

*The absolute contradiction: capitalism vs. finite planet*

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Ever since the late 18th century, expanding industrialisation, led by the capitalist mode of production and its diverse social formations, has shifted the emphasis of organised human action from delivering utility and use values to providing quantity and exchange values in search for continuous accumulation of capital.

Ultimately, there is no goal in capitalist economy other than to generate more profits and accumulate more capital *ad infinitum*. While capitalist production goes on, the reproduction of capitalism requires more and more natural resources and labour (human or machine) to sustain growth, capital circulation and accumulation. In this sense, one of the most pressing problems in capital's relation towards its natural surroundings is that the logic of capital accumulation operates in contradiction to its ontology, that is, from the perspective of capital accumulation nature is treated as a limitless 'external' entity – as an object to overcome and as a resource (or a free gift) to be exploited to foster endless accumulation.

Tellingly, the expansive environmental destruction of industrial capitalism, is most often believed to be remedied by human ingenuity. It is regularly claimed that, through technological advancements, we are to reach a stage of development when technology is clean and emission free, thus creating conditions for sustainable growth and accumulating wealth. However, this is, in many ways, a highly problematic statement.

Mainstream economists, ecological modernisationists and politicians alike generally reject the general concerns over economic growth versus limits of the planet, peak oil, overall environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, and give faith to human ingenuity linked to technological advancements such as solar powered civilisation. But considering the serious doubts that have been expressed for instance towards the large-scale applicability of solar power as a potential cure for future energy crises and substitute for fossil fuels, it is relevant to ask whether this technological scenario should be viewed as unrealistic. This is above all because, technological solutions are not created out of thin air, but fundamentally rely on labour and natural resources, and while some efficiency gains have resulted, the logic of capital accumulation insists that savings in one place are used to foster further capital accumulation elsewhere, thus adding up the total material throughput of capitalist economies.