Uneven and combined development and ecological crisis: a theoretical introduction

No one has systematically theorised the ecological and human effects of the combined and uneven development of capitalism. However, based on new studies and a growing knowledge of ecological conditions and capitalist social formations in various parts of the globe, and guided by the general theory of uneven and combined development, we can hazard some provisional conclusions. * But before turning to this it is necessary to recap briefly and crudely the salient features of both uneven and combined development.

Uneven development is usually defined in political economic and sociological terms, namely, as the historically produced, uneven, spatial distribution of industry, banking, commerce, wealth, consumption, labour relations, political configurations and so on. Some writers use the categories ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’ to describe the polarities between, for example, industrial zones and those supplying raw materials; rich and poor countries; countries with

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* I stress at the outset that the present account of the problem is one-sided. This article does not address the ways that capitalism’s and imperialism’s destruction of natural and human ecologies is a form of self-destruction – that is, has the unintentional effects of raising costs, limiting variability of labour and capital, and so on. Nor does it address the crucial problem of social and political resistance to ecological degradation, which is almost everywhere associated with poverty, social movements and social action, and national liberation struggles, which themselves have powerful, independent effects on the costs of capital, flexibility of capital, and so on.

* Race & Class, 30(3), 1989
The problem of pollution is not new. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, wrote about the effects of pollution on the environment over 2,000 years ago. However, it was not until the Industrial Revolution, and the advent of the factory system, that pollution became a serious issue.

The pollution problem is complex and multifaceted. It involves not only the release of harmful substances into the air, water, and soil, but also the degradation of natural resources. The scale of the problem is global, with pollution affecting both developed and developing nations.

The most significant sources of pollution are industry, transportation, and energy production. These activities release large amounts of greenhouse gases, as well as other pollutants such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter.

The consequences of pollution are far-reaching. They include the degradation of air, water, and soil quality, the loss of biodiversity, and the health impacts on humans and animals. Pollution also has economic costs, as it leads to increased health care expenses and reduced productivity.

The solution to the pollution problem requires a multi-faceted approach. This includes reducing the sources of pollution, improving pollution control technologies, and promoting sustainable practices. It also requires international cooperation, as pollution knows no borders.

In recent years, there have been significant efforts to address the pollution problem. Many countries have implemented regulations and policies to reduce pollution, and there is increasing public awareness and concern about the issue. However, much work remains to be done.

This chapter will explore the nature and extent of pollution, the causes and impacts of pollution, and the strategies for addressing this global challenge.
Confrontation and development are often seen as contradictory goals. This is especially true in Africa, where many countries have struggled to balance rapid economic growth with the preservation of their natural resources. The tension between development and conservation is a significant challenge for policymakers and environmentalists alike.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of sustainable development, which seeks to reconcile the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This approach involves considering the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of development simultaneously.

One of the key aspects of sustainable development is the need to protect and conserve natural capital. This includes the conservation of biodiversity, the management of natural resources, and the reduction of pollution. By doing so, we can ensure that future generations have access to the same natural benefits that we enjoy today.

At the same time, it is crucial to promote economic growth and prosperity. This can be achieved through investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, as well as by encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship. However, these efforts must be accompanied by policies that prioritize environmental sustainability.

The challenge of balancing development and conservation is complex and multifaceted. It requires a comprehensive approach that involves government, businesses, civil society, and the general public. By working together, we can create a sustainable future for all.
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Depletion/exhaustion and pollution are thus not independent processes of capital valorization. They are the necessary result of the same universal process, the process of development and reproduction of capital. These two processes are both consequences of the development of capital and the expansion of its value. The process of depletion/exhaustion, on the one hand, is the result of the accumulation of capital, which leads to the destruction of natural resources. The process of pollution, on the other hand, is the result of the production of capital, which leads to the contamination of the environment.

In short, the process of depletion/exhaustion and pollution are both consequences of the accumulation of capital. They are both necessary to the reproduction of capital, and they both contribute to the valorization of capital.

Conclusion

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References


