

LUXURIOUS POVERTY: LOOKING BACK AT A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Part of [Austerity and Utopia](#)

Emilio Santiago Muíño

11 May 2020

This essay explores the utopian materialisation of the idea of luxurious poverty as a central proposition of the necessary positive resignifying of austerity in energy and material resources, which is essential for any society to be sustainable. To this end, it considers the possibilities of comparing and contrasting the fall in the consumption of resources with an enrichment of other aspects of social life. Such an approach would make possible societies capable of disconnecting their environmental impact from their quality of life, so long as this were defined on the basis of other cultural parameters. This essay achieves this through a thought experiment: a future personal letter in the tone of utopian literature written in the mid-21st century – when people are taking stock of the transitional years – to Jorge Riechmann, a leading figure in Spanish ecosocialist thinking. The notes contain bibliographical references that point to material for further study of the concepts raised.

18 March 2051, Vila da Praia, Ferrol Bioregion of Artabria, Republic of Galicia, Iberian Confederation (180 years after the Paris Commune!)

Dear Jorge,

Firstly, congratulations! In less than a week's time, you'll be 98 years old. And in such good health! I still remember how you surprised us just a few months ago during our traditional New Year's walk in the mountains around Cercedilla. I'll be very pleased if I get to your age feeling as well as you evidently do. The second thing is how nice it is to be writing a letter again. I've got no other choice since you announced that you'd be getting your phone line disconnected so you could achieve your wish for peace and quiet. And as it's been over five years since you quit the Internet, your hermit-like isolation is almost complete. You might not be aware of this but you're up with the latest trend among some young radicals! The press call them 'the disconnected'. They're a new counter-cultural movement – yet another one! – that's part of the boom in anthropological creativity in recent years.

One of the good things about a letter is that I don't need to go to the community telecoms centre, though it is a nice walk there. Ah, the old high-speed internet! Sometimes I miss it. It turns out that while writing by hand, I can look out the window at the sea as I gather my thoughts. By the way, Hurricane Nadia did a lot of damage to the coastline as it passed by (and I didn't tell you but our solar panel got blown away in the wind! and we had to get by without electricity for a Special Period that went on for three weeks).

As well as sending you birthday greetings, I wanted to share a marvellous anecdote with you. Do you remember that poem in *Fail Better* in which you talked of a Secretary of State for Odontological Eroticism in the future eco-socialist society? ¹ The Artabria Health Committee is launching a pilot project that could have come straight out of your poem! It's the madcap idea of some youngsters newly graduated from the University of A Coruña. They've got local dentists to draw up a census of patients whose saliva carries bacteria that protect against caries. And for the Eve of St. John's Day, they'll be organising their voluntary participation in a kind of orgiastic party on the beach, to be called *The Kiss of a Summer's Night*. They hope the outcome will be a statistically significant improvement in people's oral and dental health. Naturally, the local Unitary Eroticism Network groups are closely involved. Something like this would be impossible were it not for the delightful eroticising of everyday life that we've seen these last 20 years. Which suggests that eco-socialism is reaching far and wide.

This idea prompted me to take stock. In 2019, I began to talk about the 'extremely short 21st century', along the lines of Hobsbawm's distinction between the long 19th and the short 20th century. Back then, I anticipated the historic dilemma we would face, stating, "By the middle of the century, we will have crossed the ecological Rubicon: either our society will have dropped back to within the limits of what the biosphere can provide, or we will see the catastrophic breakdown of industrial civilisation" ². Now that spring 2051 is upon us, the midway point of what you termed the 'Great Trial' is behind us ³. So what does an evaluation of the Great Trial indicate? Well, the result is a kind of draw. It seems that the denouement has been delayed somewhat and the final outcome hasn't quite revealed itself.

So will there be biospheric reintegration or catastrophic breakdown? We can't say for sure, but recent events give me hope. There was a new record in the global cut in emissions in 2050. The news from the Arctic is grounds for moderate optimism concerning the climate feedback loops that filled us with dread during boreal summers two decades ago. And the mass mobilisations of the green movement on the streets of Moscow, Delhi and Toronto are opening up cracks in the most intransigent nations in the pro-fossil-fuels bloc. I heard from Héctor ⁴ a few weeks ago. The results of the 12th IPCC report have leaked: it looks likely that the global temperature will rise by *just* 1.8 °C in 2100 and then it will stabilise. I know you'll say that 'just' 1.8 °C is still too much. That the Tropics are already suffering severe impacts (there's the tragedy of the millions of climate refugees). That we'll feel the effects soon. And above all that this is an 'anthropocentric' assessment. Perhaps you will agree with me that we are, contrary to all expectations, managing to put on the emergency brakes. But that the string of crimes against the biosphere we have committed in the past is unacceptable. You know what I'll say in reply: that

1. Riechmann J. (2013), "Secretaría de Estado de Erotismo Odontológico", in *Fracasar Mejor, Tarazona: Olifante*, p. 130.

2. Santiago Muíño E. (2019), "El cortísimo siglo XXI", *La Maleta de Portbou*, no. 36.

3. The concept of 'The Century of the Great Trial' runs throughout Riechmann's work. See Riechmann J. (2013), *El Siglo de la Gran Prueba*, Tegueste: Baile del Sol.

4. A reference to Héctor Tejero, a climate activist and Más Madrid deputy in the eleventh legislature of the Madrid Assembly. In 2019, Tejero wrote *¿Qué hacer en caso de incendio?*, Madrid: Capitán Swing.

biophysical limits aren't the only ones, that there are also anthropological limits. You yourself taught us "we are (and always will be) simians that are out of order"⁵. It was perhaps too much to ask of us that we would do things better. When I argue with you in my mind, I remember the line of that poem I wrote at the height of the climate terror of the twenties: "of not extinguishing along the way / the humans of the year 3260 / they too will take consolation in banalities / in the face of inconsolable facts".

I haven't forgotten that we're still fighting on many fronts. The pro-fossil-fuel bloc, which marched in step behind that pioneering criminal Trump, is still going strong⁶. And ecosocialism is not the socioeconomic system most widely adopted by those countries leading the ecological transition, though the fact that ecosocialism exists at all geopolitically is to my mind a miracle. The econational axis, the material expression of the idea of ecofascism that we all speculated on decades ago, is stronger than we would like. And it is true that the most significant reduction in our emissions has been driven by the unexpected alliance between the United States and China under the umbrella of green techno-capitalism and their neo-colonial tentacles. That even though the market society may be effective as regards the climate, it continues to put pressure on other aspects of the biosphere because nobody questions it. The suicidal rise in the destruction of biodiversity has come to a halt, which is more good news. But the areas of sacrifice are still there, and there are a dozen new mega-mining projects around the world. Ecocide hasn't stopped, instead it has become pinpointed. The panorama is that of a Gaia tortured by terrible extractivist acupuncture. Things could be better. But they could also be much worse. And the ecosystemic regeneration in every area that we remove ourselves from is astounding.

I'm recapping the last century in this way because we still haven't dared to look back at it in terms of victory. But today, as we commemorate the 180th anniversary of the Paris Commune, I wish to state it plainly: we're winning. Despite all the turmoil, the constant toing and froing and the pain of the victims, if we compare the real course of events with what might have happened, we deserve to celebrate the times we live in with a handful of cherries. And to trust that this era will not be short, whatever the song by Jean-Baptiste Clément says⁷.

It's time to celebrate victories, Jorge, and it's time to analyse them in order to consolidate and extend them. Below the colliding of geopolitical tectonic plates, another much more important and decisive battle is being waged, one that will end up tipping the balance of the first. And because it is extremely asymmetrical in nature, we are going to win it: the war for the meaning of life, as the Situationists would say. None of the opposing regimes are able to show the results we have achieved. Obviously, there's the reduction in our ecological footprint or in the Gini coefficient, but there are other even more relevant facts and figures. We boast of the free time we each enjoy, in which none can better us, but our soft power has made next to no use of the argument that to me seems crucial: the mass consumption of anxiolytics and antidepressants that was a characteristic feature of Spanish society 30 years ago, particularly among women, has virtually ended. There may be fundamental differences of opinion over the idea of happiness, but even there we are gaining ground.

5. This notion is found throughout Riechmann's work. See Riechmann J. (2017), *¿Vivir como buenos huérfanos?*, Madrid: Catarata.

6. On the historically pioneering nature of the Trump administration, see Santiago Muño, E. (2018), "De nuevo estamos todos en peligro", in *Petróleo*, Barcelona: Arcadia.

7. "Le Temps des Cerises", the song written by Jean-Baptiste Clément in 1866 that became one of the anthems of the Paris Commune.

Luxurious poverty: I believe that to be the key to our success. The cultural revolution that began at the end of the twenties, and which is today in full swing around the world, is the most powerful weapon of mass construction for our project. We were smart enough to anticipate its arrival. But its riches have exceeded our most feverish utopian imaginings. I'm thinking of that visionary project that anticipated degrowth, *Será una vez Móstoles 2030*. Fundamentally, we didn't go far enough ⁸.

Drawing a map of luxurious poverty and practices is an impossible task. In particular because the 'deuniversalisation of the world' caused by the shrinkage of the transport system, which has meant geographical distances have grown enormously, means that local singularities are proliferating at a dizzying pace. New ideas and new customs are emerging in every city, in every bioregion. No political rival can deny this: the foundations of the ecosocialist project – financial security, secure lives, social justice, free time, community restructuring and the austere ecological relocalising of everyday life for the benefit of effective sustainability – are making one of the most fascinating cultural transformations ever possible. Neoliberalism managed to impose its anthropological mutation in 40 years. We are on track to do the same in less.

At the heart of this is the reconnection of community ties, while preserving the best of what liberalism achieved. Loneliness, which became a psychological problem that affected people's health, has now been virtually eliminated. People today cannot imagine their lives in any other way except as a member of extended networks of family and friends, solid and diverse networks they are proud to belong to and which sustain the spending of time in good company. We live in all kinds of tribes, of the kind that Carolina del Olmo envisaged in an idea that later proved so popular ⁹. But unlike traditional communities, these tribes aren't rigid. They don't promote homogeneity, nor do they censor ideological or sexual heresy. On the contrary, they encourage it. And unlike econationalist communities, ours are open, generous, cosmopolitan without losing touch with those many traditions that deserve to be preserved.

Ecofeminism played a crucial role in this. Together with the entire feminist movement, it pushed for the full equality of women, which strengthened the notion of human equality just when people were readying for their worst battle ever, which took place in the middle of the century (to share or to kill in a world in which there was no more room). And it made two important contributions. First it introduced men into the world of care, with no going back. The 'cowboy economist' (Boulding) inside all of us men could not have had a better shock to his system than singing lullabies or wiping his old parents' bottoms. That profound wisdom that a life can only be lived aware of our human condition as children, rather than freeing ourselves of it, is no longer the exclusive preserve of grandmothers and mothers because there are grandmothers and mothers of every sex, as Santiago Alba Rico puts it ¹⁰. Moreover, our ecofeminism has wrought this change without idealising care, as the econational patriarchy does: it is necessary and valuable, but it is exhausting. That is why our policies have created a network in which the things that are public and common to us are brought together to make care a social and not just a family responsibility. In our ecosocialism, there is no need crush the personality of a

8. This project is summarised in Santiago Muño E. (2019), "Será una vez Móstoles 2030" (Online). Available at: enfantsperdidos.com.

9. Del Olmo C. (2013), *¿Dónde está mi tribu?*, Madrid: Clave Intelectual.

10. Alba Rico S. (2017), *Ser o no ser (un cuerpo)*, Barcelona: Seix Barral.

member of the group for the benefit of the survival of the rest.

Secondly, ecofeminism has been the best vector for popularising green philosophy and its ideas: ecocodependence, interdependence, finiteness and the skewed nature of the way in which the capitalist market measured material wealth and defined work, leaving essential aspects out of the equation. And I know we've commented on this already many times, but it needs emphasising: how lucky it was for our republics that we were able to elect Yayo as the first president of the Iberian Confederation after the turmoil of the constitutional process ¹¹! In the old Spain and Portugal, the process consolidated so quickly and we were able to go so far because Yayo's emotional and outstanding public discourse dispelled reactionary arguments. Yayo was the striker who thrashed the opposition in the media battle at the key moment. Leadership figures are always problematic. Fortunately, Yayo never wanted the job and cut and ran as soon as she could, which undoubtedly helped her to do it so well.

I must emphasise here that the new tribes are anything but a space for social reaction. Quite the opposite. One of the most fascinating effects of everything that's happening is something you pondered on in a poem many years ago: the day when the "archipelagos of personal places" replaced common places ¹². That day has come. People no longer gather around commonplaces, expressions or awkward silences. Tribes come together in private languages and shared meanings constructed together. The extreme anthropological diversity of the capitalist market has not dissolved. Instead, it has grown stronger. But it is not reproduced by buying and selling things. It is reproduced by sharing time, now so plentiful, with loved ones. Everywhere I see something that could only be glimpsed among certain privileged groups: the magic of collective genius. Everyone seems profoundly inspired and brilliant at that which they share with their circle of people. Everyone seems to be playing in the dream team of some unrepeatable obsession: here fossils, there bossa nova, elsewhere dark humour, earthenware drinking vessels or home insulation. Today we all have five or six extremely specific enthusiasms that bring us together and draw the best out of us. Many of these passions are to do with meeting needs that no longer depend on the market, like the powerful organisations involved in green construction, ecological farming and handicrafts. We have come a long way from the autonomous society that Adrián advocated, but we have gained in material independence, and local resilience has improved considerably ¹³. Consequently, the community is unquestionably the testing ground for anthropological innovation par excellence.

Of all these new traits, the one that best anticipated the trifling green utopistics that went before us (I'm thinking of *Ectopia* by Ernest Callenbach) is biophilia, something you too put a lot of effort into. Nowadays, enjoying the sense of nature and its tremendous beauty is not a matter of a weekend fling. It's a happy marriage. In Ferrol, the migrations of seabirds, the Perseids or simply the latest storm have been spectacles watched by as many people as used to go to the premieres of good films. Children's lack of contact with nature has been remedied through schools: the community and outdoor experiences that in our day were only to be had during summer camps are now part of their year-round education. The liberals scorned us and accused us of engendering something like the young Cuban pioneers. What foolishness! As if there was even the slightest indoctrination in this learning to live

11. A reference to the ecofeminist thinker and anthropologist Yayo Herrero. See Herrero Y. (2018), "Sujetos arraigados en la tierra y en los cuerpos", in *Petróleo*, Barcelona: Arcadia.

12. From the poem "Hacia la Séptima Internacional", included in the book Riechmann J. (2013), *Entreser. Poesía reunida 1993-2007*, Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores.

13. On environmentalism and political autonomy, see Almazán A. (2018), "La actualidad del ecologismo como propuesta de autonomía", in Riechmann J. et al., *Ecosocialismo descalzo: tentativas*, Barcelona: Icaria.

as a team outdoors! All you need to do is talk to any teenager: if you ignore the fact that they've got their heads in the clouds, which you'd expect given their age, their sensibility and love of everything are such that you feel as if you might be talking with Whitman himself. And look at how beneficial Paco Fernández Buey's Third Culture is proving to be as a centre of educational reform, which our friend Carmen succeeded so well in pushing forwards while she occupied that ministerial secretariat ¹⁴. Multiple skills and broad knowledge in the humanities and science are not the exception in universities today; rather, they are the norm. You can see the positive results in children from an early age. I am constantly surprised by the fact that my grandchildren Ibai and Sálvora can identify the flora and fauna of Artabria in a way that only biologists could do in the past. I learn something new from them every day. And I like to go with them on their astronomy camps with their friends. I've persuaded them to play at designing maps of imaginary constellations and to spin tales regarding their myths. I'm a kind of old surreal guru for them. At the moment, they pay attention to me, but it won't be long before they tell me to leave them alone.

And talking of Surrealism, how magnificent the effective democratisation of artistic talent has been! If this isn't the communism of genius that Breton and his buddies extolled, then I don't know what it is. Our friend Eugenio Castro ¹⁵ never approved of my remark, but I remain convinced. In a roundabout way, the Surrealist project has achieved its historic goal in the loveliest way possible: stopping being avant-garde in order to become popular custom. The conversion of art into common terrain without rights or ownership, the anti-enclosures of art (as Jaime ¹⁶ magnificently dubbed it, making reference to the fencing in of the original capitalist accumulation) is a permanent wellspring of cultural vigour. And I'm not just talking about the thousands of music groups that have sprung up in recent decades. Or of the many novelists and poets, painters or sculptors. Or the fact that there is no neighbourhood that doesn't have its own amateur theatre company. Yes, even the cult of our own dreams – and there's nothing more Surrealist than that – is today increasingly widespread. Not to mention the experimentation with the marvellous that animates this subculture, "the explorers of the wondrous". Who, though they know little about Surrealism, organise congresses where they share their discoveries, which undoubtedly are glimmers of what Breton called "the gold of time".

It's interesting to note as well how the poetic terrorism formulated by Hakim Bey in the last century, filtered through that Hollywood commercial film from twenty-twenty-something, provided an extremely fruitful conduit for the vulgarisation of Situationist ideas. How important non-intellectual fashions are and how little attention we pay them, Jorge. Lots of people today spend their free time on the 'construction of situations'. Doubtless in their own fashion and in a manner so unsophisticated that Debord would be shocked. But there they are. And it's amusing to watch groups from different cities compete to generate creative jokes that reach far and wide, such as the latest one in Zamora with a false alarm over anacondas. When I look back, I think that my most important books were my short publications on psychogeography, like the one on Madrid, which encouraged people to engage in dérives. I'm proud to have contributed to ensuring that the re-encharmed walk has its small community of initiates in our ecosocialist culture. I have always argued, as you know, that the video game industry was a "bitter Situationist International

14. On the notion of the Third Culture, see Madorrán C. (2018), "Buscando un candil. Movimientos de Ilustración para el Siglo de la Gran Prueba", in Riechmann J. et al., *Ecosocialismo descalzo: tentativas*, Barcelona: Icaria.

15. A reference to Eugenio Castro, a member of the Surrealist Group in Madrid and the author of Castro E. (2011), *La flor más azul del mundo*, Logroño: Pepitas de Calabaza.

16. A reference to Jaime Vindel, the ecosocialist art historian and author of "Entropía, capital y malestar: una historia cultural", in Jappe et al. (2019), *Comunismos por venir*, Barcelona: Icaria.

victory”. My son Lautaro tells me that we still have good video games programmed collaboratively using open source code, though no longer those online multiplayer platforms that were unviable in energy terms, as well as psychologically addictive. But it’s fascinating how board games have taken up the baton and in such a creative way: nowadays there is no group of friends worth its salt that has not invented its own board game!

This Situationist-provincial realisation of art did not catch us unawares. But what did take us by surprise was the massive explosion in sport. How did we not see that coming? It’s obvious that you and I have always shared the leanings typical of bookish types. The Decathlon phenomenon and all its derivations were full of good ecological promises! We’ve gone beyond the foibles of the early 21st century, such as equipping ourselves with vast amounts of technological devices or engaging in long-distance sports tourism. And we must admit that mass participation in sports has contributed to ecosocialism by adding a considerable measure of sociological stability and improved quality of life! The lower leagues in the most diverse sports, many of them new and outlandish, are some of the most vibrant events of the social calendar. The data released by the Confederate Institute of Statistics (CIS) show that almost 85% of the population actively engage in sport. And even though we still have football stars, Laura Acosta or Mario Luque’s charisma cannot be compared with the hypnotic influence exerted by Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo at the beginning of the century. Celebrity idols are fewer and farther between. But good examples close at hand and more readily accessible are increasing in number. And I’m sure the young girls of Ferrol appreciate pitting themselves against each other in a game of medieval football (they’re spectacular, with hundreds of people taking part on each side) on Valdoviño Beach with Helga Prieto (the star of the Racing de Ferrol women’s team) much more than they would a photo taken with Acosta.

Undoubtedly it is this increasing interest in sport, allied with a more plant-based diet, an atmosphere that is less polluted and the continuing existence of our public health systems, that has enabled us to maintain our life expectancy. The pessimistic predictions of a number of friends that the death rate in the 21st century would be tremendously high have proven to be mistaken. And in our countries, having more than two children is almost seen automatically as a cultural aberration, on a par with the acceptance that incest is taboo. Is this restrictive demographic control? The issue is still open to debate, but as a number of our feminist friends and colleagues pointed out years ago, we are seeing that if you give women rights on an equal footing – not only reproductive rights but also financial and political rights – the demographic transition will take place without further intervention, in a gentle *laissez-faire*.

I talked earlier of the eroticising of everyday life. The sexual revolution of the 21st century, our “bonoboc turn”, as the anthropologist Lucía Gándara put it, has proved incredible: what a marvellous Hegelian synthesis! We are a much more promiscuous society, one in which we fuck more often and better, with far more empathy and a lot more playfulness, with desires less conditioned by the aesthetic standards set by advertising or the gestural archetypes of commercial porn. But at the same time, the loving partnership is much more solid, and couples consisting of friends who love each other, even married couples!, are increasing in number and enduring, laying the foundations for all kinds of families that are no longer suffocating. What a

difference in comparison with the compulsive neoliberal sexuality of the Tinder era! What a delightful distance we have travelled from what Santiago Alba Rico termed “a world of singletons, on the loose and alone”, incapable of falling in love, which we now see as binge-and-purge narcissism that enables the disconsolately lonely to interact ¹⁷! I'd like to draw a comparison with an old song by Nacho Vegas that comes to mind ¹⁸. Nowadays, when there's a full moon at night, werewolves surrender as never before to their wildest orgasms and their most twisted fantasies. But when dawn comes, they no longer die of grief, as this song had it.

How comforting it is to see that hedonism and sustainability are fully compatible! The true *carpe diem* of Horace, who urged us to gratefully enjoy the simple miracles of everyday life, is forcing out that adulterated *carpe diem* that became the official watchword of the consumer society. The monstrous traits that became all too familiar during the hedonism of the Great Acceleration were owing to the sickness of capitalist accumulation. The Zero-Miles Pleasure Movement (which so closely resembles what I imagined many years back and termed barefoot dandyism) is unquestionably one of the most widespread and interesting countercultures to have emerged in recent years. Its ramifications are wide-reaching: arts like interior design, massage and craft clothing design and making are today part of a broad DIO (do-it-ourselves) movement. Our ecosocialist cuisine, based on local produce, is growing increasingly subtle. As people have more time, there is no social event that is not accompanied by delicious home-made food, wine and beer, all produced using almost extinct local varieties that have been resurrected by local growers. If there was a sensualometer capable of measuring the variety and intensity of sensations, this contribution of recipes devised by unknown individuals to a network of reciprocity would make a laughingstock of the cuisine d'auteur at the beginning of the century.

Even drug use no longer serves as a tool of mass medication and social control which, under the guise of flouting the rules, regulated the collective states of anxiety and frustration caused by capitalist alienation. As in the past, young people today are once again reading essays by Huxley and Castaneda, as well as books that initiate them into important mysteries. And they spend many hours collecting the psychotropic drugs offered by their local ecosystem (here in Galicia, the current craze is fungi that grow wild deep in the new forests that are springing up in place of the old eucalyptus plantations). However, framed within the new emerging world visions, these forays into the unknown realms of the consciousness no longer seem either ridiculous or superficial.

On this point, even though it is a phenomenon of great moment, the years are passing and I find it difficult to reconcile myself to the return of spiritualities, both traditional and new. Though I accept their importance. The alliance with Christianity has been fundamental at the political level, of course. In retrospect, it has to be acknowledged that the *Laudato Si'* was one of the most momentous documents of the century and consequently ever. The blend of Buddhist and Taoist wisdom with Hellenistic ethics (especially those of Epicurus), in which you were a pioneer, has laid the foundations for the new moral common sense that we have settled on ¹⁹. And I accept that the last major anthropological task still outstanding – the supplanting of an anthropocentric paradigm with a biocentric paradigm (although I still think this will take thousands of years) – can only grow out of the success of

17. Alba Rico S. (2015), *Leer con niños*, Barcelona: Random House.

18. A reference to the song “Ciudad Vampira”, by Nacho Vegas on his album *Resituación* (2014).

19. See Riechmann J. (2017), *¿Vivir como buenos huérfanos?*, Madrid: Catarata.

Gaianism, now in its infancy (though some of its expressions still seem crazy to me and are, in political terms, unbearably irritating). In short, this cultural explosion of compassion, this widespread acceptance of finiteness as a gift and not as a hindrance, would not have been possible without the return of spiritualities. And without doubt saving one's soul, or, more simply, meditating, is that type of praxis whereby we can construct a meaning of life that comes to terms with a finite planet.

This brief rundown of the most notable traits of luxurious poverty as a cultural revolution may not be new but even so I believe it allows us to better assess our potential. What stirs in the hearts of Russian demonstrators, but also of the wave of young people that threatened to shake the US Democratic Party to its core, as Alexandria did 30 years ago, is not just a fear of climate change: it is that we are being increasingly won over by our austere and environmentally friendly model of happiness.

I'm going to end with a confession, Jorge: I look at my grandchildren and I feel something I never expected to feel at this stage of the game. All my life, I've been tormented by their judgement as the generation coming up behind us. But in all honesty, I see them growing up surrounded by the gifts of luxurious poverty and I am moved by something similar to healthy envy. Oh to be 15 or 20 years old today! To continue with the lyrics of *Le Temps des Cerises*, seeing as we're celebrating the Commune, I see that the girls of today have much more madness in their heads and the lovers of today much more sun in their hearts than we did. When I am plagued by doubts, I cling to their brand-new joy.

I will close here. Best wishes from your friend Emilio.

The views and opinions published in this section mirror the principles of academic freedom and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the L'Internationale confederation and its members.

