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At the Systemic Edge: Expulsions

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I use the term 'expelled' to describe a diversity of conditions. They include the growing numbers of the abjectly poor, of the displaced in poor countries who are warehoused in formal and informal refugee camps, of the minoritized and persecuted in rich countries who are warehoused in prisons, of workers whose bodies are destroyed on the job and rendered useless at far too young an age, of able-bodied surplus populations warehoused in ghettoes and slums. But I also include the fact that pieces of the biosphere are being expelled from their life space – and I insist that the tame language of climate change does not quite capture the fact, at ground level, of vast expanses of dead land and dead water. My argument is that this massive and very diverse set of expulsions is actually signaling a deeper systemic transformation, one documented in bits and pieces in multiple specialized studies but not quite narrated as an overarching dynamic that is taking us into a new phase of global capitalism – and global destruction. As an analytic category, expulsion is to be distinguished from the more common 'social exclusion': the latter happens inside a system and in that sense can be reduced, ameliorated, and even eliminated. As I conceive of them,[1] expulsions happen at the systemic edge. At this time, I see the proliferation of such systemic edges deep inside national territories as more significant than the borders of the interstate system – which are open for some and closed for others. In brief, the types of complex systems that are the focus of the larger research project of which the present article forms a part contain multiple systemic edges: they partly reflect the multiplying of negative conditions in the diverse domains contained in such systems, from prisons and refugee camps to financial exploitations and environmental destructions. None of this is new, but the sharp escalation towards negative outcomes since the 1980s in much of the world does invite a question as to the sustainability of it all.

Introduction

Today, after 20 years of a particular type of advanced capitalism, we confront a human and economic landscape marked by dualizing dynamics. On the one hand we notice the familiar reconditioning of terrain in the direction of growing organizational and technological complexity, epitomized by the state-of-the-art space of the global cities that are proliferating in the North and the South; this extreme upgrading comes at a high price to those excluded from its riches (a subject developed in Refs 2 and 3). On the other hand, we see a mix of conditions, often coded with the seemingly neutral term of 'a growing surplus population.' A key underlying condition of this 'surplus' is the growing expanse of territory that is devastated – by poverty and disease, by various kinds of armed conflict, and by governments rendered dysfunctional by acute corruption and a crippling international debt-regime, both leading to an extreme inability to address their peoples' needs. To this we should add the sharp increase in land-acquisition by foreign firms and foreign government agencies, which is creating additional mass-displacements of whole villages and whole smallholder agriculture districts.

It is this second emerging condition that concerns me here. It goes against the familiar notion that our modernity is marked by an irresistible growth in organizational and technological complexity. In vast stretches of our very modern world, we see shifts from the complex to the elementary. From the complex encasing of land that is the doctrine of 'national sovereign territory,' to land in devastated nation-states as a commodity to be sold on the global market. And from the complexity of people as citizens to people as surplus – to be warehoused, displaced, trafficked, reduced to mere laboring bodies and body-organs. In *Expulsions*, the larger project on which this short paper is based, I examine a critical component of these shifts: how much of the sharp rise in complex systems and instruments winds up producing elementary brutalities.

The next section briefly discusses some of the evolutions and innovations that got us to this point, including the imposing of indebtedness on Global South governments, which then began to function as a kind of disciplining regime that enabled powerful actors, notably global firms, to extract and destroy. The subsequent section examines a new profit-producing mechanism that can thrive on the devastations produced by the dominant logic of the last two decades: the repositioning of national sovereign territory as land for sale on the global market. This is largely land in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Central Asia and in Latin America, with over 200 million hectares from 2006 to 2011 bought/leased by rich investors and rich governments to grow food, to access underground water tables, and to access minerals and metals. The following section posits that also the biosphere has developed systemic edges where there should be none. In this case what is expelled are bits and pieces of the biosphere herself that become dead land and dead water.

Expanding the Operational Space of Advanced Capitalism

The geographic expansion and systemic deepening of capitalist relations of production over the last 20 years have led to a brutal sorting of winners and losers. The development of capitalism has, since its origins, been marked by violence, destruction, and appropriation, but also by the making of the regulatory state, a victory for the struggling working classes, and by the expansion of vast middle classes. Much attention has gone to the destruction of pre-capitalist economies via their incorporation into capitalist relations of production. The post-1980s period makes visible another variant of this appropriation via incorporation – the appropriation of traditional capitalisms to further the deepening of advanced capitalism. I use this term to capture a phase dominated by a financial logic. Built into this proposition is the fact of diverse phases of capitalist development and hence the possibility that, in today's global phase, the extension of capitalist relations has its own distinct mechanisms and that these need to be distinguished from older national and imperial phases.

Elsewhere (Ref. 4, chs. 1, 8, 9) I develop a theory of change that has, as one core dynamic, the fact that condition x or capability y can shift organizing logics and thereby actually change valence even if it may look the same: thus, for instance, the massive expulsion of people alluded to briefly above, does not necessarily simply more of the same – more poor, more displaced, more downward mobility. It may be part of a new organizing logic that alters the valence and systemic character of poverty and downward mobility. Thus, I find that the organizing logic of this post-Keynesian period is now making legible its shape. One extreme component of this logic diverges sharply from the earlier systemic 'valuing' of people as workers and consumers: to put it dramatically, it is the expulsion of people and the destruction of traditional capitalisms to feed the needs of high finance and the needs for natural resources – one capitalist mode destroying another such mode. For instance, what are easily seen as traditional or familiar logics of resource-extraction to meet ongoing domestic needs, might also actually be novel ways of preparing the ground for the systemic deepening of advanced capitalism. I see this dynamic in much of the Global North, and, under very diverse formats (e.g. financialization of just about everything) in the Global South.

One of these instances is the structural adjustment project implemented by global regulatory institutions, notably the IMF, the World Bank and WTO, beginning in the 1980s and escalating in the 1990s. My argument here is that, beyond the much noted extraction of billions of dollars from global South countries in the form of debt servicing, the key is the work of systemic conditioning that took place; debt servicing was the instrument for this disciplining. The second instance is the sub-prime mortgage crisis that began in the early 2000s and exploded in 2007. Most of the attention has gone, and rightly so, to the massive losses for the individuals and families who were sold these mortgages, losses that still continue. In this case my argument is, again, that beyond the logics of extraction in the form of mortgage payments and mortgage agents' fees, here we can detect a more foundational emergent dynamic: the use of a contract on a material asset (the mortgage) at a time when top level investors wanted something 'real', such as asset-backed securities, as one ingredient for making a complex investment instrument for high finance.

Central to my analysis is that inside capitalism itself we can characterize the relation of advanced to traditional capitalism as one marked by predatory dynamics rather than merely evolution, development or progress.[5] At its most extreme this can mean immiseration and exclusion of growing numbers of people who cease being of value as workers and consumers. But it also means that traditional petty bourgeoisies and traditional national bourgeoisies cease being of value. I see the latter as part of the current systemic deepening of capitalist relations. One brutal way of putting it is to say that the natural resources of much of Africa and good parts of Latin America count more than the people on those lands count as consumers and as workers. This is part of the systemic deepening of advanced capitalist relations of production. We have left behind the varieties of Keynesian periods that thrived on the accelerated expansion of prosperous working and middle classes – though not in today's emergent economies, especially in Asia. Keynesianism's valuing of people as workers and consumers was critical for the deepening of capitalism.

In what follows, the emphasis is on the making of capitalist relations of production, whether those of early or of advanced capitalism. In this paper, and in the larger projects on which these cases are based, I focus on two instances that are easily described as familiar resource-extraction. Extraction is indeed a major feature, and I describe this. But I think it is critical to go further and deeper and recover the making of a systemic transformation – how more traditional capitalist economies are being destroyed to expand the operational space of advanced capitalism. In brief, the two cases I describe are, beyond extraction, system-changing practices and projects.

When Elementary Logics of Extraction Expand the Terrain for Advanced Capitalism

The extraction of value from the global South and the implementation of restructuring programs at the hands of the IMF and the World Bank have had the effect of 'reconditioning' the terrain represented by these countries for an expansion of advanced capitalism, including its explicitly criminal forms. The aspect that concerns me here is above all systemic deepening more so than extraction.

More concretely, many of the poor countries subjected to this regime now have larger shares of their populations in desperate poverty and are less likely to enter the capitalist circuit via consumption than they did even 20 years ago. Many of the sub-Saharan countries had functioning health and education systems and economies, and less destitution than today. Systemically, governments have been weakened and corrupted; even resource-rich countries have had expanded shares of their people become destitute, with Nigeria the most noted case. The dominant dynamic at work for these populations is, to a good extent, the opposite of the Keynesian period's valuing of people as workers and as consumers. This expelling has given expanded space to criminal networks, and greater access to land and underground water resources to foreign buyers, whether firms or governments. Systemically, the role of rich donor countries has also shifted: overall they give less in foreign aid for development than 30 years ago. As a result, the remittances sent by low-income immigrants are larger than foreign aid. Philanthropies now enter the realm once almost exclusive to governments.

These systemic shifts contribute to explain a complex difference that can be captured in a set of simple numbers. For much of the 1980s and onwards, indebted poor countries were asked to pay a share of their export earnings toward debt service. This share tended to hover around 20%, which is far higher than that asked from other instances of country indebtedness. For instance, in 1953, the Allies cancelled 80% of Germany's war debt and only insisted on 3% to 5% of export earnings for debt service.

And they asked only 8% from Central European countries in the 1990s. In comparison, the debt service burdens on today's poor countries have wound up being extreme, as I discuss below. It does suggest that the aim regarding Germany was re-incorporation into the capitalist world economy of the time, and incorporation into today's advanced capitalism with regard to Central Europe.

In contrast, the aim vis-à-vis the global South countries in the 1980s and 1990s was more akin to a disciplining regime, starting with forced acceptance of restructuring programs and of loans from the international system. After 20 years of this regime, it became clear that it did not deliver on the basic components for healthy development. The discipline of debt service payments was given strong priority over infrastructure, hospitals, schools, and other people-oriented development goals. The primacy of this extractive logic became a mechanism for systemic transformation that went well beyond debt service payment – the devastation of large sectors of traditional economies, including small-scale manufacturing, the destruction of a good part of the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, the sharp impoverishment of the population and, in many cases, the impoverishment and thereby corruptibility of the state.

Debt as a Disciplining Regime

Debt and debt servicing problems have long been a systemic feature of the developing world. But it is the particular features of IMF negotiated debt rather than the fact of debt per se that concerns me here. The second feature that concerns me here is how this gradual destruction of traditional economies prepared the ground, literally, for some of the new needs of advanced capitalism, among which are the acquisitions of vast stretches of land – for agriculture, for underground water tables, and for mining. Precisely at a time of extreme financialization and systemic crisis, the growing demand for those material resources has ascended in importance and visibility. The third aspect that concerns me here is the new survival economies of the impoverished middle classes and of the poor. While each one of these three components is familiar and has happened before, my argument is that they are now part of a new organizing logic that changes their valence and their interaction; there is much contingency here, but also the shaping of such a new organizing logic.

Even before the economic crises of the mid-1990s that hit a vast number of countries as they implemented neoliberal policies, the debt of poor countries in the South had grown from US$507 billion in 1980 to US$1.4 trillion in 1992. Debt service payments alone had increased to US$1.6 trillion, more than the actual debt. From 1982 to 1998, indebted countries paid four times their original debts, and at the same time their debt stocks went up by four times. These countries had to use a significant share of their total revenues to service these debts. For instance, Africa's payments reached US$5 billion in 1998, which means that for every $1 in aid, African countries paid $1.40 in debt service in 1998. Debt to Gross National Product (GNP) ratios were especially high in Africa, where they stood at 123% in the late 1990s, compared with 42% in Latin America and 28% in Asia. By 2003, debt service as a share of exports only (not overall government revenue) ranged from extremely high levels for

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Zambia (29.6%) and Mauritania (27.7%) to significantly lowered levels compared with the 1990s for Uganda (down from 19.8% in 1995 to 7.1% in 2003) and Mozambique (down from 34.5% in 1995 to 6.9% in 2003). As of 2006, the poorest 49 countries (i.e. 'low income countries' with less than US$935 per capita annual income) had debts of US$375 billion. If to these 49 poor countries we add the 'developing countries', we have a total of 144 countries with a debt of over US$2.9 trillion and US$573 billion paid to service debts in 2006.[6–9]

The IMF, World Bank and other such programs establish the criteria and process these debts, thereby functioning as a global disciplining regime. The HIPC initiative was set up in 1996 by the World Bank and IMF to assist countries with debts equivalent to more than one and a half times their annual export earnings and part of an IMF and World Bank program. In order to be eligible, countries have to have been compliant to the IMF for at least three years. The HIPC process begins with a 'decision point' document. This sets out eligibility requirements, among which is the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that replaces the earlier Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). PRSPs describe 'the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs' that a country is required to pursue in order to be eligible for debt relief.[10,11] As of 1 July 2009, 26 countries had completed HIPC, and nine had 'passed the decision point'.[11,12] Finally, the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) went into full force in July 2006. It was intended to address many of the critiques of the HIPC initiative. MDRI promised cancellation of debts to the World Bank (incurred before 2003), IMF (incurred before 2004), and African Development Fund (incurred before 2004) for the countries that completed the HIPC initiative. According to one estimate, the major cancellation schemes (including HIPC and MDRI initiatives, and the Paris Club) have written off US$88 billion so far.[8]

The debt burden that built up in the 1980s, and especially the 1990s, has had substantial repercussions on state spending composition. Zambia, Ghana and Uganda, three countries that global regulators (notably the World Bank and the IMF) saw as cooperative, responsible and successful at implementing SAPs, illustrate some of the issues even when held in high esteem by global regulators. A few examples of expenditure levels paint a troubling picture about how they achieved this high esteem. At the height of these programs in the early to mid-1990s, Zambia's government paid US$1.3 billion in debt but only US$37 million for primary education; Ghana's social expenses, at US$75 million, represented 20% of its debt service; and Uganda paid US$9 per capita on its debt and only US$1 for health care. In 1994 alone, these three countries remitted US$2.7 billion to bankers in the North. When the new programs became an option, these three countries benefited from HIPC and MDRI programs and conceded to the attendant PRSP requirements. Thus, while in 1997 Zambia spent 18.3% of income on exports of goods and services on debt service, by 2007 this was reduced to 1.3%; for Ghana these figures are 27.1% and 3.1% respectively, and for Uganda they are 19.7% and 1.2%.[13]

Generally, IMF debt management policies from the 1980s onwards can be shown to have worsened the situation for the unemployed and poor.[14,15] Much research on poor countries documents the link between hyper-indebted governments and cuts in social programs. These cuts tend to affect women and children in particular through cuts in education and health care, both investments necessary to ensuring a better future (for overviews of the data see Refs 14–18). There is by now a large literature in many different languages on this subject, including a vast number of limited circulation items produced by various activist and support organizations. An older literature on women and debt also documents the disproportionate burden that these programs put on women during the first generation of SAPs in the 1980s in several developing countries in response to growing government debt.[19–22] Unemployment of women themselves but also, more generally, of the men in their households has added to the pressure on women to find ways to ensure household survival.[23–26] Subsistence food production, informal work, emigration, and prostitution have all become survival options for women and, by extension, often for their households. For instance, when there is a shortage of basic healthcare, women usually take on the extra burden of caring for the sick. When school fees are introduced or spending is cut, sons' education is prioritized over daughters'. Water privatization can reduce access to water and increase the water-gathering burden placed on women. When families grow cash crops for export, women's work produces money, which men usually control, rather than food.[27]

One question concerns the option of not becoming part of the IMF debt servicing disciplining regime and foregoing the help it is meant to provide. The so-called adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s destroyed many traditional economies, leaving many countries only with major debts. At that point, becoming part of the debt cancellation program launched in 2006 has probably been preferable. The evidence suggests that once a country has been pushed into debt, cancellation can, in principle, help a country allocate more government revenue for general social and development questions. This has been the case with Ghana, Uganda and a few others that have seen the growth of middle classes – along with continuing abject poverty.

On the other hand, Angola – which was not accepted for debt cancellation – spent 6.8% of GDP on debt service payments and only 1.5% of GDP on health in 2005; it continues to spend about US$2.2 billion each year on external debt payments.[7,8,28]

But the Angola case also points to another combination of elements. Its elites have become wealthy on the vast mining resources, mostly for export, and this arrangement can now continue to do so without much interference. The vast poverty continues and so does the mining for export. One cannot help but ask, who are the other beneficiaries of this situation?

This restructuring across so many countries has tended to weaken governments and often enhance corruption. It has also made it easier for foreign governments and firms to acquire vast stretches of land, in ways that might have been less acceptable in the 1960s with the rise of national autonomy struggles. Such acquisitions have, in turn, repositioned 'national territory' in vast regions of the world as a site for resource extraction rather than as a nation's space. This is an old story, in many ways, especially when it comes to mining. But the scale at which land is coming under the control of foreign actors in the last decade does point to a new phase. It has also contributed to a significant loss of habitat for many small farmers and rural populations.

I see, then, a larger history in the making. In my reading it includes as one key element a repositioning of much of Africa and good parts of Latin America and Central Asia in a new massively restructured global economy. Weakened governments and the destruction of traditional economies have launched a new phase of survival economies. Here, I focus briefly on two of these aspects (for a more detailed analysis see Ref. 1). One aspect is that this restructuring has repositioned 'territory' in vast regions of the world as a site for resources rather than as a nation's space. The other is the emergence of an expanded range of survival economies; some of these are old but now operate at a global scale.

The Repositioning of Territory in the Global Division of Functions

The extent of land acquisitions in the global South by multinational corporations (MNCs) and governments of rich countries over the last few years marks a new phase. It is not the first time in modern times: this is a recurrent dynamic that tends to be part of imperial realignments. China's acquiring of mines in Africa is linked to its rise as a global power. Britain, France, the US, and other countries all did this in their early imperial phases, and in many cases have owned vast stretches of land in foreign countries for hundreds of years. But each phase has its particularities. One key feature of the current period is that, unlike past empires, today's world consists largely of nation states recognized as sovereign, no matter how feeble this sovereign power is in many cases. Rather than imperial grab, the mechanism is foreign direct investment (among others).

More than 200 million hectares of land are estimated to have been acquired from 2006 to 2011 by foreign governments and firms according to Land Matrix,[29–31] the most comprehensive network of researchers on this subject.[32] Much of the purchased land is in Africa, but a growing share is now in Latin America and (a first since the post-Second World War era) in several countries in Asia, notably Russia, Ukraine, Laos, and Vietnam. Finally, the buyers are increasingly diverse, including purchasers from countries of origin that range from China to Sweden, and firms from sectors as different as biotechnology and finance.

What matters for my analysis is this extremely sharp change in the total level and geographical range of foreign land acquisitions. It represents a break in a long-term trend and thereby becomes an indicator of a larger systemic shift, one that goes beyond the old, established patterns of acquisition. Two significant factors contribute to this sharp increase in acquisitions. One is the growing demand for industrial crops, notably palm for biofuels, and for food crops, the latter still coming largely from the states of the Persian Gulf and from China. The second is that growing demand for land and the sharp rise in global food prices in the 2000s made land a desirable investment, even for speculative reasons. It is now public knowledge that the major banks were already concerned in 2006 about signs of the extraordinary financial crisis that was about to break. It is no coincidence that land then surged as a destination for investment capital, both because of its materiality (the thing itself, rather than a derivative representing land) and as a means of access to an expanding range of commodities (food, industrial crops, rare earth minerals, and water).

The contractual formats under which this land is acquired include direct acquisitions and leasing. A few examples signal the range of buyers and of locations. Africa is a major destination for land acquisitions. South Korea has signed deals for 690,000 hectares and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for 400,000 hectares, both in Sudan. Saudi investors are spending US$100 million to raise wheat, barley and rice on land leased to them by Ethiopia's government; they received tax exemptions and export the crop back to Saudi Arabia. China secured the right to grow palm oil for biofuels on 2.8 million hectares in Congo, which would be the world's largest palm-oil plantation. It is negotiating to grow biofuels on 2 million hectares in Zambia. Perhaps less known than the African case is the fact that privatized land in the territories of the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia and Ukraine, is also becoming the object of much foreign acquisition. In 2008 alone, these acquisitions included the following: a Swedish company, Alpcot Agro, bought 128,000 hectares in Russia; South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries paid US$6.5 million for a majority stake in Khorol Zerno, a company that owns 10,000 hectares in eastern Siberia; Morgan Stanley sought to buy 40,000 hectares in Ukraine, but it may not have worked out; Gulf investors are planning to acquire Pava, the first Russian grain processor to be floated on the financial markets to sell 40% of its landowning division, giving them access to 500,000 hectares. Also less noticed than the African case is that Pakistan is offering half a million hectares of land to Gulf investors with the promise of a security force of 100,000 to protect the land.

These developments are part of a larger combination of trends. First, there is the immediate fact of how the global demand for food, partly fed by the new middle classes of Asia, has meant that there are profits to be had in food and land. We now have a global market for land and food controlled by large firms and some governments, and it has been a growth sector throughout the financial crisis. Under these conditions pricing is a controlled affair. Secondly, there is the ongoing demand for metals and minerals of all sorts and a whole new demand for metals and minerals hitherto not been much exploited as their demand comes from the more recent developments in the electronics sector. Africa, much less densely populated and built up than other parts of the world, has become a key destination for investments in mining. Thirdly, there is the growing demand for water and the exhaustion of underground water tables in several areas of the world.

Fourth, and least noted perhaps, is the sharp decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) in manufacturing in Africa, also signaling the repositioning of territory. There was a time when most foreign investment went into manufacturing, mostly because there was a growing middle class (partly generated by the national manufacturing sector and its associated services) that represented a considerable consumption capacity. The economic restructuring programs discussed earlier decimated this endogenous manufacturing sector and had the effect of replacing this with global firms, mostly interested in the consumption aspect and with little interest in growing that manufacturing sector as a development strategy. What took over was mining and plantation agriculture for the international market. Thus, South Africa and Nigeria, Africa's top two FDI recipients accounting for 37% of FDI stock in Africa in 2006, have had a sharp rise in FDI in the primary sector and a sharp fall in the manufacturing sector. This is also the case in Nigeria, where foreign investment in oil has long been a major factor: the share of the primary sector in inward FDI stock stood at 75% in 2005, up from 43% in 1990. Other African countries have seen similar shifts. Even in Madagascar, one of the few, mostly small, countries where manufacturing FDI inflows increased in the 1990s, this increase was well below that of the primary sector.

This is not a promising picture: manufacturing and its associated commercial and industrial services are key generators of prosperous working classes and modest middle classes. Africa was on its way in some countries, but this history has been overtaken by the violence of extraction industries, which destroy land, water and people. All this leaves behind is destruction, especially since the vast profits either leave the country or go to the increasingly predatory elites of the so-called rich African countries.

Counter-Geographies of Survival

These trends have forced many of the poor and newly impoverished into survival economies. Heavy government debt and high unemployment in global South countries have brought with them the need for survival alternatives not only for ordinary people, but also for governments and enterprises. And a shrinking regular economy in a growing number of these countries has led to a wider use of illegal profit-making by enterprises and organizations.

The IMF and World Bank programs of the last 30 years, with their massive contribution to heavy debt burdens, have played an important role in the formation of counter-geographies of survival, of profit-making, and of government revenue enhancement. Furthermore, economic globalization has provided an institutional infrastructure for cross-border flows and global markets, thereby facilitating the operation of these counter-geographies on a global scale. Once there is an institutional infrastructure for globalization, processes that have operated for the most part at the national or regional level can scale up to the global level even when this is not necessary for their operation. This contrasts with processes that are by their very nature global, such as the network of financial centers underlying the formation of a global capital market. Finally, this pattern also points to a different trajectory from that of the old industrial countries. Instead of going the way of unions and political fights to move from the predatory state to the regulatory state, in the global South it is the axis of criminality and extreme sacrifice on the part of poor and impoverished households.

It is in this context that alternative survival circuits emerge. The context can be specified as a systemic condition comprising a set of particular interactions including high unemployment, poverty, widespread bankruptcies and shrinking state resource allocation for people-oriented development. We see the formation of profit making and government revenue-making possibilities built on the backs of migrants, and women migrants in particular. As such, examining the question of immigrant remittances offers valuable insights into the broader subject of the formation of alternative political economies and how these unsettle older notions of an international division of labor.

Immigrants enter the macro level of development strategies through the remittances they send back home. These represent a major source of foreign exchange reserves for the government in a good number of countries. Although the flows of remittances may be minor compared with the massive daily capital flows in global financial markets, they can matter enormously to developing or struggling economies. The World Bank estimates that remittances worldwide reached US$318 billion in 2007, up from US$230 billion in 2005, and US$70 billion in 1998; of this total amount, US$240 billion went to developing countries up from US$168 billion in 2005, and up 73% over 2001 (Ref. 33, p. 2). The Inter-American Development Bank also found that over the years, with ups and downs, in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, these remittance flows generally exceeded the combined flows of all foreign direct investment and net official development assistance.

To understand the significance of these figures, they should be related to the GDP and foreign currency reserves in the specific countries involved, rather than compared with the global flow of capital. For instance, remittances were the third largest source of foreign exchange over the past several decades for the Philippines, a key provider of migrants in general, and of women for the entertainment industry and for nursing, in particular. In Bangladesh, another country with significant numbers of its workers in the Middle East, Japan, and several European countries, remittances represent about a third of foreign exchange. In Mexico, remittances have long been the second source of foreign currency, just below oil and ahead of tourism, and are larger than foreign direct investment, although early 2008 saw a decline in total inflows due to the US economic crisis.

In short, the growing immiseration of governments and economies in the global South launches a new phase of global migration and people trafficking, strategies that function both as survival mechanisms and profit-making activities. We saw a similar syndrome, with trafficking as a key component, after the Soviet Union disintegrated and Russia and Central and Eastern Europe entered these trafficking circuits. To some extent, these are older processes that used to be national or regional and today operate on global scales. The same infrastructure that facilitates cross-border flows of capital, information and trade is also making possible a range of cross-border flows not intended by the framers and designers of the current corporate globalization of economies. Growing numbers of traffickers and smugglers are making money off the backs of men, women and children, and many governments are increasingly dependent on their remittances.

A key aspect here is that through their work and remittances, migrants enhance the government revenue of deeply indebted countries. The need for traffickers to help in the migration effort also offers new profit-making possibilities to local entrepreneurs and small business operators who have seen other opportunities vanish as global firms and markets enter their countries. But its main effect has been to enable criminal syndicates to operate their illegal trade globally, with often rather sophisticated distribution of women and children for the sex industry inside countries, notably in the US. Overall, these trading circuits and survival circuits are often complex, involving multiple locations and types of actors, and constituting increasingly global chains of traders, traffickers, victims, and workers.

The other side of these dynamics is the proliferation of sites that concentrate a growing demand for particular types of labor supplies (for a full elaboration see Ref. 3, chs 4 and 7). Strategic among these are global cities, with their sharp demand for top-level transnational professionals and for low-wage workers, often women from the global South. These are places that concentrate some of the key functions and resources for the management and coordination of global economic processes. The growth of these activities has, in turn, produced a sharp growth in the demand for highly paid professionals, both through the sphere of production (the financial sector, specialized corporate services, and so on) and the sphere of social reproduction (both of the high-income professionals and the low-wage workforce that is also part of the new advanced sectors). Thus, global cities are also sites for the incorporation of large numbers of low-paid immigrants into strategic economic sectors. This incorporation happens directly through the demand for mostly low-paid clerical and blue-collar service workers, such as janitors and repair workers. And it happens indirectly through the consumption practices of high-income professionals both at work and in their households, practices that generate a demand for low-wage workers in expensive restaurants and shops, as well as for maids and nannies at home. In this way, low-wage workers get incorporated into the leading sectors, but they do so under conditions that render them invisible, therewith undermining what had historically functioned as a source of workers' empowerment – being employed in growth sectors.

This mix of circuits for labor supply and demand is articulated with other dynamics of globalization: the formation of global markets, the intensifying of transnational and trans-local networks in a growing range of spheres, and the geographic redeployment of a growing range of economic and financial operations. The strengthening and, in some of these cases, the formation of new global labor circuits, is embedded in the global economic system and its associated development of various institutional supports for cross-border markets and money flows. These circuits are dynamic and changing in terms of their location. Some of these circuits are part of the shadow economy, but they use some of the institutional infrastructure of the regular economy. Most of these circuits are part of the formal economy and they service leading economic sectors and places worldwide. This mix of labor supply and demand circuits is dynamic, multi-locational, and marked by enormous diversity, ranging from top level corporate leaders to trafficked people bordering on modern slavery.

Dead Land, Dead Water[34]

The biosphere's capacities to renew land, water, and air are remarkable. But they are predicated on specific temporalities and life cycles that our technical, chemical, and organizational innovations are rapidly outpacing. Industrialized economies have long done damage to the biosphere, but in at least some of these cases, and with time on its side, the biosphere has brought land and water back to life. Existing data make it clear that in a growing range of sites we have gone well beyond this capacity for recovery. We now have vast stretches of land and water that are dead – land overwhelmed by the relentless use of chemicals and water dead from lack of oxygen due to pollution of all sorts. The surge of

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foreign land acquisitions by governments and firms examined above is one of many sources of this destruction. But these acquisitions are also partly a response to the crisis: more land and water need to be acquired to replace what has died.

The trends described here point to accelerated histories and geographies of destruction on a scale our planet has not seen before, making substantive the notion of the Anthropocene, the age marked by major human impact on the environment. Many of these destructions of the quality of land, water, and air have hit poor communities particularly hard, producing an estimated 800 million displaced people worldwide. But none of us is immune, as other destructions can reach us all, spread by massive transformations in the atmosphere.

This is a partial view that rests on the assumption that extreme conditions make visible trends that are more difficult to apprehend in their milder versions. Most of the land and most of the water on our planet is still alive. But much of it is fragile even though it may not like it. Scattered evidence in news media signals that the extent of this fragility may not be widely understood or recognized. For instance, polls suggest that few in the United States seem to know that more than a third of that country's land, including much of the cherished fertile Midwest, is actually stressed according to scientific measures, even if on the surface it looks fine. Or that the six major gyres that help keep our ocean currents going and oxygenated have now become massive trash zones leading to the asphyxiation of marine life. Or that we have at least 400 clinically dead coastal ocean zones.

We made this fragility and these deaths.

We can think of such dead land and dead water as holes in the tissue of the biosphere. I conceive of these holes as sites marked by the expulsion of biospheric elements from their life space, and as the surface expression of deeper subterranean trends that are cutting across the world, regardless of the local type of politico-economic organization. As I examine at length in *Expulsions*,[1] we have collectively produced conditions that override national differences: my guiding conceptual effort throughout the examination of concrete cases across our planet was to make visible the recurrence of environmentally destructive modes no matter how diverse the political economies in play. Together and over time, we have generated a planetary condition that reaches far beyond the specific sources of destruction and the specific forms of politico-economic organization within which they take place. It is a condition that hovers in spaces that range from the stratosphere to deep ocean gyres. It destroys the Arctic permafrost, even though the indigenous Eskimo people had nothing to do with that destruction, rather it was the polluting factories of the US and Russia, among so many others.

Conclusion: The Expulsion of People and the Abuse of the Biosphere

There is a profound disjuncture between the diverse planetary conditions briefly described in this chapter and the dominant logics shaping governmental and experts' responses. Destroyed economies, livelihoods, bodies, land and water have become a generic condition, disembedded from the geopolitical landscape of nation-states and mainstream international policies.

One key dynamic at work, and the one I focused on here, is expulsion from the diverse systems in play – economic, social, biospheric. The proliferation of systemic edges in all our major domains is foundationally different from the geographic border in the interstate system. Each major domain has its own distinctive systemic edge – this edge is constituted differently for the economy than it is for the biosphere and the social. One of the organizing assumptions in the book on which this paper is based is that the systemic edge is the site where general conditions take extreme forms precisely because it is the site for expulsion or incorporation. Part of the conceptual power of these systemic edges is that the extreme character of conditions at the edge makes visible larger trends that are less extreme and hence more difficult to capture. I conceive of these larger trends as conceptually subterranean because we cannot easily make them visible through our current categories of meaning. This, then, explains the importance of positioning my inquiry at the systemic edge.

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Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and Chair, The Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University (www.saskiasassen.com). Her most recent book is *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Harvard University Press/Belknap, 2014). Other recent books are *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press, 2008), *A Sociology of Globalization* (W.W. Norton 2007), and the fourth fully updated edition of *Cities in a World Economy* (Sage, 2012). Among older books is *The Global City* (Princeton University Press, 1991/2001). Her books are translated into over 20 languages. She has received diverse awards, from multiple doctor honoris causa to being chosen, in multiple lists, as one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers. She was awarded the 2013 Principe de Asturias Prize for the Social Sciences and elected to the Netherlands Royal Academy of the Sciences. Member Academia Europaea.