

Ecology and the Rise of Capitalism

by

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Abstract

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In *Ecology and the Rise of Capitalism*, I offer an environmental history of the origins of the modern world. This study makes two overarching claims. First, Europe's overseas expansion after 1492 was part and parcel of an epochal shift in nature-society relations. Second, this epochal shift was at once cause and consequence of the rise of capitalism (c. 1450-1750), which be seen within Europe as well as outside it. These claims are pursued in the interests of coming to grips with the specificity of modernity's ecological contradictions, and discerning the outlines of global ecological crisis today. The dissertation's pivotal conclusion is that the origins of today's ecological crisis are found in the emergence of the modern world-system during the "long" sixteenth century (1450-1640), and not, as commonly believed, in the English-led Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century. This conclusion emerges out of the sustained examination of the environmental history of successive "commodity frontiers" in the early modern world-economy – foremost among these the sugar planting, silver mining, and forest products frontiers.

Dedicated to

To Diana Carol Moore Gildea,
with whom everything is possible

And to John William Connor Moore,

Philosopher and Socialist,

my father and friend,

Whose love of ideas, justice, and liberation lives eternally

Ecology and the Rise of Capitalism

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