

Undermining the Infrastructure of Oppression

A Strategy for a Just, Livable World

Where We Stand

The current global economic system is destroying all life on this planet.

This system kills hundreds of thousands of civilians a year in wars for oil and water. It tortures millions of nonhuman animals a year in laboratories and factory farms. It destroys indigenous communities, dispossesses small farmers, enslaves workers in fields and factories, and poisons every living thing with chemicals and radiation.

We are losing cultural and biological diversity at rates unheard of in the history of our species, and despite all our efforts, these rates are only accelerating.

From global warming to genocide, the crises that confront us are not accidental — as if politicians and business leaders were somehow independently deciding to murder union organizers, pollute the seas or strip the land. Rather, these atrocities are deliberately engineered to meet the demands of an economic system that values profit over life.

Modern-Day Colonialism

First World economies are founded on colonialism; they cannot function without stealing resources from distant nations for their own benefit. That's because the First World's massive consumption levels demand resources in quantities that far outstrip domestic supplies. Without a steady stream of cheap labor and materials, the military and economic power of the world's elites would collapse into ruins.

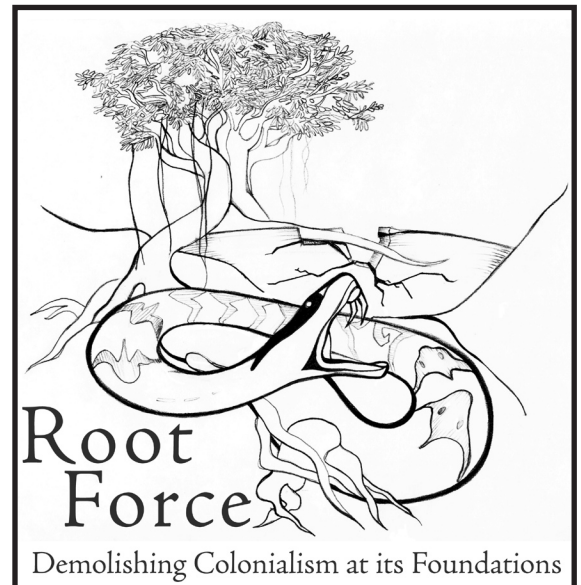
Cheap labor, of course, means forcing people into poverty and keeping them there. Cheap materials means turning living ecosystems into dams, mines and two-by-fours. It means taking resources out of the hands of locals, often at the barrel of a gun. This scenario plays out every day in every country in the world, from the Amazon Basin to the Fertile Crescent.

But the international trade that underlies this system cannot take place without *infrastructure*: the transportation, electrical and communications networks required for the extraction and movement of resources. Specific examples of infrastructure include highways, railways, ports, dams, mines, oil and gas pipelines, power plants, power lines and telecommunications cables.

So in addition to using force to gain access to raw materials, First World countries also push poor nations to accept new infrastructure projects, under the guise of “economic development.” When political and economic pressure fail — as they did in guaranteeing the stability of a gas-pipeline in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan — the military is dispatched to clear the way.

These globalized infrastructure projects are designed to move resources and wealth *out* of the Third World and into the First. For example, the power generated by a series of planned dams in Mexico and Central America is meant to be integrated into a massive electric grid and then sold to the southwestern US.

By no coincidence, such projects are overwhelmingly slated for territories of indigenous or rural peoples. These territories hold two powerful attractions for modern colonialists, just as they always have. First of all, Earth-based cultures tend to live in highly biodiverse areas, where there are still “resources” to be exploited (intact forests for lumber; intact land above oil or minerals; intact, undammed rivers). The second advantage is just as important: If members of traditional societies can be forced off their land by highways, dams or other such projects, they instantly become a cheap work force.



This is how the global economy brings us the high-tech luxuries we have grown accustomed to — along with the war, genocide and ecological devastation that dominate the headlines daily.

What Kind of Future Do We Want?

But we do not want a world where our personal comforts are bought at the price of murdered Iraqis, Colombians, or *anyone*, anywhere. We do not want to see our air fouled, our wilderness paved, and our global climate so unbalanced that drought, famine and extinction run rampant on a scale that makes the bloody 20th century pale in comparison.

The hard truth is, an import-dependent economy like the one we have created is fundamentally unjust and unsustainable. If we mean what we say about justice, we must shift our society away from its dependence on fossil fuels, metals, highways, airplanes, and anything that we cannot *produce and process locally*, without destroying the habitat in which we live.

In such a locally-based model of society, communities are more directly in control of their lives: deciding what products they wish to consume, what local environmental costs they are willing to bear, and what conditions they wish to work under. This would provide the true job security that comes from producing only that which is needed, from being in control of that production, and from keeping that production on a small, local scale.

In this system, it is no longer possible for the costs associated with a product's manufacture to be forced upon another community. There would be no destructive mining of ore for consumption far away, or chemical plants dumping toxins in a community that would rather have clean drinking water. Since there isn't much place in such a model for multinational corporations that are based around shipping products over vast distances, local economies would also lessen corporate control over our lives.

How Do We Get There?

This vision may seem like a long shot — but it's a vision worth fighting for.

It is essential that we create sustainable local economies now, without waiting for some utopian future. We must rise to the challenge of reconnecting with our own bioregions, with the plants, animals and seasons of the places we live. There are as many ways to live sustainably as there are indigenous cultures that have walked this Earth.

But this is not enough. If this system is allowed to progress to its inevitable end, there will be no Earth left for future generations to inherit. And for us to work only on local sustainability — while disregarding the massive injustice that the system wreaks on humans and nonhumans around the world — would be fundamentally elitist and immoral, making a mockery of all our stated ideals.

In any case, the world's corporate leaders will not just stand idly by while we simply choose not to purchase their products. With all the advertising and weaponry that they possess, they will seek to destroy our alternative economies as quickly as we build them.

So in addition to building a sustainable future, we must take concerted action to dismantle the colonialist global economy. The good news is, *we can do this*.

Due to a combination of resource depletion and increasing consumption, the First World's dependence on imports will only worsen in coming years. But in the Americas, existing infrastructure is simply insufficient for the trade volume already coming in. That's why expanding "international trade infrastructure" is one of the top priorities for business and political leaders throughout the hemisphere.

Prevent this expansion — shut down their planned highways, power plants, airports and dams — and we can cut off the First World's access to the resources it needs. Faced with a resource shortage, these economies will have no choice but to scale back their industrial production and their efforts to dominate the rest of the world.

That's the goal of the Root Force campaign: to assist and invigorate a broad-based anti-infrastructure movement capable of placing pressure on the entire global economy.

Because we know that if we strategically exploit the weaknesses of the colonialist global economy — even as we build alternatives that increasingly lessen our dependence on its corporations and machines — we will finally see the day when this entire corrupt system is no more.

Root Force

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demolishing colonialism at its foundations