nothing worthwhile is taking place. Yet, if it collapses, be sure that governments will be asked to step in again.** Finance can do more or less as it likes, but if it collapses, be sure that governments will be asked to step in again The risks are downplayed. Surely it could not happen again when regulators are more alert and bankers have been required to provide more of their own capital as a cushion against mistakes? Yet just a cursory glance at the markets shows how febrile they are, how exposed to violent movements, how illusory is their much-vaunted liquidity – and how rich the pickings remain for those prepared to take the risks. Note, also, how shaky are the foundations of the new wave of financial products offering “risk diversification”, notably exchange trading funds (ETF). We live in a world in which the price of US Treasury bonds – a market of multi-trillion dollars – can move 10% in 10 minutes. What was bewildering in 2008 was how, as a result of computerised algorithmic buy and sell instructions, everybody had diversified in the same way – so everybody became simultaneous buyers and sellers. That is even more acute today. All that is required is for, say, Turkey or Italy to default on their debts, an ETF to become distressed, or a sequence of Chinese banks to fail (all too imaginable) and the impact would radiate across the network as it did in 2008. Banks carry far too little capital to insulate themselves from the shocks – and governments, again, would have to step in. **Capitalism as it is could not survive**. **Trump’s America would not collaborate in underwriting a global bailout as the US did in 2008. The trend towards deglobalisation and trade protection would accelerate. Brexit Britain, outside the EU and with a huge financial sector, would be devastated. We must urgently minimise risk and reshape our economy. If not, today’s debates and preoccupations will, in the future, be viewed as incredible**.

#### Capitalisim Is Unsustainable-Russia and Nauru Prove

Erald Kolasi, 6-1-2019, A research associate at the the Income and Benefits Policy Center at the Urban Institute. BA in physics and history from the University of Virginia and earned his MS and PhD from George Mason University, both in physics."Monthly Review," Monthly Review,<https://monthlyreview.org/2019/06/01/energy-economic-growth-and-ecological-crisis/> JI

To chip away at this elaborate fantasy, it helps to begin with some basic physics. The most fundamental limits to substitution come from thermodynamics, the branch of physics that studies quantities like heat, work, and energy. Thermodynamic limits impose constraints on the maximum efficiency of energy flows through technological systems. Car engines, power plants, and photovoltaic cells are all limited in their capacities to convert one type of energy into another. Technological progress cannot overcome these limits; no car engine can ever be more efficient than an engine running on the Carnot cycle.20 In an earlier article for this magazine, I defined the aggregate efficiency of an economic system as the fraction of all primary energy consumption that produces mechanical work and electricity.21 I argued that aggregate efficiencies are highly inertial over time because improving them substantially requires enormous investments that would disrupt the reigning economic order. Once a society has settled into a particular energy structure, changing it much further becomes a daunting task because of elite classes and groups that rely heavily on that structure for their wealth and influence. We can look to the recent experience of Germany for a prominent case study. In 2000, the German government launched its ambitious Energiewende, a comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by shifting energy production towards renewable sources, such as wind and solar.22 For a time, the program made some notable achievements. Compared to 1990, greenhouse gas emissions had declined 28 percent by 2017. That same year, renewables reached a 13 percent share of primary energy consumption. Although these numbers are impressive, progress has recently come to a standstill. It has become increasingly clear that Germany will not reach the climate targets that it set for 2020. And once we dig into the numbers a bit deeper, even those that look impressive come with huge caveats. For example, the large reduction of carbon emissions since 1990 can be largely attributed to the collapse of heavy industry in East Germany after reunification. Over the past eight years, greenhouse gas emissions from Germany have hardly changed. The variabilities associated with wind and solar power have opened up problems related to electricity storage. Prices fluctuate dramatically depending on weather conditions. To compensate for these and other issues, Germany began sabotaging its energy program by constructing a series of new coal power plants when the coal industry pressured Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government to relax its policies. The German example offers an important lesson: the necessary substitution of fossil fuels with renewables will never come fast enough under the market logic of capitalism. Another major limit to substitution comes from the ecological instabilities associated with excessive levels of economic growth. These instabilities can combine to pump and amplify existing natural phenomena. The amplifier effect works as follows. Economies absorb energy from the natural world and then exploit that energy for cycles of production and consumption. For highly energy-intensive economies, these cycles necessarily yield extensive levels of waste and dissipation, or energy losses that are dumped back out to the environment. These energy losses are not “useless” from the standpoint of physics or ecology. Under the right circumstances, they can power the formation of other natural dynamical systems, including everything from viruses and bacteria to wildfires and hurricanes.24 These highly chaotic effects associated with energy-intensive economies are largely ignored and dismissed by neoclassical theory, even though they have often played a central role in the evolution of human history.25 As a highly dissipative system, capitalism regularly produces very powerful amplifier effects. Collectively, these amplifiers are now creating what Marx called a “metabolic rift” between nature and society, which means that the ecological basis of civilization is steadily eroding under profit-seeking and energy-intensive development that does not care about replacing what it extracts. The natural world has major tipping points that we should not cross, but indefinite economic growth through substitution virtually guarantees that some of those critical thresholds will be breached, threatening the broader ecosphere that supports human civilization. Consider another problem. Substitution can occur quite frequently on small and restricted scales of economic activity. A pizza store can always substitute certain ingredients for others. A homeowner can substitute heating fuel for insulation. A company can replace older light bulbs for more efficient lighting in its offices. And even some countries can substitute various forms of wealth for others, at least temporarily. The Pacific island nation of Nauru provides a classic example that highlights the central themes of the debate. In the twentieth century, Nauru possessed vast deposits of phosphate, which is highly prized as an agricultural fertilizer. These deposits were extensively mined, depleted, and then traded in global markets, allowing Nauru to reach a sky-high standard of living by 1990.28 Nauru converted a portion of its earnings from the phosphate trade into a public trust fund, which invested in manufactured capital through financial markets. However, its impressive standard of living collapsed sharply after the phosphate vanished, along with most of the money in the trust fund. Nauru offers a cautionary tale for the world as a whole. If global civilization runs out of natural resources, we cannot replace them by investing in commodities through financial markets. People cannot eat money. Substitution in the long run may be possible at the microlevel of economic activity, but long-term macrolevel substitution is downright wishful thinking.

### A2 Sustainable – Decoupling

#### Their evidence conflates relative decoupling with absolute which is impossible---EROI decreases, emission outsourcing, no global spill-over, and rebound effects

**Ferguson 19**—Lecturer in Politics and Policy at Deakin University, his research focuses on the political barriers to moving toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable global economy, published articles in peer reviewed journals on environmental politics and green economics [Peter, 2019, *Post-growth Politics A Critical Theoretical and Policy Framework for Decarbonisation*, Chapter 2: The Problem with Economic Growth, pgs 19-21, Springer] AMarb

The claim that economic growth and long-term ecological sustainability can be compatible is generally presented in one of four ways. The first is to argue that growth can be effectively ‘decoupled’ from environmental damage. Decoupling aims to reconfigure production processes to make them more ecologically ‘efficient’, so that economic output becomes progressively less dependent upon material throughput. In this context, it is **critical to distinguish** between **relative** and **absolute decoupling**. Relative decoupling refers to a reduction in the biophysical throughput of each unit of production, so that resource use declines relative to GDP. In this situation, environmental externalities still increase but at a slower rate than overall GDP growth. There is some evidence to support the relative decoupling hypothesis. For example, the amount of energy required to produce each unit of global economic output has fallen gradually over the past 50 years, so that worldwide energy intensity is now 33% lower than it was in 1970. The problem is, however, that **total energy use has increased exponentially** as the economy has grown. For instance, whilst the carbon intensity of the global economy declined from one kilogram of carbon dioxide per US dollar of production in 1980 to 770 grams in 2006, total global carbon emissions actually increased over the same period by 80% (Jackson 2009a). At the same time, some widely used forms of energy are actually becoming **increasingly less efficient**. The most significant of these is **oil**, as the **costs of extracting remaining reserves** in terms of both **financial and energy expenditure** are **set to grow exponentially** over coming decades. This is because most of the easily accessible and most bountiful oil fields have already been exploited, as demonstrated by the Energy Returned on Energy Invested **(EROEI) index**. In 1930, the EROEI for oil produced in the US was about from 100 to 1. This had declined to 30 to 1 by 1970 and to 12 to 1 in 2005. The ratios for other fossil fuels such as **coal** and **gas** are also in **decline** (Heinberg 2011). Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has estimated that **world oil production peaked during 2006** (International Energy Agency 2011),4 although the recent development of unconventional oil fields such as the Alberta tar sands appears to be postponing the decline in production (Lukacs 2014). What is needed is **absolute decoupling**, where total material throughput is reduced irrespective of the rate of growth. Evidence of this form of decoupling, however, is rather **scant**. In a very small number of countries, there does appear to have been something of a stabilisation of resource throughput since the late 1980s. However, this appears to have been achieved largely by moving production offshore and thus effectively outsourcing environmental externalities, usually to the Global South (Jackson 2009a).5 In the UK, for example a reported 6% reduction in domestic **g**reen**h**ouse **g**a**s** emissions between 1990 and 2004 actually equates to an **11% increase in emissions** when the **emissions embodied in imports** are taken into account (Jackson 2009a). What matters, therefore, is not evidence of absolute decoupling at the national level, but its **existence at a global scale**. Unfortunately, as the **80-fold increase in global carbon emissions** since 1980 cited above indicates, this has not happened. Of course, the current absence of absolute decoupling does not provide irrefutable proof of the impossibility of any future structural shift in this direction (Hepburn and Bowen 2013). Indeed, many technologies, such as the microchip and the photovoltaic cell, have achieved exponential increases in efficiency accompanied by dramatic reductions in costs. Nonetheless, in a growing economy absolute decoupling is likely to **remain elusive** because **gains in resource efficiency** are almost always **absorbed** by **increases in resource consumption** (Herring 2006). Some analysts claim that this ‘**rebound effect**’ can negate as much as 60–**100% of energy savings** (Saunders 2010).6 For example, the efficiency of electricity usage in the United States increased by 57.3% during the twentieth century at the same time that total annual electricity consumption increased by 630% (Victor 2008). Some analysts suggest that the rebound effect can be negated without necessarily impeding growth by properly pricing environmental externalities (Hepburn and Bowen 2013). This appears to have happened in California, where over the past 30 years, rigorous energy efficiency measures and demand management have prevented per capita electricity consumption from increasing. Over the same period, in the rest of the United States, per capita electricity consumption has increased on average by 1.4% per year in the absence of concerted national energy efficiency measures (Afsah et al. 2012).

### A2 Sustainable – Epistemology

#### All their sustainability claims are epistemologically suspect and should be rejected on face

**Ahmed 17**—Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Research and Development [Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, 2017, *Failing States, Collapsing Systems BioPhysical Triggers of Political Violence*, Introduction, pg 4, Springer Briefs in Energy, Accessed through the Wake Forest Library] AMarb

Part of this study, then, identifies how conventional governmental, industry and media narratives of these crises for the most part **fail** to accurately understand them, not just due to a lack of a holistic-systemic frameworks for examining these crises as interdependent—but due to a fundamental **epistemological failure** that has allowed **mythological** ‘theories’ of human progress in the form of neoclassical and neoliberal economics to become **entrenched** as the **dominant cognitive paradigm**. The most powerful **hegemonic component** of this **ideological capture** of human collective cognition occurs through the global institutions associated with the mainstream media. The principal problem here is a highly compromised ownership and editorial structure that ties media outlets to the very prevailing structures of fossil fuel-centric power complicit in global crisis acceleration. The preponderance of **fossil fuel-centric interests** in conventional media ownership has led to consistently **inaccurate reporting** on energy issues, and their relationships with economic, food and climate crises, as well as specific conflicts. Yet to some extent, and compounding the insular ideological approach of powerful government, industry and media institutions, there has been a similar failure from amongst experts in different fields of these crises, who have been unable to develop theoretical, conceptual and empirical frameworks to view their specialized data in its inherent interconnections with data from other fields. In other words, a lack of generalized systems training in our schools. Due to this problem, we are beginning to grasp only recently the extent to which geopolitical ruptures that overwhelm of the news of the day have been exacerbated by a convergence of crises studied largely separately in these disparate fields. There is, therefore, little understanding of how energy and resource depletion tangibly impact the political economies of different societies, and how these processes interact with the local impacts of global processes like climate change. This has led to a **knowledge deficit**—specifically, a whole systems knowledge deficit comprising a **paucity of reliable**, **actionable knowledge** in the mainstream, exacerbating a sense of public apathy and confusion, and cementing a policymaking impasse among political leaders who remain subject to a fatal combination of intensive fossil fuel lobbying and media misinformation.

#### You should be skeptical of their sustainability claims---it’s based off manipulated consciousness

**Sempere 17** – Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona, specialized in environmental sociology. He has conducted research and published on human needs and wants, the role of experts in environmental social movements and the social effects of ecological crisis [Joaquim, 2017, *Transitioning to a Post-Carbon Society Degrowth, Austerity and Wellbeing*, Chapter 2: Uncertainties, Inertia and Cognitive and Psychosocial Obstacles to a Smooth Transition, pgs 39-40, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-95176-5] AMarb

As if the false perceptions mentioned above were not enough, there are groups of society with private interests whose future is bound to the **capitalist socio-economic model**, which is expansive by nature and linked to **economic growth**. These groups do not want people to be aware of the limits of the planet, preferring instead for them to continue to cherish the **illusion of indefinite growth** and thus support their socio-economic model, a model that provides them with abundance and which, it must also be noted, only a quarter or **fifth of humanity** have been able to enjoy. These **privileged groups** seek to prolong a system of living, production and consumption that gives them **immense power**, beyond the wildest dreams of the tyrants of days gone by. Energy, chemical, pharmaceutical, mechanical, electronics, transport and food companies, alongside many others, have linked their existence to the current social order and use immoral methods to prolong it as long as they can. They use a wide range of techniques to **manipulate** the market and consciousness, most notably by lobbying the elected representatives of the people in parliaments and other public institutions, inciting corruption and controlling the media by paying mercenary journalists to spread untruths or half-truths. Thus, they have been able to postpone **consciousness of climate change** (“deniers” being a case in point) and “peak oil”. Furthermore, they have placed obstacles not only in the way of the dissemination of scientific achievements but also in the way of scientific research that has the potential to curtail the harmful industrial exploitation of certain discoveries (a case in point being research into the effects of genetically modified plants on the human body exemplified by the Séralini affair). The enormous forces exercised on politics by the plutocracy help **delay our awareness** of the need for major changes.

### A2 Sustainable – Innovation

#### Growth breeds systemic complexity which reduces marginal returns and restricts innovation

**Korowicz ’11** David Korowicz, physicist & human-systems ecologist at Feasta & independent consultant, “On the cusp of collapse: complexity, energy, and the globalised economy,” Fleeing Vesuvius, 10/8/2011, http://fleeingvesuvius.org/2011/10/08/on-the-cusp-of-collapse-complexity-energy-and-the-globalised-economy/

Complexity can be measured in several ways — as the number of connections between people and institutions, the intensity of hierarchical networks, the number of distinct products produced and the extent of the supply-chain networks required to produce them, the number of specialised occupations, the amount of effort required to manage systems, the amount of information available and the energy flows required to maintain them. By all these measures, economic growth has been associated with increasing complexity. [4] As a species, we had to become problem solvers to meet our basic needs, deal with status anxiety and respond to the new challenges presented by a dynamic environment. The problem to be solved could be simple such as getting a bus or buying bread; or it could be complex, such as developing an economy’s energy infrastructure. We tend to exploit the easiest and least costly solutions first. We pick the lowest hanging fruit or the easiest extractable oil first. As problems are solved new ones tend to require more effort and complex solutions. A solution is framed within a network of constraints. One of the system constraints is set by the operational fabric, comprising the given conditions at any time and place which support system wide functionality. For modern developed economies this includes functioning markets, financing, monetary stability, operational supply-chains, transport, digital infrastructure, command and control, health services, research and development infrastructure, institutions of trust and socio-political stability. It is what we casually assume does and will exist, and which provides the structural foundation for any project we wish to develop. Our solutions are also limited by knowledge and culture, and by the available energetic, material, and economic resources available to us. The formation of solutions is also shaped by the interactions with the myriad other interacting agents such as people, businesses and institutions. These add to the dynamic complexity of the environment in which the solution is formed, and thus the growing complexity is likely to be reinforced as elements co-evolve together. As a result, the process of economic growth and complexity has been self-reinforcing. The growth in the size of the networks of exchange, the operational fabric and economic efficiencies all provided a basis for further growth. Growing complexity provided the foundation for developing even more complex integration. In aggregate, as the operational fabric evolves in complexity it provides the basis to build more complex solutions. The net benefits of increasing complexity are subject to declining marginal returns — in other words, the benefit of rising complexity is eventually outweighed by its cost. A major cost is environmental destruction and resource depletion. There is also the cost of complexity itself. We can see this in the costs of managing more complex systems, and the increasing cost of the research and development process. [5] When increased complexity begins to have a net cost, then responding to new problems arising by further increasing complexity may be no longer viable. An economy becomes locked into established processes and infrastructures, but can no longer respond to shocks or adapt to change. For the historian Joseph Tainter, this is the context in which earlier civilisations have collapsed. [6]

### A2 Sustainable – Progress

#### Social and economic inequality is only getting worse

**Chen 12-29-16**

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Donald Trump boasted that his election reflected the “voice of the people,” but it was mostly the voice of fear. And while ingrained racism and misogyny drove much of Trump’s support, his popularity reflected a massive sense of loss: real economic loss, perceived cultural loss, and anticipatory loss for their children’s generation. Just how “real” this decline actually has been, however, depends on where you stand, and where you’re falling from. A recent study of stratification and eroding quality of life across generations, between races, and between socioeconomic classes sheds light on how America’s so-called “middle class” perceives itself. Social-inequality trends over the past half century indicate that class divisions are growing more rigid, most are getting worse off, and those at the bottom are falling further, faster by the day. It’s the momentum of change that is causing much of the pain and anxiety, as many self-identified “middle-class Americans” are realizing the truth only now: They were never as well-off as they thought they were. “Overall, if you look back 30 years, most of the distribution [of wealth] is lower than where it was in the ’80s. So…the typical American family today has less wealth than the typical American family in the ’80s,” says University of Michigan sociologist Fabian Pfeffer, who co-published a new research collection on trends in inequality. And yet, Pfeffer observes, higher on the economic hierarchy, affluent households experienced “the mirror image,” accruing riches and power at others’ expense. For households losing wealth, Pfeffer found that social insecurity hurts from many different angles: not just in the evaporation of housing and retirement wealth but also through declining health, diminished prospects for their kids, and ensuing despair and anger. “One of the things wealth gives you is safety and security,” Pfeffer says, but when insecurity becomes chronic “as labor markets become more insecure…and as public safety nets become more porous…that role of private safety nets, such as in the form of wealth, may become even more pronounced.” Take the case of a working-class, jobless white youth in a marginal postindustrial suburb. He hovers in the same social status as his blue-collar parents, but his life is markedly harder than theirs were. He is priced out of higher education in a community with few living-wage jobs and has virtually none of the health or retirement benefits his parents attained through their now-vanished industrial vocations. But white anxiety about middle-class precarity is only part of the picture because the middle-class was always built on **structural inequality and social exclusion**. The anxiety Trump manipulated so deftly on the campaign trail expresses real agony that working people are feeling. Yet the people who aren’t represented in Trump’s support base are in many ways suffering the most from long-term economic polarization. Compared to whites, the downward trajectory has been steeper in communities of color. A typical low-income black kid has even dimmer college prospects, having been deprived of early education and decent housing and health care from birth. She grows up with greater exposure to traumas like mass incarceration or foreclosure. Racial discrimination limits her career opportunities and she moves from teenage poverty into inescapable, lifelong debt after getting hit by predatory lenders. While her parents were also poor, they benefited from public welfare and education programs, and retired with modest savings instead of an underwater mortgage. Towering high above both these young people is the affluent white youth who inherits her parents’ educational advantages, graduates debt-free, and has the social capital that accrues over her formative years spent in a privileged community network. Her segment of society is pulling away from both low-income black and white communities. Pfeffer’s analysis shows that “the probability of becoming part of the wealthiest 20 percent of Americans is seven times greater if your parents were also in the top 20 percent [of income earners] instead of the bottom.” And **social mobility could decline further in the coming years**. This is in part perhaps why Trump was able to win votes with his vision of restoring “greatness,” but **such a restoration is a return to a fundamentally unfair social structure built on a zero-sum economy that has been cratering on itself for decades**. Such political polarization can poison democracy. As Princeton economist Angus Deaton contended, since economic elites are inclined to push policies that impoverish public social infrastructure and distribute wealth upward on the income scale (and into their pockets), the political system becomes increasingly undemocratic—and plutocracy becomes even more entrenched. The 50-year trajectory of class polarization isn’t likely to end anytime soon. A political solution probably isn’t forthcoming under Trump’s impending reign of chaos. But for the rising generation, there may be some promise in the debate around rebuilding “infrastructure.” Rather than roads and bridges, however, a more radical approach would develop our social infrastructure. An emphasis on social programs that would directly benefit people’s lives could be a redistributive, comprehensive corrective for the wealth gap, and would carry real populist appeal. “The one public infrastructure that I see as the most in need of public investment is education,” Pfeffer says, “and that is also because the private investment [has grown] more unequal, partly thanks to this growth in the wealth gap.” In coming years, there will be a chance for a grassroots movement to emerge and press for a stronger public-education system as an intervention against further decline in the next generation—it could stop kids today from falling through the gaps that ensnared their parents. Trump found support among people who supposedly lacked formal education. Yet they keenly understood how it felt to be cheated by the system. The blame for middle-class decline, however, which should be aimed at the top, was tragically misdirected at others on the bottom, whom Trump and right-wing media inaccurately portrayed as having an unfair advantage. Overall, a huge chunk of the country is sliding down; some have just been slipping a little faster in recent years. The more crowded it gets on the bottom rung, the harder it is to see those climbing at the top and leaving the rest of us behind.

### A2 Sustainable – Resources

#### They can delay resource constraints, but it won’t offset environmental impacts

**Ferguson 19**—Lecturer in Politics and Policy at Deakin University, his research focuses on the political barriers to moving toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable global economy, published articles in peer reviewed journals on environmental politics and green economics [Peter, 2019, *Post-growth Politics A Critical Theoretical and Policy Framework for Decarbonisation*, Chapter 2: The Problem with Economic Growth, pgs 21-2, Springer] AMarb

A second argument for the compatibility of growth and environmental protection is that any exhausted finite resource can be readily substituted with another. For instance, advocates of **infinite substitutability** argue that conventional oil can be replaced with shale oil or biofuel and natural fibres with synthetics. All that is required is access to sufficient amounts of capital and energy to mine and process these resources (Goeller and Weinberg 1978). However, there are at least two fundamental problems with this argument. First, energy, as noted above, is a **physical parameter** and, therefore, **cannot be created out of thin air**. **Energy stocks are thus just as finite as other resources**. This applies both to **fossil** and **mineral** resources and to **solar resources**, because whilst the former are physically finite, the latter are limited by the amount of solar radiation that can be captured at the Earth’s surface. The **capacity to capture energy flows** is also a **limiting factor** for other forms of renewable energy such as biofuels, wind, wave and geothermal resources. The other problem is that even where this energy is available, exploiting it, especially in the form of fossil fuels or radioactive ores, can create serious **climatic and ecosystemic side effects** that the **Earth cannot sustain above certain thresholds** (Bardi 2011). So, although the substitution of resources is possible up to a point, it is **not a long-term solution** to the problem of resource scarcity.

### A2 Tech

#### Tech creates a cyclical trap that causes endless resource depletion

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The fourth standard argument for why economic growth need not generate environmental degradation is that technological innovations will always solve environmental problems. However, improvements in technological efficiency tend to yield **increasingly marginal benefits**. The **historical development** of a range of technologies exhibited an **initial period of intense improvement** that **gradually subsided** as these technologies were refined. A prime example of this is the motorcar, which more or less achieved its modern form during the 1920s. Whilst it has become much faster, safer and more comfortable over the ensuing decades, it has **not on average become more fuel efficient**, and has actually become **more resource intensive** in its manufacture (Bardi 2011). Indeed, **patterns of declining improvements in efficiency** in a **number of specific sectors** can in many respects be **accurately generalised** to broader trendsin technological development (Ayres 2001). As a result, the capacity of technological innovation to decouple economic growth from environmental damage is **steadily diminishing**. Claims to the contrary, such as those made by Ernst von Weizsäcker et al. (1997), who hold that in the coming decades the amount of wealth extracted from one unit of natural resources is likely to quadruple rely on a **completely unfounded** degree of **technological optimism** (see also Basiago 1994; Huesemann 2003). Moreover, as demonstrated above, unless these improvements in resource efficiency are accompanied by a **move to a steady-state economy**, absolute **resource use will continue to grow**.

### A2 Transition Wars

#### Appeals to fear of collapse are epistemologically constrictive and legitimize the status quo

**Žižek ’97** (Slavoj Žižek, Senior Researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana and Codirector of the Center for Humanities at Birkbeck College, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," New Left Review, No. 224, 1997, pp.25-27)

Today, financial crisis is a permanent state of things the reference to which legitimizes the demands to cut social spending, health care, support of culture and scientific research, in short, the dismantling of the welfare state. Is, however, this permanent crisis really an  objective feature of our socio-economic life? Is it not rather one of the effects of the shift of balance in the ‘class struggle’ towards Capital, resulting from the growing role of new technologies as well as from the direct internationalization of Capital and the co-  dependent diminished role of the Nation-State which was further able to impose certain minimal requirements and limitations to exploitation? In other words, the crisis is an ‘objective fact’ if and only if one accepts in advance as an unquestionable premise the  inherent logic of Capital—as more and more left-wing or liberal parties have done. We are thus witnessing the uncanny spectacle of social-democratic parties which came to power with the between-the-lines message to Capital ‘we will do the necessary job for you in an even more efficient and painless way than the conservatives’. The problem, of course, is that, in today’s global socio-political circumstances, it is practically impossible effectively to call into question the logic of Capital: even a modest social-democratic  attempt to redistribute wealth beyond the limit acceptable to the Capital ‘effectively’ leads to economic crisis, inflation, a fall in revenues and so on. Nevertheless, one should always bear in mind how the connection between ‘cause’ (rising social expenditure) and  ‘effect’ (economic crisis) is not a direct objective causal one: it is always-already embedded in a situation of social antagonism and struggle. The fact that, if one does not obey the limits set by Capital, a crisis ‘really follows’, in no way ‘proves’ that the necessity of these limits is an objective necessity of economic life. It should rather be conceived as a proof of the privileged position Capital holds in the economic and political struggle, as in the situation where a stronger partner threatens that if you do X, you will be punished by Y, and then, upon your doing X, Y effectively ensues.

#### Autonomous communities band together in resistance to capital – that prevents capitalist victory

**Kovel ‘2** (Joel Kovel, Professor of Social Studies at Bard College, 2002, The Enemy of Nature, p. 236-238)

If such events as O’Connor envisions were to come to pass, they would not yet be ecosocialism, but they would form a kind of self-generative and non-linear dialectic that can rapidly accelerate the motion toward ecosocialism. After all, it is the ‘tens of thousands of local and regional experiments and practices’ who would have had to join with communities of activation to make this possible, and whose power would be accordingly magnified by it. And being magnified, the Zapatistas, and the Gaviotistas, and the Indymedia centres that connect them, and the politicized collectives of farmers from around the world, and the teacher’s associations, and the ecologically radicalized fractions of the labour movement, and the little Bruderhof-like manufacturing collectives making ecologically sane products with the aid of local credit unions, and all the ten thousand locally originating but universally striving community formations — all would come together in solidarity to make such an event, and, in its aftermath, to press for further transformation. There is no point in predicting a scenario according to which this will expand, beyond the condition that it occur in the context of capital’s incapability of regulating the ecological crisis. At some time within this span, the communities arising from the process may be imagined to grow to a point of relative autonomy such that they can begin providing material support for activists, with bases of operation and — in the case of those considerable number of communities producing food, wool, hemp, solar technology and so on — the actual means of subsistence for people engaged in revolutionary struggle. It must also be presumed — a large but feasible order that these people will have developed the spiritual and psychological strength enabling them to go forward. For there should be no mistake: the struggle for ecosocialism is no technical or voluntaristic process, but a radical transforming of self as well as world to link up in ever-widening and deepening solidarity Here is where post-patriarchal values will come forward, radicalizing human being itself for the struggle. Now the movement of events is self-sustaining, rapid and dramatic. Communities of place and of praxis increasingly coalesce to form miniature societies, and these enter into relations with others both inside and outside the national boundary. Capital may be expected to respond with heightened efforts at repression. A heroic phase begins, with much sacrifice. The awesome might of the capital system now encounters a set of factors it has never dealt with before:  ∙ The forces against it are both numerous and dispersed. ∙ They operate with changed needs, and on the basis of a kind of production capable of sustaining itself with small inputs and labour-intensive technologies; and they have secure bases and ‘safe houses’ in the intentional communities of resistance, now extending across national boundaries. ∙ Their many allies in the interstices of the mainstream society are capable of forming support groups and ‘underground railroads’. ∙ As with all successful forms of revolutionary protest, the oppositional forces are capable of shutting down normal production through strikes, boycotts, and mass actions. ∙ The forces of capital have lost confidence, and are further undermined by support for the revolution within the alternative parties and their various niches in the state. This extends to armies and police. When the first of these lays down their arms and joins the revolution, the turning point is reached. The behaviour of the revolutionaries is spiritually superior, and the examples they set are given credibility and persuasiveness by the brute facts of the crisis and the gathering realization that what is at stake here is not so much the redistribution of wealth as the sustenance of life itself. Thus it could be that in an increasingly hectic period, millions of people take to the streets, and join together in global solidarity — with each other, with the communities of resistance, and with their comrades in other nations — bringing normal social activity to a halt, petitioning the state and refusing to take ‘no’ for an answer, and driving capital into ever smaller pens. With defections mounting and the irreducible fact all around that the people demand a new beginning in order to save the planetary ecology, the state apparatus passes into new hands, the expropriators are expropriated, and the 500-year regime of capital falls.

### A2 Venezuela

#### Venezuela is a case of disaster capitalism: their discourse around it justifies the logic of interventionaism

**López 19** (Reinaldo Antonio Iturriza López, (Puerto Ordaz, Bolívar, Venezuela, November 30, 1973), is a Venezuelan politician, sociologist and writer. He was the Minister of Popular Power for Culture of Venezuela from September 2014 to January 2016. “Venezuela and Disaster Capitalism” 2/5/19.<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4232-venezuela-and-disaster-capitalism>) ME.

On Monday, January 28, the Department of the Treasury of the United States announced it was placing a “block” on all of Petróleos de Venezuela’s (PDVSA) assets under US jurisdiction, prohibiting its citizens from engaging in any type of transaction with the Venezuelan state-owned oil company.[1] Secretary Steve Mnuchin added that “if the people of Venezuela want to continue to sell us oil”, we will only accept it on the condition that our money goes to “blocked accounts”, which would later be made available for the “transition government”.[2] According to National Security Advisor John Bolton, the sanctions imposed on PDVSA would provoke a loss of some 11 billion dollars in exports for 2019, and a freeze on 7 billion dollars in assets. On January 24th, Bolton declared on FOX Business, “It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela”. Just three minutes before effectively confessing the true intentions of US imperialism, Bolton asserted that Chávez and Maduro had “impoverished Venezuela. We now have between three and four million refugees who have fled the country, something unprecedented in the history of the Western Hemisphere. Maduro and Hugo Chávez before him systematically looted the oil resources of the country. There is no capital investment, and income is declining. Society is literally collapsing in Venezuela”. These factors, Bolton continued, provide the justification for the Trump Administration’s recognition of Juan Guaidó as “Interim President”.[3] **A few hours after sanctions were publicly announced, on January 29, the Venezuelan National Assembly approved an “Agreement for the Promotion of a National Rescue Plan”, which upheld that Venezuela was experiencing a “social and economic collapse” that had produced a “humanitarian emergency”, consequence of the policies of the “regime of Nicolás Maduro”, which has installed a “totalitarian economic and political model for domination and social control”, otherwise known as “21st century socialism”.[4] Behold, a concise summary of the way in which foreign and local agents put in practice what Naomi Klein defined as “disaster capitalism” in her formidable Shock Doctrine– a useful framework for understanding what is happening in Venezuela, at a time when forces are conspiring to severely – if possible, irreparably – affect our ability to interpret our own present. With “disaster capitalism”, Klein refers to “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities”.[**5] It took place first in Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship, but also in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina; in Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami; in Iraq after the US invasion of 2003; in the US after the attacks of September 11, 2001; in China after Tiananmen; in 1993 under Yeltsin’s Russia, and so on. In each case, Klein explains, the attacks were led by fanatical neoliberals who gave no quarter in their application of austerity policies. **This is exactly what is taking place in Venezuela, compounded by the fact that the shock is largely induced by the local Venezuelan elite acting in lockstep with US imperialism, each drawing on the support of their respective social base. Fundamentally composed of middle and upper classes, the class component of the shock recalls the history of Salvador Allende’s government. In both cases, democratic governments with a socialist orientation, elected by popular vote, are systematically put under siege, their respective economies asphyxiated in order to create the conditions for a violent solution that would “neutralize” the popular classes inclined to support revolutionary change**. In a recent declaration by Alfonso Guerra, the Spanish ex-president claimed that Nicolás Maduro was comparable to the Pinochet government – an assertion all the more obscene for the reasons outlined above. According to Guerra, “Venezuela is suffering under a dictatorship that, on top of everything else, is incompetent; dictatorships often undermine liberty, but at least they act efficiently in the economic sphere”. He then added: “There is a difference between the horrible Pinochet dictatorship and that of Maduro: in the first, the economy did not collapse, and in the second it did”.[6] The current “disaster” of the Venezuelan economy is not the work of “21st century socialism”, as the National Assembly would have it, nor the “incompetence” of the government; instead, it is fundamentally the handiwork of local and global capitalist powers, combined with the political difficulties the Bolivarian Revolution faces in its attempts to manage the conflict in favor the popular majority. Venezuela is today suffering a textbook case of “disaster capitalism”. II In the dominant narrative, the situation in Venezuela has been interpreted as an “emergency”, but above all as a “humanitarian crisis”. It will remain for a later date to fully understand the historical conditions that have enabled the use of the “humanitarian” concept. However, taking as a reference point articles published in a US propaganda organ such as Voice of America [Voz de América], it is possible to trace the concept’s usage back to 2014. Curiously, it first appears in connection with the right to freedom of expression. On March 31 of that year, in the midst of the second wave of anti-Chavista violence directed against the Maduro government, Rodrigo Diamanti, an economist from the Catholic University Andrés Bello and president of the NGO “A World Without Censorship” [Un mundo sin mordaza], declared that the “political crisis in Venezuela, combined with the economic and social crisis, is fueling a humanitarian crisis”.[7] **Contrary to all evidence, Diamanti stated that the government had violated the right to political demonstration and had launched a persecutory campaign in social networks. Throughout 2014, the “humanitarian” discourse was employed in relation to the situation in the health sector. This time it was José Manuel Olivares, “a medical resident at the university hospital of Caracas and specialist in oncological radiotherapy”, who spoke out against the “humanitarian crisis that the country is currently suffering”.**[8] Voice of America failed to inform that Olivares was then a militant with the rightwing party Primero Justicia. In fact, he is currently a deputy in the National Assembly, elected by the state of Vargas in the 2015 parliamentary elections, as was Deputy Juan Guaidó. By 2015 the term had become a permanent fixture. On February 24, the think tank “International Crisis Group” issued a report in which it warned that Venezuela “would be facing a humanitarian crisis if measures were not taken to solve the country’s problems”.[9] A couple weeks later, on March 9, the Obama Administration declared Venezuela an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”, imposing sanctions on seven officials allegedly involved in human rights violations.[10] In an article dated to March 11, José Manuel Oliveras spoke in the name of an NGO known as “Doctors for Health” [Médicos por la Salud], again asserting that the country was experiencing a “a humanitarian health crisis”. [11] Republican Marco Rubio weighed in with his own declaration the next day: “while individual economic sanctions against infractions of human rights, announced earlier this week, has focused on the catastrophe that Nicolás Maduro and his regime have inflicted on the Venezuelans, there must be more action and attention paid to the humanitarian and economic crisis that threatens regional security”.[12] That same day, the Secretary of State John Kerry “assured that if Venezuela were to cease its oil assistance to neighboring countries, a humanitarian crisis could be unleashed”.[13] From that moment onward, the anti-Chavista voices would employ the term with increasing frequency. By 2016, with the National Assembly under opposition control, that institution became a sounding board for the same kind of discourse: on January 26 it issued a statement on “the humanitarian crisis in health in Venezuela, due to the scarcity of medications, medical supplies and the deterioration of health infrastructure”, [14] while on February 11 it announced a “humanitarian crisis and the complete absence of any form of food security for the Venezuelan population”.[15] On January 23, the team at Misión Verdad published a report providing information that showed the fallacy behind the “cartelized discourses sustaining the ‘lack of dollars’ as a fundamental cause for the restriction of medication, which is produced oligopolistically” by a handful of pharmaceutical corporations based in the country.[16] On February 15, journalist Victor Hugo Majano warned: “the National Assembly’s declaration of a dietary and pharmaceutical emergency is meant to force the government into maintaining flows of foreign currency that are in turn used to finance imports, typically by the commercial layer of the bourgeoisie and transnational corporations that are dedicated to the commercialization of consumer goods”. [17] **Even having only sketched a tentative relation between the available facts, and given the historical conditions in which this type of discourse emerges and the type of language it uses, not to mention its principal motives, it seems clear that when there is talk of a “humanitarian crisis” in Venezuela it comes in the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those who speak a “humanitarian” language, more than warning against what could happen, are anticipating a reality that they themselves are deeply invested in seeing materialized. Apart from that, they are posing the problem as the exclusive responsibility of the government, from which can only follow a single solution: “humanitarian intervention”. This is critical to understand: there is no “crisis” without “intervention”.** Another effect is the progressive degradation of political language: the “humanitarianization” of discourse is the most recent expression of an attempt to dehumanize Chavismo. It is inherent to anti-Chavismo. The “hordes” from the first years of the Bolivarian Revolution are then made out to be criminal accomplices of a genocidal dictator, i.e. Nicolás Maduro, who furthermore is a “usurper”, like the equally “illegitimate” Hugo Chávez. The virulence of the recent attacks against Chavismo, regarded as a despicable and vile phenomenon subject to legitimate extermination, does not answer to any **“humanitarian crisis”: it is the same virulence as twenty years earlier, fomented by the brutality that is today expressed in Venezuela’s “disaster capitalism”. The “humanitarianization” of political discourse is the intricate plot upon which the Trump Administration looks to legitimize their attack on the PDVSA: it is “justified” on the grounds that, as John Bolton stated on Fox Business on January 24, the government in question is “genocidal” and “corrupt”. So what is the trick? The trick is that this discursive plot serves to muddy the waters: anyone who should question the humanitarian discourse has simply failed to “recognize” or, worse, “justified” the crisis and corruption.** By the same sleight of hand, the main parties responsible for the “catastrophe” are the ones exempt from any responsibility. III The “humanitarian crisis” is a business opportunity, as Bolton acknowledged in his Fox Business interview. The same “opportunities” are also on display in the plans being promoted by the National Assembly. On December 19, 2018, a proposal was put before the National Assembly: the “Plan for the Country, the Day After” [Plan País, el día después]. The “Plan” offers a roadmap for what is to be expected during the “democratic transition”. According to Banking and Business [Banca y Negocios], the plan outlines: – “the reactivation of the productive apparatus […] by accessing the finances of multilateral banking”, read the International Monetary Fund; – “removal of all controls, regulations and bureaucratic obstacles, and punitive measures”; – “international investment within a regulatory framework that creates confidence and effective protection of private property”; – “opening for private investment in public enterprises”; – “ approval of a new Hydrocarbon Law that […] would allow for private capital to act as a majority shareholder in oil projects”; – “the private sector will be responsible […] for the operation of utility assets”; – “efficiency in order to reduce the size of the state”. On social matters, the proposal aims to “supply and provide continuous access to primary goods and services, with special focus on the sectors of health, education and nutrition for the most vulnerable, encouraging quality employment and protection of family income”.[18] On January 8, 2019, a bill proposal was circulated in the National Assembly with the title “Statute Governing the Transition to Democracy and the Reestablishment of the Validity of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela” [Ley de Estatuto que rige la transición a la democracia y el restablecimiento de la vigencia de la Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela]. Article 21 of the bill reads: “the National Assembly will issue the laws necessary to deal with the complex humanitarian emergency and promote the recovery of the Venezuelan economy, in conformity with the Agreement of Plan País approved on December 18, 2018”. The same article goes on to list the objectives it will accomplish: “rapid economic recuperation through extraordinary international financial assistance provided by multilateral organisms” (paragraph 1); “centralized control, arbitrary measures for expropriation and other similar measures will all be abolished, including currency control. To that end, the centralized model for economic control will be replaced by a model based on liberty and the market, founded on the right enjoyed by each Venezuelan to work under the guarantees based on property and freedom of enterprise” (paragraph 2); “public utilities will be subject to a process of restructuring that assures efficient and transparent management, including through public-private arrangements” (paragraph 4).[19] **Clearly, “Plan País” and the “Transition” bill proposal are both rife with neoliberal measures: deregulation, massive privatization (including PDVSA), restructuring of the state, etc. And as for social concerns, given that the issue at hand is nothing less than a “humanitarian crisis”, and that the magnitude of such a crisis would logically occupy a central place in any “democratic transition plan”, the proposed social measures are little more than a scaled-back version of the policies implemented throughout the Bolivarian Revolution. Such is the deceptive nature of Venezuela’s “disaster capitalists”: they promise to return the country to the years of Chávez, which in their thinking was destroyed by the very same “21st century socialism”; however they also intend to apply the same neoliberal policies of the 80s and 90s, which fueled the first rebellions of the Venezuelan people.**