
Industry, housing and contamination: How Mexico's poor were sold into debt and forced into market relationships for water

Joshua Greene*¹ and Solene Morvant-Roux¹

¹University of Geneva [Switzerland] – Suisse

Résumé

By arguing for an expanded understanding of Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), showing the interrelation between all non-wage forms of survival (care and community support, ecological services, public services, public protections, rights and debt), this paper shows how Mexico's pro-poor discourse of industrialization and housing have created new forms of poverty, market dependence and reliance on debt. Following Mosse's (2010) work in India, this paper clearly shows how capitalism simultaneously generates profits as well as poverty, in an industrial area of Mexico. The paper begins by tracing the parallel developments of Mexico's unregulated industrial and federal housing policies, which have locked large numbers of working poor families into toxic landscapes. These historical developments contextualize the current access to water crisis. The paper then shows how the water provision policies in this region have failed to keep up with issues of contamination and demand, leaving families completely dependent on market forms of access for water. Utilizing a theoretical framework building on SRT the paper will analyze these developments in respect to the livelihood strategies of residents in this region. This broadened scope of SRT, as encouraged by Bhattacharya (2017) and Katz (2004), and akin to Wood's (2002) idea of "self-reproduction," will allow the paper to show how working class burdens increase when contamination is left unchecked and previously plentiful ecological services are unavailable. In the cases presented here, residents buy bottled water as their only source of safe drinking water. Finally, the paper argues for an expanded SRT framework to show how publicly provided services and protections along with ecological services are in a direct relationship with an increased reliance, on market-provided goods and debt. The article utilizes fieldwork carried out in the 2016-2018 period in this region.

Mots-Clés: social reproduction, contamination, commodification, debt, financialized citizenship

*Intervenant