

# Final Conclusions working group 1: Structural Causes

April 30, 2010 in [01. Structural causes, Working Groups](#)

We are faced with a profound structural crisis as a consequence of having reached the planet's limits. We are confronted with the terminal crisis of a patriarchal development model based in the slavery and destruction of human beings and nature. The climate crisis we live in isn't only a problem of rising atmospheric temperatures, but also the global destruction of conditions that make life possible on the planet and the harmonic relationship of humans with Mother Earth.

The looting/expropriation of the communal goods of all the peoples of the world was accelerated with the genocidal colonial expansion of capitalism more than 500 years ago. With the industrial revolution, a new jump in history occurred initiating a new production system of growth and overflowing global accumulation concentrated primarily in the most industrialized countries that have generated 75% of the cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions even though they represent only 20% of the world population.

This production pattern has led to the current climate crisis which translates into major effects primarily for countries in the global South<sup>[1]</sup>, with extreme climate events such as prolonged droughts, floods, etc.

The capitalist system has imposed on us an ideology of Progress and unlimited growth. This regime of production and consumption is guided by the search for maximum gain, forgetting completely the implications of an infinite growth pattern on a finite planet. This pattern of development has separated human beings from nature, establishing a rationale of domination over nature and leading to the destruction of nature.

This capitalist development model has created societies and ways of life that are incompatible with nature. Mother Earth is assumed to be a source of raw materials and human beings become a means for production and consumption. For this system, the logic of life is competition and the hunger for unlimited gain. The capitalist system turns everything into a commodity: water, earth, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, death and life itself. Everything must be extracted, transformed and consumed, thus negating the sacred character of nature. With this system, the spiritual relationship of the people with Mother Earth is broken.

The overexploitation and unequal appropriation of the planet's communal goods have benefited some sectors of the population to the detriment of others. For example, hundreds of millions of people lack access to clean water and other conditions for a dignified life, while others squander the abundance of communal goods and then profit from the shortage. This system has massacred and expelled the indigenous peoples and farmers from their territories by taking control over their land, communal goods, germoplasm and ancestral knowledge.

Capitalism pretends to satisfy all the deficiencies and dissatisfactions of human beings through the consumption of things. The “first developed world” should be called instead the “hyper-consuming first world”. For instance, the United States of America, because of its unlimited level of consumption, increased its GHG emissions by 16.8% during the period from 1990 to 2007. On average, this emits about 20 to 23 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year per person and represents more than 9 times the emissions of an inhabitant of the Third World, almost 8 times the emissions of a Latin-American and Caribbean per capita and more than 20 times the emissions of a person from Sub-Saharan Africa.

This capitalist logic places financial gain over people. Through commerce, the unlimited consumer identity is created and new patterns of consumption are established so that people are valued more by what they have than by who they are. For this system, profit and profitability are placed above everything else and the rights to access and the efficiency of basic services for the people are converted into commerce. Gain requires more gain.

Corporations and the governments of the most dominant developed countries, in complicity with a part of the scientific community, have shaped the climate change discussion as a problem of temperature increase, posing to us technical and commercial solutions that don't question the justification behind this type of production and development.

Today, “climate change” has become a business for the capitalist system. Governments and “developed” countries are promising so-called “green” reforms of the system. These mechanisms of technological innovation are directed by the creation of new sources of investment and business under the pretext that this technology will resolve the climate crisis. What these solutions really do is exacerbate the problems we face. These false solutions, called Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), leave the responsibility of caring for the planet to the global South without taking on any real responsibility themselves.

The corporate pattern of production, distribution, wastefulness and consumption of food and all the mechanisms of agribusiness (factory farming of animals, monoculture, genetically modified foods, nanotechnologies, pesticides, biofuels, etc.) aren't just destroying the sustainable production of food, farm production and food sovereignty. They are also one of the fundamental causes of the destruction process of nature (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, methane, nitrous oxide, deforestation, contamination of soil and overuse and contamination of the waters, etc.).

The political, economic, military and communications power structure, along with the current legal-institutional administration, legitimize, promote and deepen destructive ideologies. Current international financial and commercial institutions (WB, IMF, IDB, WTO and others) with their rules, regulations and secured funding systematically impose predatory growth. Mainstream media and the culture industry promote individualism and irrational and unsustainable consumerism, and help cement them as the only possible way to exist. These tendencies have been accentuated during the last decades of neoliberal globalization, free trade and the increased use of monoculture and extractivism. We are in the presence of an imperialistic system of re-colonialization of the planet.

Capitalism responds through militarization, repression and war to the resistance of the people. It requires a potent military industry, the militarization of societies and war as conditions necessary for its process of accumulation as well as for its control over territories, mineral and energy resources, and to suppress the struggles of the people. Wars, through their direct impact on the environment (massive consumption of combustible fossil fuels, oil spills, GHG emissions, impoverished uranium contamination, white phosphorus, etc.) have become one of the primary destroyers of Mother Earth.

The battle against global warming is not only about the urgent transformation of production and consumption, it is also a strong fight against paradigms and hegemonic models of colonial and Eurocentric knowledge. These hegemonic forms of knowledge and subjectivity are firmly instilled in education systems all over the world. Cultural patterns, personal opinions and the aspirations of the planet's populations have been greatly penetrated by the values of the individualistic capitalist consumer identity. Changes in production have to be accompanied by a profound cultural revolution that alters current hegemonic behavioral patterns, strengthening other world visions of life like "Living Well" or "el buen vivir", which are in harmony with Pachamama.

What has failed is the model of trying to live as "a better consumer every time", of development without brakes, of unlimited industrialization, of modernity that scorns history, of cultures and the knowledge of others, of life based on the increasing accumulation of material things at the cost of others and of nature.

*Capitalism as a patriarchal system of endless growth is incompatible with life on this finite planet. For the planet, every alternative for life must necessarily be anticapitalist. But not only this, it must be more than anticapitalist. The Soviet experience has shown us that a predatory production system with devastating conditions that make life similar to that of capitalism was possible with other ownership relationships. The alternatives must lead to a profound transformation of civilization. Without this profound transformation, it will not be possible to continue life on planet Earth. Humanity is faced with a huge dilemma: continue down the road of capitalism, patriarchy, Progress and death, or embark on the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.*

Cochabamba, Tiquipaya, April 2010

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[1] Global South: A geopolitical and cultural concept, not a geographic one, that describes human groups as having historically been confined to greater economic and environmental vulnerability than other human groups.