



Corporatized humanity: victim and accomplice of the devastation of the earth

La humanidad corporativizada: víctima y cómplice de la devastación de la tierra

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ABSTRACT: Our civilization is going through a crisis that threatens the living conditions of future generations. The imminence of socio-environmental and economic-political collapse manifests itself before a careful gaze. Despite the fact that innumerable scientists try to alert humanity, it does not clearly appreciate either the causes or the consequences of such a crisis. It is also not clear what it would have to do to stop or mitigate the phenomenon. In this study we focus on the role of a social actor that has been generally neglected and that, from our point of view, is key: the transnational corporation.

Keywords: climate change; global economy; corporations; externalities.

RESUMEN: Nuestra civilización atraviesa una crisis que amenaza las condiciones de vida de las generaciones venideras. La inminencia del colapso socioambiental y económico-político se manifiesta ante la mirada cuidadosa. A pesar de que innumerables científicos intentan alertar a la humanidad, ésta no aprecia con claridad ni las causas ni las consecuencias de tal crisis. Tampoco tiene claro lo que tendría que hacer para detener o mitigar el fenómeno. En este estudio centramos la mirada en el papel de un actor social que ha sido en general desdeñado y que, desde nuestro punto de vista, es clave: la corporación transnacional.

Palabras clave: cambio climático; economía global; corporaciones; externalidades.

1. The Great Collapse of Civilization

The world is going through the greatest systemic crisis in history. It is the synergistic conjunction of all crises: economic and financial; ecological, environmental, epidemiological, ontological, moral, and existential. Its scope is worldwide, global, planetary, personal, and collective. The civilizational crisis of humanity expresses in a virulent way its forgetfulness of life. COVID19, which infects human bodies, profoundly affects the economic system that governs the world. The regime of capital that has unleashed entropic degradation, climate change and global warming of the planet, has been associated in enigmatic but increasingly evident ways with the "liberation" mutation and transmission of viruses by invading and disrupting the environment. behavior of ecosystems, altering the resilience, metabolism and the "immune system" of the biosphere". (Leff, 2020, p. 2).

When in the twenties of the last century, Sigmund Freud tried to think about the consequences of the malaise in human culture derived from the drives that dominated it –Life drive, *Lebenstrieb* and Death drive, *Todestrieb*–, he never thought that “natural”¹ catastrophes could reach the magnitude that they now present. Likewise, Freud's description of the way in which the masses behave in *Mass Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* allows us to understand the reasons for the ineffective human action to stop Anthropogenic Global Warming. Ugo Bardi (2020) is not wrong, we are currently suffering what he called the "Seneca effect": the rapid destruction of what cost so much to build. Such destruction is presented under the figure of

two major crises, the socio-environmental and the economic-political.

1.1 The socio-environmental crisis

Something very serious is happening with the Earth-System. In the summer of 2022, some of the mightiest rivers in Europe lose volume and cease to be the means of communication and freight transport of yesteryear. An associated heat wave damages the health of many Europeans and generates not a few deaths. Shortly after, in China, the worst heat wave in human history occurs in the basin of the second longest river in the world, the Yangtze; and in Japan the worst typhoon in its history – Nanmadol – hits its islands with winds of up to 250 km/h. A year earlier, in the summer of 2021, severe flooding in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany damaged the infrastructure and caused thousands of victims. That same year, forest fires in North America, Siberia, and Australia darkened the skies of those nations and caused great devastation. And in the nations that are part of the "underdeveloped" world, the situation is worse. In the spring of 2022, two thirds of Bangladesh is under water and many other nations such as Pakistan and India suffer from flooding. Only in Pakistan there were 33 million displaced persons. In the Arabian Peninsula and sub-Saharan Africa, temperatures are so high that life becomes simply unbearable. And a year earlier, at the end of 2020 and with a difference of a few weeks, two hurricanes hit the coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, causing severe flooding in a vast region

¹ I put the word in quotation marks because, as will be derived from this essay, the current crisis has very little to do with nature: as the IPCC AR6 (2021) concludes, it is unequivocal that humanity is the cause of the environmental catastrophe.

(from Colombia and Venezuela to the southeast of Mexico), as well as millions of displaced. In Polynesia and Indonesia, heavy rains cause flooding so severe that some island nations – such as Fiji, Tuvalu, or Kiribati – are seeking permission from nearby mainland nations to allow them to settle. At the same time, an "atypical and unseasonable cold wave" froze large parts of Russia when, just in the summer of the previous year, the Siberian permafrost was thawing in an unusual way, causing serious damage to infrastructure. The region and releasing increasing amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that, if unbridled, will make any action to try to mitigate Anthropogenic Global Warming (AGW) useless.

While all this is happening, some scientists indicate that the Arctic, the region that has been most affected by climate change, will disappear in the summer of one of the years of the next decade. To give just one example, Dr. Robert Newton – a researcher at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University – maintains that:

During that timeframe [in the last 30 years], the Arctic will complete the ongoing transition from a perennial to a seasonal ice cover. The nature of the transition (when, how quickly, and what specific source regions remain) will depend on what emission pathway is realized (i.e., to what degree humans can mitigate carbon dioxide emissions). (Newton et al., 2021, p. 3).

The Anthropogenic Global Warming derived from the emissions of Greenhouse Gases that since the beginning of the industrial revolution, humanity throws into the atmosphere, is taking its toll, affecting innumerable ecosystems. For no other reason UNESCO declared three years ago that the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species had begun. On the

human level, we can affirm, in agreement with the IPCC and many other scientific organizations from various regions of the globe, that a Great Collapse of Civilization is taking place. The world, to take up the words of António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, is in a "climate emergency".

Despite all this, humanity seems not to fully realize the problem and is incapable of reacting effectively. As stated in the 2019 Emissions Gap Report published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP):

Overall, the countries have not been able to stop the increase in global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, which means that more drastic reductions are now needed and in less time. [...] Greenhouse Gas emissions are on the rise despite warnings from scientists and political commitments (PNUMA, 2019).

The organization *Earth4All*, associated with the *Club of Rome* – the scientists led by Denis and Donella Meadows who published the prescient study *The Limits to Growth* in 1972 and announces a new version in October 2022 – is more forceful, demanding a quick change of economic-political model, a "Great Leap" towards sustainability:

The model [developed by Earth4All members] shows that to achieve The Giant Leap, societies would need to adopt unprecedented and immediate action across five interconnected turnarounds:

- Ending poverty through reform of the international financial system, lifting 3-4 billion people out of poverty,
- Addressing gross inequality by ensuring that the wealthiest 10% take no more than 40% of national incomes,

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- Empowering women to achieve full gender equity by 2050,
 - Transforming the food system to provide healthy diets for people and planet,
 - Transitioning to clean energy to reach net zero emissions by 2050 (Earth4All, 2022).

Meanwhile, desperate for the lack of effectiveness of the Conferences of the Parties (the *COPs* organized by the United Nations, the last of which was held in November 2021 in Glasgow with meager results), more than a thousand scientists declared themselves on 13 April 2021 in Civil Disobedience. Such actions were intended to attract the attention of a comfortable citizenry and blind or lukewarm politicians. In an action where the scientific article “Unextractable fossil fuels in a 1.5°C World” was placed on the facade of the UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, several scientists accompanied by *Extinction Rebellion* activists were arrested. On that occasion Dr. Aaron Thierry, a specialist in the Arctic situation stated:

Last week the world’s scientists released a report that sounded the final alarm for the planet. It said we must end our addiction to fossil fuels NOW. The UK Government’s response a few days later was to announce it will increase its exploration for oil and gas with the intention of extracting every last drop. Science tells us that this approach will condemn our civilizations to destruction. We will not stand by and let this happen. Scientists have been sounding the alarm for decades but have been ignored by governments. We have no choice for the sake of our children and the living planet than to act in civil disobedience until our governments face the truth and abandon fossil fuels. (*Extinction Rebellion*, 2022).

Accordingly, in an essay published on August 29 in *Nature Climate Change*, Stuart Capstick,

Aaron Thierry, Emily Cox, Oscar Berglund, Steve Westlake and Julia K. Steinberger reiterated that it is up to scientists to carry out acts of civil disobedience in order to attract the gaze of the majority in the face of the serious problem of climate change: “Civil disobedience by scientists has the potential to cut through the myriad complexities and confusion surrounding the climate crisis.” (Capstick, 2022, p. 773).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for its part, although it has done a wonderful job regarding research on the current and future effects of the AGW, its communication strategy has not been as effective as it would have liked, as they themselves acknowledge:

As several decades of attempts to raise awareness indicate, climate change does not spread by itself. [...] For some people the topic seems abstract and intangible, for others the abstract statistics are too far removed from their daily experience. [...] In some nations the issue has become politicized. In others what is missing is political discourse on the subject (IPCC, 2018, p. 3).

To solve this problem, the IPCC communicators propose this to scientists:

[...] “talk about the real world, not about abstract ideas, that is, avoid the topic of concentrations of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) and talk about specific topics that connect with the topics that matter to your audience, e.g., how the CGA affects the community where the conference is given” (IPCC, 2018, p. 8).

Such a strategy, however, has not been shown to be effective either.² But the fault of the citizen’s inattention is not only of the scientists. In psychological science we know well that there is a form

of cognitive dissonance —the *Optimistic Bias* or *Confirmative Bias* as Dr. Tali Sharot (2012) calls it, which makes it difficult for majorities to admit the validity of those ideas that contradict their previous prejudices or experiences—and therefore prevent them from reacting effectively to new situations and problems (such as AGW). Such a "confirmative bias" is a human quality that allows us to "flatten" the differences in a constantly changing world and, consequently, avoid the anguish that such an unstable situation should produce. The "confirmation bias" is a human characteristic that, although it saves us from the anguish that the impermanent world generates, also prevents us from reacting effectively to new phenomena. In the case of the referred environmental crisis, it makes many consider valid the theses of the deniers of global environmental change.

In short, and despite the "good intentions" raised in the numerous "summits", "multinational meetings", "congresses" and "symposia" that for decades have been organized around the world to address the issue of Anthropogenic Global Warming, achievements have been very poor. The true rulers of the earth – the Big Corporations associated with the rulers of the main nations – are very interested in keeping the human masses entertained and silent, as Robert Proctor (2008) shows. And such

masses operate following the model described by Le Bon and Freud:

The mass is impulsive, fickle and excitable. It is guided almost exclusively by the unconscious. [...] it is extraordinarily influential and gullible; it is uncritical, the improbable does not exist for it. [...] The masses want to be dominated and subdued... and fear their masters. [...] The masses never knew the thirst for truth. They ask for illusions, which they cannot give up (Freud, 1921 [1976], p. 74-76).

It is such a rejection of the truth, such a fascination with illusion, that makes deniers, from Donald Trump, James Inhofe and the Koch brothers³ to Santi Abascal and Jair Bolsonaro⁴, so successful with the masses. As reported by NOAA⁵, not even the COVID-19 pandemic has managed to stop the global increase in emissions and by the end of 2020 we had already reached 413 ppm of CO₂⁶. Let's never forget that James Hansen *et al.* (2007), the renowned scientist and former NASA researcher, indicated that the point of no return in this line is 450 ppm of CO₂. And since CO₂ grows between two and three points annually... we will reach that amount before 2040, that is, before 2040 we will have managed to create the planetary conditions so that future generations can do absolutely nothing to stop Anthropogenic Global Warming (AGW)!

² Tamayo *et al.*, 2021.

³ López Palacios, 2019.

⁴ Ramírez, 2019.

⁵ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

⁶ 413 parts per million of carbon dioxide (NOAA, 2020). The decrease in human activity due to the pandemic did not stop the phenomenon because although it is true that in such years both vehicular and air traffic and industrial activity in the world decreased, the same is not true of electrical energy. As reported by the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2019): 64% of the electrical energy we consume comes from fossil fuels (coal 38%, gas 23%, oil 3%).

Likewise, as reported by the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), presented on August 9, 2021,⁷ in many of the environmental variables we have already reached the tipping point. The IPCC AR6 allows us to unite the loose ends and understand the misfortune that humanity, blind and wild, is generating throughout the earth.

But the AGW is not the only phenomenon that threatens our civilization. Global Environmental Change⁸ also includes the Sixth mass extinction of species. Such an extinction has been widely documented. In 2014 Elizabeth Kolbert⁹ published a study that in subsequent years has been proven accurate. As reported in the 2020 edition of the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Living Planet Report: "our relationship with nature is fractured". The consequence of this is a serious defaunation:

The global Living Planet Index continues to decline. It shows an average 68% decrease in population sizes of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016. (WWF, 2020, p. 5). In fact, the most impressive result on a planetary scale is the 94% reduction in the LPI (Living Planet Index) of the tropical subregions of the American continent. The alteration of grasslands, savannahs, forests and wetlands, the overexploitation of species, climate change and the introduction of exotic species constitute the main threats. (WWF, 2020, p. 6).

Despite the efforts that humanity has made to stop defaunation¹⁰, in less than 50 years (1970-2016), almost three quarters of the more than 4,000 species that WWF monitors have disappeared, or rather, we have replaced them with us and our domesticated species.

Insects, as reported by the German Entomological Society, are also disappearing on a catastrophic scale: in just 30 years we have lost 75% of the world's insects¹¹. And the causes of this collapse are the widespread practices of agro-industrial companies that, so that their crops are not affected, throw huge amounts of biocides (herbicides, fungicides, nematicides, insecticides, rodenticides, and others) into the soil. By caring for our crops, we are destroying food chains. For example, insects are key not only for the pollination of multiple plants, but also constitute the food of birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. For this and many other reasons, UNESCO declared, on May 6, 2019, that the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species had begun. An extinction that, unlike the previous ones, is no longer responsible for a planetary event -the fall of a meteorite, a glaciation or unusual volcanic activity- but for a small but widespread species: humans.

The serious impacts that the human species has caused on earth have prompted Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to argue that our geological era should no longer be called the Holocene but the Anthropocene¹². Years later, evaluating the same data,

⁷ IPCC, 2021.

⁸ Rockström *et al.*, 2009; Steffen *et al.*, 2013.

⁹ Kolbert, 2014.

¹⁰ According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are currently more than 200,000 protected natural areas in the world located in 20 million km², which constitutes almost 15% of the planet's surface outside water.

¹¹ Kusma, 2017.

¹² Crutzen, 2002.

Jason W. Moore and Jorge Riechmann called it the Capitalocene, as they realized that the worst impacts derive from capitalist exploitation, currently dominant on the planet. Without disagreeing with them, and in order to sharpen the perspective even more, I propose to call our time the "Corporocene", since I believe that the large transnational corporations are the main causes of the socio-environmental and economic-political degradation of the Earth. And it is about a degradation that, since the middle of the 20th century, as Will Steffen and Josep Xercavins Valls maintain, occurs at the rate of the "Great acceleration"¹³.

Humanity today is witness to a *perfect crime*¹⁴, one that, as we will try to show in this essay, is perpetrated, with our collusion and against ourselves - as well as against many of the earth's ecosystems - by transnational corporations. Human greed created a machine, an *Alien*, that will end civilization and the earth as we know it: the *Transnational Corporation*. But, before studying corporations, let's refer to the second crisis, the economic-political one.

1.2 *The economic-political crisis*

Something very serious is happening in the global economic sphere. In recent decades, majorities have become poorer while corporations – and their shareholders- have become richer. The world is becoming more unequal every day.

As indicated by the United Nations Organization in its Declaration on the Right to Development of December 4, 2018:

Today we live in a world that is richer, but also more unequal than ever. Too many people around the world are being denied social and economic rights, including the 800 million who still live in extreme poverty. [...] Income inequality is on the rise, with the richest 10 percent of the world's population earning up to 40 percent of total income. Some reports suggest that 82 percent of all wealth created in 2017 went to the top 1 percent of the most economically privileged population, while the bottom 50 percent saw no increase at all. (UN, 2018).

Such accumulation of capital, associated with the crisis generated by the SARS-CoV2 pandemic – which forced many States to over-issue money that will soon take its toll on their economies¹⁵ – and the war waged by two of the nations that produce the most grains in the world -Russia and Ukraine-, threatens to produce a global economic crisis of dimensions never seen before. The energy crisis that currently affects Europe will be dwarfed by the famine that will hit the Third World in 2023. Environmental refugees will be the order of the day and entire nations will see the start of wars and instability.

The Gini index – the one that calculates inequality and, consequently, the risk of internal conflicts emerging in nations –, according to the World

¹³ Ecoportal, 2015.

¹⁴ Tamayo, 2021.

¹⁵ Friedrich & Weik, 2019.

Bank¹⁶, in more and more countries has exceeded 0.4 and threatens to generate internal wars in such nations¹⁷. This index will increase on a global scale as the years go by and the socio-environmental and economic crisis worsens.

The political crisis, on the other hand, is seen in the notorious inefficiency of the rulers of the earth to act for the good of their citizens against the phenomena of violence, anomie and, above all, the climate crisis. All of this is evident in the Climate Summits (COPs) and has already been appreciated for decades. As indicated by Dr. Víctor Urquidi since 2002:

[...] in the two decades from Stockholm [the 1972 Summit] to Rio de Janeiro [the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development], little was achieved other than the adoption of a Plan of Action and the creation of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) [...] The Action Plan, subject to "voluntary" application, had little success, even among industrialized countries (Urquidi, 2007, p. 49).

Summits and other meetings aimed at bringing down the AGW can only be unsuccessful because humanity seems unable to realize that those who govern the world are not the leaders. Those who currently dominate it are large corporations. They are the ones who, thanks to bribes and canonries, dictate the laws, the ones that impose rulers, the ones that control scientists and subdue all non-conformists, sometimes in very illegal ways. Let's study it in detail.

2. *The World ruled by Corporations*

As Joel Bakan (2004) indicates, the corporation is a "legal person", that is, an individual with full rights and almost all its obligations: it can acquire assets, hire workers, obtain loans, establish demands and respond to them, it can increase its assets and even go bankrupt... although it can't go to jail. The corporate "legal person" makes the dream of every capitalist come true: to carry out ventures without fear of lawsuits that some error could generate. The corporation allows the capitalist to enjoy limited liability, that is, in fact and with respect to the rest of the citizens, the corporation makes its shareholders lose responsibility:

[The Corporation] is an institution – a unique structure and set of imperatives that direct the actions of people within it. It is also a legal institution, one whose existence and capacity of to operate depend upon the law. The corporation's legally defined mandate is to pursue, relentlessly and without exception, its own self-interest, regardless of the often harmful consequences it might cause to others (Bakan, 2004, p. 1-2).

Such corporations went, in just over a century, from relative obscurity to becoming "the World's dominant economic institution" (Bakan, 2004, p. 5). Transnational corporations, supported by the productivity derived from industrial revolutions, not only deplete the earth's resources, but also cover the planet with a large amount of merchandise, a

¹⁶ <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SI.POV.GINI>

¹⁷ Let us remember that Corrado Gini indicated that, after 0.4 of his index, inequality placed the evaluated nation at risk of internal conflict due to inequality (Chaves, 2003, p. 107).

good part of it with "programmed obsolescence", causing damage to all ecosystems.

Bakan (2004) indicates that the legal figure of the corporation was created so that it was possible to carry out enormous and risky actions, extract or manufacture products that could endanger ecosystems or human health without causing any fear to investors due to legal demands.

The corporation can be called the *masterpiece of neoliberalism*: it generates huge amounts of capital for its investors and makes its dream come true by achieving the fastest possible return on the capital invested. And if the actions of a corporation produce loss of human lives or the destruction of ecosystems ("externalities") the owners, the investors, have no responsibility, only their managers or administrators can be blamed for the damages.

As Vitali *et al.* (2011) have indicated, corporations have appropriated almost all capital. Only 144 of them own 40% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 700 of them own 80% of the world's GDP. Such capital accumulation, the Swiss researchers indicate, had never been appreciated in human history.

Thanks to the power they were gaining, corporations have also allowed themselves to reduce labor rights and buy or extort governments that oppose their interests. The so-called "revolving doors" between corporations and governments facilitate this

task¹⁸. Attempts to assuage corporate greed have been small and limited: ISO standard 14000¹⁹ or the call by American millionaires Warren Buffett and Bill Gates to increase tax payments for the great millionaires²⁰ have been largely unsuccessful (Bakan, 2020).

According to Bakan (2004), corporations operate based on three key elements: mechanization, division of labor, and stock market operations. Mechanization, which, as a product of successive industrial revolutions, has allowed products once reserved for the richest on earth to be appropriated by the majority –with the consequent plundering of the planet's resources— is no longer revealed as "democratizing the products of the land" but as what it always was, a mechanism to hide the generation of enormous surplus value for the owners of the "brands" under the guise of benefiting the majority, who, in order to increase their profits, do not hesitate to reduce the quality of the products they offer.

The division of labor, even geographical, has also been revealed as an important strategy of large corporations. In order to reduce the payment to their workers as much as possible, large corporations establish their factories not only in the countries that provide them with the best cost-benefit (regardless of loyalties or vital commitments with their employees) but also take advantage of such geographical division to, in the event that a strike

¹⁸ In this regard, the *Diccionario crítico de empresas transnacionales* (Critical Dictionary of Transnational Companies) reports: "[...] former presidents González, Aznar, Blair and Schröder have entered the board of corporations such as Gas Natural Fenosa, Endesa, JP Morgan Chase and Gazprom, respectively, in the same way that Conversely, Mario Draghi and Mario Monti went from Goldman Sachs to the presidencies of the European Central Bank and the Italian government" (Hernández Zubizarreta *et al.*, 2012, p. 7).

¹⁹ The International Standard ISO 14000, constitutes an attempt to reduce the environmental impact of companies, implementing Environmental Management Systems for it.

²⁰ I am referring to the letter of June 2019 where, at the initiative of Buffett and Gates, several millionaires requested the US government to pay more taxes on their wealth. Cf. *Entrepreneur en español*, 2020.

occurs in a plant in one country, the operation can be transferred to another and, in this way, withstand the time that the conflict takes without any problem. Such a strategy allows them to continue supplying their product in the market despite long strikes and ensure that, in the end, they will be victorious, that is, that the workers will have to accept the lowest wages possible.

Finally, the link of large corporations with the stock market is what allows them to capitalize, while maintaining control of the ventures, since it is the majority shareholders who decide the destiny of the corporation.

Such corporations, as Naomi Klein (2002) clearly indicated, have been incorporated into our lives in such a way that many human beings almost assume they are “familiar” with them and, thanks to publicity, recognize them as protective and beneficial.

The truth is that corporations, while getting richer, have sown poverty throughout the world. Corporations—precisely because they are inhumane, because they are a kind of *Alien* compared to all species on earth—are capable of ending, not only the rights and standard of living of the people, but also, due to environmental externalities that continue to be carried out, are capable of finish the life on the planet!

And those, like the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who try to raise their voices to denounce that the current system of things does not allow us to foresee a correct future for the coming generations, are simply annulled not only by corporate power but by all those who only want to continue living with the comforts offered by the world dominated by corporations.

In summary, given the disastrous role that corporations have played in recent history, I believe that in order to generate sound politics, a sustainable economy, as well as effective climate action, it is necessary, first, to make a legal correction: reconvert corporations into companies.

2.1 The urgent conversion of corporations into companies

We must never forget that a *corporation* is not the same as a *company*. If a *company* generates externalities, its owner must pay the consequences and may even end up in jail. The owner of a company is responsible for the misfortunes that his enterprise could generate. The *corporation* was designed to evade responsibility.

As denounced for decades, not only Naomi Klein (2002), Chomsky & Waterstone (2021), but also Joel Bakan (2004; 2020), Hernández Zubizarreta *et al.* (2012) and Vitali *et al.* (2011), the growing power that the large transnational corporations have obtained has not only made them the owners of the planet, has made them practically untouchable.

The Bhopal disaster is a good example of this. Let's remember the story:

The night of December 2-3, 1984, a leak of methyl isocyanate—a substance that the Union Carbide plant produced in Bhopal—caused, according to official figures, more than 3,500 deaths. 15,000 people died in the following weeks. Another 50,000—called “severely affected”—still suffer today from pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, blindness, tuberculosis, spontaneous abortions, neurological damage, and fatigue. And those affected called

"mild" total half a million. Warren Anderson, the Union Carbide executive who lived in India, posted a small bail after the accident, escaped to the US, and died in Florida at age 92 without ever having been tried. The USA never accepted the extradition request. Almost 30 years later, only two Indian executives of the company were sentenced to 2 years in prison (but with the right to bail and appeal, which will extend the trial much longer). While it is true that Union Carbide received fines, they were insufficient and late paid. Finally, when Dow Chemical acquired Union Carbide Corporation in 1999, it denied any responsibility for what happened in 1984. The "legal person" that caused the deaths and illnesses simply disappeared. There is no one to sue anymore. The most shameful thing is that for the Law that is correct (Tamayo, 2021).

Corporations, as perverse entities (Bakan, 2004), enemies of democracy (Bakan, 2020), omnipresent (Klein, 2002) and omnipotent (Vitali *et al.*, 2011), buy governments, establish laws and deceive citizens. In all possible ways. And they are untouchable because of the powerful legal offices they own.

Corporate dominance has, over the years, found unexpected allies. One of them was the famous biologist E.-O. Wilson. Let's review such history.

2.2 *The Tragedy of the Commons*

Garrett Hardin raised, in 1968, his thesis on the *Tragedy of the Commons*. In this essay, Hardin expresses a paradox: individual well-being derived

from the use of common goods causes general malaise, that is, when someone, seeking their personal benefit, takes advantage of common goods, and if the other members of the community emulate this behavior, that leads to an overexploitation of natural resources, which causes, on the limit, their destruction and general malaise. This phenomenon has been proven accurate in countless parts of the world.

The privatization of common goods is, nowadays, a widespread practice. The goods of nature, which for centuries were given to humans and other species on earth, have been converted into exchange values and therefore have ceased to be the goods of all: from the prairies to the forests, from the savannahs to beaches, from oceans to surface and groundwater.

At the beginning of such privatization, the famous biologist E-O Wilson argued that there was no problem with the market economy appropriating all natural goods and resources. In the end, the selfishness of humans would act in favor of nature, since they would defend it to protect their interests, that is, the natural system, in the same way as the markets, would self-regulate (Wilson, 1984).

As J-M Esteban indicates in his book *The Biophilia Hypothesis*²¹, E-O Wilson's thesis is valid for natural ecosystems but incorrect for economic-social ones. Wilson forgets that the great transnational corporation is not like other species, the corporation is an *Alien*, a kind of extraterrestrial, for natural ecosystems.

The corporation, as we indicated before, is a voracious and predatory *legal person*, an entity

²¹ Esteban, 2019.

without a soul that does not establish equilibrium with the natural and social ecosystems in which it is inserted because it simply does not come from them, it is a creation of the greediest humans. Its only objective is to obtain for its investors the return, soon and increased to the maximum, of the invested capital. The corporatized free market in the earth's goods will never balance as Wilson claims. On the contrary, the corporate Alien, if we let him, will end all life. It will commit a *perfect crime*²².

I call his final achievement a *perfect crime* because it will cause no consequence to the perpetrator—the transnational corporation—since one of the victims—humanity—is also an accomplice. The other silent victims are the countless species and ecosystems of the earth.

For humanity, the socio-environmental collapse that will decimate it is a kind of suicide: it will be the greed of a few and the wild unconsciousness of the majority that will end the possibility of future generations of having a living space of the same quality as we receive. The waste and stupidity of the humanity of the “Siglo de la gran prueba” (Century of the great test) (Riechmann, 2013) will be harshly criticized by the youth of the future.

The corporation is a machine whose task is to generate enormous amounts of capital at the expense of everything that is put in front of it: people, ecosystems, entire nations. The century of the *Great acceleration* is also the century of the Great accumulation. As well maintained by Hernández Zubizarreta *et al.*:

Multinational companies control strategic sectors of

the world economy: energy, finance, telecommunications, health, agriculture, infrastructure, water, media, arms and food industries. And the capitalist crisis has done nothing but reinforce the economic role and the political influence capacity of the big corporations, which both do business with natural resources, public services and real estate speculation, as well as with the energy futures markets and food, patents on life or land grabbing. Of course, we are witnessing a systemic crisis that is not only economic, but also ecological, social and care, which is wreaking havoc on the living conditions of the majority of the world population (Hernández Zubizarreta *et al.*, 2012).

3. Conclusions. Towards a sustainable future

The theses of Paul Ehrlich (1968) and the authors that make up the Club of Rome (1972) are not without truth: the increase in the human population—and that of the animals raised for consumption—is a key element of degradation of the planet. But the number of humans is not the only variable or the most important. As William Catton (2010) indicates, the mode of production, that is, the lifestyle, is also important. The earth can support a greater number of human beings than currently exists, but not with the consumerist and eco-predatory lifestyle characteristic of the inhabitants of the main cities of the world. In addition, humanity, as indicated by Vollset *et al.* (2020), seems that it will not be able to exceed 11 billion: the socio-environmental catastrophe will prevent it.

²² Tamayo, 2021.

The Freudian reading on the qualities of the masses and the "Optimistic Bias" of Tali Shabot, allows us to understand the success of Anthropogenic Global Warming deniers, those that lull the masses and keep them inaction. The *Optimistic Bias* makes it difficult to think —as Heidegger defines it— and while it is the best way that humanity found to evade the anguish that the fickle and inhospitable (*unheimlich*) world produces in it, it also prevents it from reacting to the AGW phenomenon. Very few have woken up in time and despite having increasingly powerful and numerous voices —that of the UN Secretary-General, that of numerous politicians: from Angela Merkel to Barack Obama and Emmanuel Macron, that of brave activists such as Greta Thunberg, Vanesa Nakate or Xiye Bastida, that of James Hansen and the IPCC, as well as the scientists who carry out civil disobedience actions. Despite all these voices, effective action against the AGW is still a long way off.

Stopping or mitigating effectively AGW also does not go through technical proposals —those of Geoengineering —those that, due to their magnitude, are priceless and threaten to generate more problems than they intend to solve.

From my point of view, effective progress in the fight against climate change requires a legal correction: the reconversion of corporations into companies. It is up to the environmental organizations to demand from their governments, or better, from international organizations, the dissolution of the legal figure of the corporation. We should never have accepted the creation of legal entities capable of avoiding responsibility for acts performed.

From my point of view, the dissolution of the *corporate legal person* would cause the emergence

of thousands or millions of small and medium-sized *companies* that would have to avoid—or respond—for the externalities that they would inherit from the extinct corporations. Many ventures, given the risk due to the lawsuits they could receive, would cease to exist and that would not be bad, it would be a sign that they should never have appeared in the world.

When corporations cease to exist, there will also disappear: corporate law firms, corporate bribery of public officials, and demanding respect for corporate intellectual property, among other wonderful actions.

Dissolving the legal figure of the corporation will trigger a virtuous circle that will make citizens and their governments more and more powerful and, therefore, we could stop the AGW before its worst effects occur.

It is possible to find meaning in life despite living in an inhospitable world (*unheimlich*). A sustainable future is possible, but we first require humanity to "move on" with respect to its thanatic greed and advance in the dissolution of the legal figure of the corporation.

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