

What Should Be the Objective of an Emancipatory Project?

International Journal of Health
Services
2020, Vol. 50(3) 253–263
© The Author(s) 2020
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0020731420908139
journals.sagepub.com/home/joh



Vicente Navarro^{1,2}

Abstract

This article covers a very central issue in the discussions of the implications of exploitation for the health, quality of life, and well-being of populations. Essentially, the objective of any emancipatory project should be the elimination of any form of exploitation, whether of class, gender, race, nation, or the environment. This article explores the interrelatedness between different types of exploitation and demonstrates how all forms of exploitation are impacted by the political context within which they exist. It compares the levels of class and gender exploitation (as well as environmental exploitation) in countries governed by different political traditions, underlining the enormous importance this political context has in shaping not only each form of exploitation but how they are related. The article concludes that those countries which have an ideological project that connects all these different projects of liberation have less exploitation of each type of discrimination.

Keywords

emancipation, intersectionality, transversality, liberation projects, exploitation

Essentially, the objective of any emancipatory project should be the elimination of any form of exploitation, whether of class, gender, race, nation, or the environment. I will start by defining what I mean by exploitation: how it is presented, how to detect it, and how it can be reduced and eliminated. We say that A exploits B when A is better off at the expense of B being worse off. A and B could be a social class, a gender, a race, a nation, or a natural environment.

Allow me to offer some examples of these types of exploitation. When an employee is paid less than the value that he or she contributes so that the employer's profits are greater, there is exploitation by class. When a couple (man and woman) both arrive home after work and the woman always goes to the kitchen to prepare their dinner while the man sits in front of the television to enjoy himself, there is exploitation by gender. When a white person is paid more than a black person for the same work, there is racial exploitation. When a nation-state imposes unfair conditions of international trade on another, poorer nation-state, there is exploitation of the poorer nation by the richer nation. And when Volkswagen is aware of the damage caused by selling cars that produce more than the legally permitted

levels of contamination, but continues to profit from the sale of these cars at the expense of the population's health and of the environment, there is environmental exploitation. Needless to say, many other forms of exploitation exist, but in this article I will focus on class, gender, and environmental exploitation.

Do All of These Forms of Exploitation Have Anything in Common?

This question is incredibly important: there is an urgent need to identify the causes and common elements of all the different kinds of exploitation to be able to propose transversal policies that can unite the various existing liberation struggles. And the answer to this fundamental question is YES, the different forms of exploitation are

¹Health and Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

²Political Sciences and Public Policy, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain

Corresponding Author:

Vicente Navarro, 624 N. Broadway, Baltimore, Maryland 21205, USA.
Email: vnavarr2@jhu.edu

indeed related. The main focus of this article will be to explore this answer in more depth. The interrelatedness of different forms of exploitation is a necessary consequence of the fact that every person in our society has a gender and a race, belongs to a social class and a nation, and lives in an environment. Their identity is shaped by every one of these conditions, the combination of which defines them as a human being and is constantly expressed through their behavior. Identity considerably affects and influences the configuration of social movements against exploitation.

Let's look at 2 examples of countries at opposite ends of the scale regarding tackling different forms of exploitation. One is the United States, a country which I know very well after having lived there for half a century. This country has an abundance of large social movements, all fighting for various kinds of emancipation. One example is the large feminist social movement, led by the National Organization for Women (NOW), which organizes protests and campaigns attended by millions of women. There are movements in defense of the rights of black citizens, of which Martin Luther King Jr. was a leader in his time. There are also very prominent ecological movements, and we could continue this list with a long etcetera. However, the subjects of these movements still have very little relative power and very few rights. Let's take women's rights, for example: the average maternity leave is just 2 weeks and is not paid. Women's lack of power in the United States is also demonstrated by the very small number of female parliamentarians in the U.S. Congress, which is one of the lowest in the OECD countries (the richest countries in the world). Meanwhile, black people in the United States continue to experience extreme discrimination (the fact that the country has had a black president, Barack Obama, has not changed this), and environmental conditions are very deteriorated in large urban areas, with enormous variation among different districts. (If you go to New York City, I urge you not only to visit Manhattan – which is where the higher-income sectors of the population live – but also to visit the Bronx and Queens, where the working class – the majority of New York's population – live. Compare the environmental quality in these neighborhoods with that of Manhattan; you will be able to see extreme differences between the various districts according to the social class of their populations.)

One characteristic of these movements in the United States is that they operate as silos, each one exclusively defending the interests of the sector of the population that they represent (victims of a certain type of discrimination and exploitation). And the reality is that, even though these movements are numerous and highly visible, the social, labor, political, and economic rights of each group are still very limited. No element of

transversality transforms these movements into components within a common project. The atomization and division of these social liberation movements is enormously debilitating for them.

The United States can be compared with Sweden, another country where I have lived and which I am very familiar with. This country has no strong feminist movement. Nor is there a strong movement for black people's rights or a strong ecological movement. What does exist, however, is a very powerful movement (the socialist movement) that has distinct sensibilities toward the different forms of exploitation: its main objective is to eliminate exploitation altogether. Hence, women and people of color in Sweden have many more social, work, and political rights than those in the United States, and there is more respect for the environment than in the United States.

Why do these differences exist between the United States and Sweden? The answer to this question is that these two countries have different sociopolitical contexts, which are conditioned largely by the existing form of capitalism in each one. The specific type of capitalism prevalent in each country shapes the sociopolitical structure of the country.

The Sociopolitical Context Under Distinct Forms of Capitalism

We must be aware that European capitalism is different from the capitalism of the United States, and both are different (very different, in fact) from Latin American capitalism. The lack of awareness about this reality causes serious mistakes when people try to apply the political experiences of one continent to those of another. Each form of capitalism generates, for example, a specific structure of social classes and a specific manner in which the power of each class is manifested and displayed. In this sense, it is very important that we do not subscribe to the ideology, exported from the United States to countries around the world, that social classes in the supposedly advanced capitalist societies have disappeared and have been replaced by a social structure which involves the rich at the top, the poor at the bottom, and everyone else under the category of the "middle classes." This ideology is ubiquitous in the narratives of the U.S. political and media establishments and is becoming common in the majority of European countries as well, shaping conventional wisdom so that the term "working class" is no longer used (even by the representatives of the left) and the working class itself is believed to have either disappeared or turned into the middle class.

Another way in which people approach the issue of social structure, usually prominent in the narratives of those who define themselves as progressives, such as

Joseph Stiglitz (who won the Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences in 2001), is to define this structure in terms of 2 components: the super-rich (the top 1%) and everyone else (that is to say, the 99%). This simplification ignores that the 1% has approximately 20% of the population at its service, maintaining and reproducing the economic, media, and political power of the top 1%. This situation is an integral part of the system of control and domination of the majority of the population by the elite few.

Similar to this approach are the analyses of authors such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which reduce the social structure to “those on top” and “those at the bottom” (also defined as “the people”). This categorization is attractive, yet it ignores the fact that within “the people” (or “the 99%”) are various social classes with differing – and sometimes conflicting – interests. A doctor and a construction worker may both be part of “those at the bottom,” as they may both be exploited by the top 1%, but their lived experiences will differ greatly. The challenge of the progressive forces is to try and find points of commonality among “the people,” while recognizing that the people also have different interests according to their social class. Failing to recognize that will cause great problems; indeed, the decline of social democracy in Europe has been partially caused by the lack of attention to social class. It is logical, reasonable, and necessary that a left-wing party, once it has established an electoral base in the working class, wants to expand to other bases and therefore appeals to the middle classes, including middle- and even high-income sectors of society. But this movement must be done without shifting the party’s politics to the center or the right, as this would inevitably cause a loss of support from the working class (which would probably either abstain or vote for other parties). And this is what has happened in many countries: the social democratic parties have been losing their votes from the working class, which increasingly abstains, leaving the political debate to be focused on the middle classes. The United States is the clearest example of this. The Democratic Party – which used to be called the People’s Party – originally had its electoral base in the working population, but today is the party of the middle classes. Meanwhile, the majority of the U.S. working class (which is the majority of the population) does not vote. The extremely high abstention in the United States – which reaches up to 45% of the population eligible to vote in the presidential elections – belongs mostly to that class.

Nevertheless, the Working Class Continues to Exist

The evidence shows, however, that social classes continue to exist today in both Europe and the United States. This includes a capitalist class, which is now

often called the “corporate class,” as the term “capitalist class” is considered antiquated. The individuals who belong to this class are the owners and managers of the large corporations. There is also a petit bourgeoisie, a middle class, and a working class. This latter class continues to exist, but with different compositions and characteristics according to the prevalent form of capitalism in the country. It is also interesting to note that in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, more people define themselves as working class than as middle class. Interestingly, when people are asked if they belong to the upper, middle, or lower class, the majority reply “middle class.” Yet, if the question is framed as a choice between upper, middle, or *working* class, more people respond saying they are “working class” than middle class. The term “lower class” is offensive and should never be used. It is an indicator of class discrimination, classism. One can use the term “lower-income class” but not “lower class.”

How Is Class Power Expressed?

Power is derived from many different factors, and it is expressed in many different ways. But what is for sure is that class power is manifested through the state, through political institutions (such as political parties), and through social institutions (such as unions and trade associations) which are rooted in the class that has created them. In Europe, the instruments created by the working class have been the left-wing political parties (social democratic and communist parties) and workers’ unions. The dominant class has created liberal, conservative, or Christian-democrat parties, in opposition to these left-wing parties. Never has a country’s business class created a left-wing party – socialist or communist. Equally, never has a country’s working class created a right-wing party – for example, a liberal party.

A core objective of left-wing parties has historically been the elimination of class exploitation. This can be easily seen by looking at the indicators of such exploitation in various countries and analyzing the evolution of these indicators according to the dominant political forces during the period between 1945 (after the Second World War) and 2010. These indicators are (1) income distribution, measured by the Gini coefficient; (2) the relative poverty rate (with relative poverty defined as the condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed to maintain the average standard of living in the society in which they live); and (3) the differences in income between the highest 20% and lowest 20% of earners, measured by the S80/S20 quotient. We can see in Table 1 that countries with stronger left-wing forces have less inequality and

Table 1. Analysis of class exploitation.

Model	Index of the Strength of the Left	Country	Exploitation of Class ^a		
			Gini Index (2016) (%)	Relative Poverty (2016) (%)	S20/S80 (2016)
Social democrat	8.5	Sweden	28.2	9	4.2
		Finland	25.9	6	3.7
		Denmark	26.3	6	3.7
		Average	26.8	7	3.9
Conservative (Christian democrat)	6	Germany	29.4	10	4.6
		Austria	28.4	10	4.5
		The Netherlands	28.5	8	4.3
		Belgium	26.6	10	3.9
		Luxembourg	30.4	11	4.9
		France	29.1	8	4.3
		Average	28.7	9.5	4.4
Southern Europe (post-dictatorship)	5	Spain	34.1	16	6.5
		Italy	32.8	14	5.9
		Portugal	33.1	13	5.6
		Greece	33.3	14	6.0
		Average	33.3	14.3	6.0
Liberal	3	United Kingdom	35.1	11	6.0
		Ireland	29.7	10	4.5
		United States	39.1	18	8.5
		Average	34.6	13	6.3
		EU-15	30.1	10.4	4.8

Source: Author's own table using OECD data.

^aExploitation of class refers to the levels of poverty and inequality in terms of income distribution.

relative poverty, and the balance between the incomes of the highest-earning 20% and lowest-earning 20% of the population is more equal. In the Northern European countries, the social democratic parties have governed for the greatest part of the post-Second World War period, in coalition with communist, green, or agricultural parties. In Central Europe, the dominant parties have been conservative or Christian-democrat parties. And the Southern European countries have been governed for long periods by ultra-right-wing fascist or quasi-fascist dictatorships followed by (insufficient) democracies with very weak left-wing parties during the post-dictatorship periods.

The United States has never been governed by a socialist or communist party, and for many years the dominant debate has been between a conservative party (the Republican Party) and a liberal party (the Democratic Party). This model reflects a political context distinct from that of the Western European countries. A similar model has appeared in the majority of Latin American countries, with notable exceptions (although I believe I know Latin America well, in this article I will focus on the countries on both sides of the North Atlantic).

How Has the Left Wing Evolved on the 2 Sides of the North Atlantic?

It is important to take into account that one phase in the emancipatory process of the working class, during the first part of the 20th century, had enormous implications for these countries. This phase involved the socialists' abandoning of the historical demand to nationalize the major means of production and substituting it with the establishment of social pacts between the working class (labor) on one side (which accepts the private property of the means of production) and the world of capital (owners and managers of large private enterprises) on the other (which accepts the empowerment of the working class and its unions). These social pacts allowed the establishment of the welfare state, which uses public funds to guarantee the provision of public services (such as health and education) and the transfers of public funds (such as pensions) to all of the population as part of their universal programs of social and labor rights. These universal programs of the welfare state were instated to guarantee collective social protection (superseding the individual), empowering the entire citizenry. This empowerment of working people reached its

maximum expression during the decades that followed the Second World War. This war was predominantly a war against Fascism and Nazism, which the latter lost. And it should always be remembered that the soldiers who fought in the front lines of this war were the children of the working class, which paid the price for this great sacrifice (as is the case in all wars).

The victory over fascism empowered the working class, whose expectations had increased considerably; they had sacrificed so much during the war, for the sake of a better quality of life for their families and their children. These raised expectations explain why, in the majority of countries on both sides of the North Atlantic, the welfare state reached its peak of development immediately after the Second World War. For these reasons, whenever the instruments of the working class are stronger (left-wing parties and unions), there is a greater reduction of social inequalities, alongside an increase in the percentage of national income derived from labor and a greater development of the welfare state.

Universalist Reformism Is Part of the Liberation Project

At this point, allow me to make a critique of some supposedly revolutionary positions which claim that the welfare state has diluted the working class's motivation to transform society by capturing it within the system. A "revolutionary" columnist, following this line of thought, criticized the book *Hay alternativas. Propuestas para crear empleo y bienestar social en España* [There are alternatives. Proposals to create employment and social well-being in Spain] – in which Juan Torres, Alberto Garzón, and I proposed alternative public policies to the neoliberal policies of austerity and cuts of public social expenditures imposed by the governing neoliberal parties in Spain – for trying to "humanize capitalism" and therefore putting the goal of working class liberation further out of reach. Their argument posited that if the conditions of the working class are worse, there is a higher chance of a "revolution."

Knowledge of how the working-class movement has developed over time shows how enormously false this simplification is. Workers want work when they do not have it. When they do have work, they want a good job. When they have a good job, they want control over their work process, and when they achieve this, they want control over their place of work. This evolution of demands shows how reformism can be an accumulation of workers' rights (each of which increases their power), which can bring them to the point of controlling their workplace, including the means of production. The Meidner reforms in Sweden, thanks to which Swedish

workers were able to create a reserve fund in each workplace, allowing them to buy the stocks of their businesses, was the greatest threat that developed capitalism had encountered in the 20th century. The dominant class's visceral opposition to these reforms came from their certainty that these reforms would have led to the end of their control over the means of production and distribution. It was a huge mistake of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's leadership to concede to the dominant class's demand to interrupt the reforms, against the wishes of the Swedish workers' unions.

What Is Neoliberalism?

The mid-20th century's enormous improvements and advances of the left in democratic European countries and in the United States (where the Democratic Party used to be known as the People's Party and as a strong left-wing branch) generated a response from the dominant classes, determined to regain their lost power. Their response ruptured the social pact and mounted a full-scale attack on the labor, social, and political gains that the working class had achieved in that period (1945–1978, known as the Golden Age of Capitalism), intending to weaken that class. Neoliberalism is the response of the capitalist class (now called the corporate class) to these economic, social, and political victories of the working class. Their regressive reforms to the labor market, deregulation of the mobility of labor and capital, and attack on social rights through cutting welfare state funds were all interventions directed at weakening the working class. These policies have characterized all of the U.S. and U.K. governments since the 1970s, starting with the administrations of U.S. president Ronald Reagan (whose first act was to attack the airport workers' strike, substituting the workers with the army) and U.K. prime minister Margaret Thatcher. They have even been adopted by parties that define themselves as left wing (using the concept of the "Third Way"), such as the Labour governments of Tony Blair, the German Social Democrat government of Gerhard Schröder, and the Zapatero government of the PSOE (the Spanish Socialist Party) in Spain. All these parties lost large parts of their working-class electorate during the Great Recession, since the neoliberal policies of such parties enormously damaged their quality of life and well-being. The greatest damage was done where the working classes were weakest, such as in the United States, where the life expectancy of this part of the population has been decreasing as a consequence of the application of these neoliberal policies.

These policies were successful in their goal of reducing the power of labor, as Table 2 shows. In this table we can see how, in the great majority of countries on both sides

Table 2. Income Derived From Work as Percent of All Incomes.

“The Golden Age of Capitalism” (1945–1978)			Peak of neoliberalism 2012 (%)
Social Pact	Capital/Employment (%)		
Countries that would be the EU-15	72.9		66.5
Germany	70.4		65.2
France	74.3		68.2
Italy	72.2		64.4
United Kingdom	74.3		72.7
Spain	72.4		58.4
United States	70.0		63.6

Source: Table 32 in ECFIN. European Commission Statistical Annex; Fall 2011.

of the North Atlantic (all of which have implemented neoliberal policies), the incomes from work as a percentage of all incomes dropped substantially during the neoliberal period (1978–2012). This decline created not only an enormous social crisis but also a major economic crisis, with a huge decrease in economic growth. This is unsurprising, as the greatest driver of the economy in any developed capitalist country is domestic demand, predominantly determined by people’s salaries. Hence, as people’s payrolls dropped, so did demand, bringing down with it the economic growth of countries and increasing their unemployment levels. This also meant that many families (as well as states) got into debt, which caused a considerable growth of financial capital, that is, of the banks. But the banks, facing such scarce domestic demand, chose speculative investment (such as that which takes place in the real estate sector) as a more profitable option than investment in productive sectors (goods and services), whose demand was being reduced due to the decline in domestic demand. This speculative investment reached its peak with the explosion of the housing bubble, which caused the great banking crisis.

How Class Power Has Shaped the Welfare State

An indicator of class domination in a country is the level of development (and the characteristics) of its welfare state. The stronger the left-wing forces are, the greater the provision of services (such as health, education, social services, preschools, home care services, social housing, and many more) and transfers (such as pensions and benefits, family support, and others).

Table 3 shows the state revenues as a percentage of the GDP in 2009 (at the start of the crisis). We can see that in the Southern European countries, as well as in Ireland (countries where the working class and the

Table 3. State Revenues as a Percentage of the GDP (2009).

EU-15	44%
Spain	34%
Greece	37%
Portugal	39%
Ireland	34%
Sweden	54%

Source: Author’s own table using Eurostat.

Table 4. Social Expenditure as a Percentage of the GDP (2009).

EU-15	33.4%
Spain	28.7%
Greece	29.9%
Portugal	32.8%
Ireland	31.8%
Sweden	36.5%

Source: Author’s own table using information from Eurostat.

Abbreviation: GDP, gross domestic product.

left-wing parties are weak), the state revenues as a percentage of GDP are much lower than the average of the EU-15 (a group of European countries with similar economic development) and much less than in Sweden (where the parties rooted in the working class have been stronger since the Second World War). The scarcity of state revenues in these countries determines their very limited social spending, which has been much lower than the EU-15 average and much, much lower than Sweden (see Table 4). The degree of underdevelopment of the welfare state in these countries is also demonstrated by the percentage of people who work in public services

(of which the most dominant are the services within the welfare state), which, as Table 5 shows, is very low in the southern European countries and in Ireland. In these countries, again, the percentage is lower than the EU-15 average and much lower than that of Sweden. In fact, if this percentage in Spain went from being 1 adult in every 10, as it is now, to 1 in every 5, as it is in Sweden, Spain would have 3.5 million more employees. This would practically eliminate the unemployment in the country, which has the highest unemployment rate in the European Union.

Another indicator of class power is the redistributive capacity of states, as shown in Table 6. As is well known, all state interventions affect, in one way or another, the income distribution of a country. Therefore, if we analyze how the public spending on social transfers affects the poverty level, we can see that these transfers diminish the poverty level in Spain – a Southern European state – from 29.5% to 22.3%. This reduction is much smaller and more limited than the average for the EU-15 countries, where the poverty level goes from 26.7% to 16.3% with these redistributive transfers, and in Sweden – a Northern European country – where the poverty level goes from 29.9% to 16.2%. The redistributive impact of the state is much less in countries with a weak working class, as is the case in Southern European countries like

Spain, and not in Northern European countries like Sweden, where labor is stronger.

How Class Power Appears in an Analysis of Who Pays Taxes

The effect of social class on income levels is clearly displayed when we analyze who pays taxes and how much they pay. Table 7 shows this class bias. The first line shows the level of state revenues in Spain, a representative of Southern Europe, as well as the EU-15 average and the level in Sweden. The second line shows us how, if we take the tax burden of a Swedish manufacturing worker as a reference point (100%), the average manufacturing worker of the EU-15 countries pays 88% of what a Swedish counterpart pays, and the comparable Spanish worker pays 72%. Now, when we look at what a super-rich member of the top 1% (whose incomes are derived from the ownership of capital) pays in taxes in Spain, compared to the super-rich in Sweden, we see that the Spanish 1% pay just 20% of what the Swedish counterparts pay (the average super-rich member of the EU-15 pays 70% of what the Swedish super-rich pay). In reality, the Spanish super-rich pay even less – 8% of what the Swedish super-rich pay – because the country’s tax deductions and other financial structures allow them to pay less than what they should be paying. From these data we can deduce the following: if manufacturing workers (and these are generally the best-paid workers within the working class of any country) pay less than their Swedish counterparts, and these workers are those who pay the most taxes out of all European manufacturing workers, then those who pay much, much less in taxes are the Spanish capitalists (a term which is not used due to being supposedly anti-quated). Another sign of classism.

Table 5. Public Occupation^a as a Percentage of the Adult Population (2016).

EU-15 ^b	15.1%
Catalonia	8.2%
Spain	9.8%
Greece	11.3%
Ireland	12.6%
Sweden	22.9%

Source: Author’s own table using information from Ilostat, Eurostat, and Idescat.

^aThe majority of public occupation is in the public services of the welfare state, such as health, education, social services, social housing, preschools, home care services, etc.

^bAverage using data from Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, United Kingdom (2015), and Sweden.

Table 6. Poverty levels before and after social transfers.

	Poverty Before Social Transfers (2016) (%)	Poverty After Social Transfers (2016) (%)
Catalonia	24.7	19.2
Spain	29.5	22.3
EU-15	26.7	16.3
Sweden	29.9	16.2

Source: Author’s own table using information from Eurostat and Idescat.

How the Exploitation of Gender Is Connected to Class Exploitation

When we look at the most underdeveloped and underfinanced sector of the welfare state in most developed capitalist countries, we can see that it is family support

Table 7. Analysis of tax payments.

	Spain/ Catalonia	EU-15	Sweden
State revenues	34% GDP	44% GDP	52% GDP
Fiscal policy (taxes paid by manufacturing workers)	74%	88%	100%
Taxes paid (the top 1%)	20%	70%	100%

Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance, Spain, 2010. Abbreviation: GDP, gross domestic product.

and care services. And to say “family” is equivalent to saying “women.” These services primarily include pre-schools and home care services for incapacitated and dependent individuals, all of which is known as the fourth pillar of the welfare state. It has been called this to emphasize that the welfare state should be based on 4 pillars, corresponding to 4 fundamental rights: the first right is access to health care; the second is access to education; the third is the right to retire and receive a pension; and the fourth should be family care services, but this might not exist in all countries. Due to the growth of the feminist movement, this right is now known as the right to access provision of care (in the economic narrative, this is known as the economy of caring).

In the same way that the first 3 pillars (health, education, and pensions) depend on the force of a country’s left-wing parties, the fourth pillar of the welfare state also depends fundamentally on the strength of left-wing socialist parties (including social democrats, labor parties, communists, or anarchists), which have historically been more sensitive to different forms of exploitation (such as gender-based exploitation) than right-wing parties. In fact, the reason that the care economy is so underdeveloped is due precisely to the weakness of the

country’s feminist movement, combined with the historic weakness of the country’s left-wing forces. Table 8 shows that there is greater sensitivity toward exploitation of *gender* in those countries (measured by the Gender Inequality Index) in which the parties with a greater sensitivity toward *class* exploitation are stronger. This index measures the different dimensions of health equality (ratio of maternal mortality and rate of teenage pregnancy), women’s empowerment (proportion of women with a secondary education and proportion of female parliamentarians), and the labor market (rate of women’s participation in the labor market).

Why Is This So? The Case of Sweden

As I have stated, an intrinsic part of socialist thought is the drive to eliminate all forms of exploitation. Although originally focused on class exploitation, the socialist movement expanded to fight for other forms of exploitation – all of which are related to the former – such as the exploitation of women. Women’s emancipation required their right to access work and therefore their incorporation into the labor market. Of the EU-15 and OECD countries, Sweden has the highest rate of

Table 8. Analysis of gender exploitation.

Model	Index of the Strength of the Left	Country	Exploitation of Gender Gender Inequality Index (2016) (%)
Social democrat	8.5	Sweden	4.4
		Finland	5.8
		Denmark	4.0
		Average	4.7
Conservative (Christian democrat)	6	Germany	6.5
		Austria	7.7
		The Netherlands	4.3
		Belgium	4.7
		Luxembourg	6.6
		France	10.0
		Average	6.6
Southern Europe (post-dictatorship)	5	Spain	8.0
		Italy	8.7
		Portugal	8.8
		Greece	1.5
		Average	9.3
Liberal	3	United Kingdom	11.9
		Ireland	11.1
		United States	18.9
		Average	14.0
		EU-15	7.6

Source: Author’s own table using United Nations data.

women's incorporation into the labor market (76%). Southern European countries have the lowest rates. Women's entrance into the labor market calls for 2 changes at the same time: (1) that women are able to combine their family responsibilities with employment or a career; and, equally important, (2) that men share the family responsibilities with women. In Sweden, women spend an average of 28 hours a week doing family chores, and men, 20 hours. In Southern Europe, this number is 42 for women and 8 for men.

For this reason, within the socialist project is a certain priority to emancipate and expand the rights of working-class women. Sweden has no strong feminist movement. However, the left-wing movement (the socialists and allied parties, as well as the class-based unions) is sensitive to feminist issues, which are explicitly incorporated into its ideology and program. Women's liberation (which, although focused on working-class women, also includes women of other social classes) is distinct but strongly connected to class liberation. To emphasize this point does not mean that the former is dependent on the latter, but that the strength of the former depends on the strength and sensitivity of the latter. This is confirmed by the data in Table 8.

Table 8 also clearly shows, using the indicators of the Gender Inequality Index, that the stronger the left-wing forces are, the less exploitation there is of both class and gender. The table shows that in countries which have been mainly governed by liberal parties, such as the United States, the indicators show a much greater gender inequality than in the countries which have been mostly governed by socialist forces, despite these former countries having strong women's movements. In the United States, the working class is extremely weak, the welfare state is very limited, and huge gender and racial inequalities exist.

Liberal Feminism Is Different Than Socialist Feminism

Hence, the ideology of any feminist movement (and its interaction with other liberation movements) is of utmost importance. The majority of the feminist movement in the United States has liberal tendencies and operates completely autonomously and independently from other movements – meaning it is competing with them all for the state's attention. In fact, the largest U.S. feminist movement, NOW, supported Hillary Clinton as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate and was very hostile toward Bernie Sanders, the socialist candidate, because he (besides being a man) was advocating for the elimination of class, gender, *and* racial exploitation within a socialist project. They feared his success would have reduced the prominence of NOW and its

liberal directors by incorporating their demands into a broader socialist project. They ignored the fact that joining forces with other social movements would empower them even more than if they all worked in silos. Incidentally, the polls showed that Sanders had more supporters than Trump. His failure in the primaries (due to the Democratic Party's hostility toward him) was a key element in Trump's victory: it channeled all of the popular classes' discontent toward the liberal political-media establishment, represented by Hillary Clinton (who was NOW's preferred candidate). Indeed, it was Clinton who, when she was secretary of state during the Obama administration, promoted economic globalization, outsourcing U.S. businesses to other countries, which negatively affected U.S. workers by reducing their salaries and the number of available jobs.

There Is No Feminist Movement: There Are as Many Different Types of Feminism as There Are Instruments of Class Exploitation or Liberation

Thus, it is not sufficient to define a women's liberation movement solely as "feminist." A socialist feminist has a very different vision of feminism than a liberal feminist. And both have a very different vision of feminism than a conservative or Christian democrat feminist. Women, as well as men, are divided into social classes and therefore there are as many types of feminism as there are social classes. NOW represents a type of feminism promoted by the liberal political-media establishment, which failed to mobilize the majority of working-class women: these women either abstained or voted for Sanders or Trump, the presidential candidates who were perceived to be anti-establishment.

Environmental Exploitation

Capitalism, and its interminable search to increase capital benefits, has been leading the world into an environmental crisis. One might say in response to this that some countries which do not define themselves as capitalist, like China, have the same level of responsibility regarding the environmental crisis as countries such as the United States.

This argument accepts the self-definition of regimes such as China as socialist, whereas their public policies clearly show otherwise. What exists in China today is what many Maoists predicted long ago: a state capitalism, whose main goal is the amassing of capital, along with the development of a ruling class who manages that capital and exploits the environment – and everyone else – for their own benefit.

Table 9. Analysis of different forms of exploitation.

Model	Index of the Strength of the Left	Country	Exploitation of Class			Exploitation of Gender	Environmental Exploitation
			Gini Index (2016) (%)	Relative Poverty (2016) (%)	S20/S80 (2016)	Gender Inequality Index (2016) (%)	Environmental Sensitivity 2010–2014 (%)
Social democrat	8.5	Sweden	28.2	9	4.2	4.4	62.9
		Finland	25.9	6	3.7	5.8	–
		Denmark	26.3	6	3.7	4.0	–
		Average	26.8	7	3.9	4.7	62.9
Conservative (Christian democrat)	6	Germany	29.4	10	4.6	6.5	47.7
		Austria	28.4	10	4.5	7.7	–
		The Netherlands	28.5	8	4.3	4.3	40.9
		Belgium	26.6	10	3.9	4.7	–
		Luxembourg	30.4	11	4.9	6.6	–
		France	29.1	8	4.3	10.0	–
		Average	28.7	9.5	4.4	6.6	44.3
Southern Europe (post-dictatorship)	5	Spain	34.1	16	6.5	8.0	35.2
		Italy	32.8	14	5.9	8.7	–
		Portugal	33.1	13	5.6	8.8	–
		Greece	33.3	14	6.0	11.5	–
		Average	33.3	14.3	6.0	9.3	35.2
Liberal	3	United Kingdom	35.1	11.0	6.0	11.9	–
		Ireland	29.7	10.0	4.5	11.1	–
		United States	39.1	18.0	8.5	18.9	37.2
		Average	34.6	13.0	6.3	14.0	37.2
		EU-15	30.1	10.4	4.8	7.6	–

Source: Author's own table using data from OECD, United Nations, and World Values Survey.

We can see that the countries on both sides of the North Atlantic (see Table 9) which have been more sensitive toward the elimination of class- and gender-based exploitation have also been more sensitive toward the elimination of environmental exploitation. The reasons for this are easy to understand, because the main victims of such environmental exploitation have also been the victims of class- and gender-based exploitation. Remember the case of New York, which highlighted the differences in the environmental quality according to the social class of the people living in each neighborhood.

I would like to end this article with a brief remark. I am aware that some of the terms and concepts in these pages might be quickly branded as old-fashioned. But it is important to remember that, in science, a concept may be very old without being antiquated. The law of gravity is indeed very old, but that does not make it antiquated. If you do not believe it, jump from a fourth floor and you will see for yourself. The political drama that we have been witnessing in many countries on both sides of the North Atlantic is that many left-wing politicians have been jumping from the fourth floor and have hit the ground. Capitalism leaves its trace in every form of

exploitation; this is why there is such an urgency for the victims of different forms of exploitation to unite and coordinate their forces on the basis of their common interests, in order to face the enormous power of the existing political, economic, financial, and media establishments which profit from such exploitation. History shows this is possible, but to achieve it we must take into consideration certain categories of analysis which are extremely useful for understanding our reality, such as class, and adapt them to our time.

Authors' Note

This article is translated into English from the original version in Spanish by Aeve Ribbons.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Author Biography

Vicente Navarro, MD, DMSA, PhD, studied medicine in Barcelona, Spain in 1962. He studied political economy at the Institute for International Studies in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1963; studied social policy with Richard Titmuss at the London School of Economics, also in 1963, and later at Oxford University in 1964; and graduated in social and health administration from Edinburgh University in 1965. In 1965, he was invited to join the Johns Hopkins University, in the United States, where he obtained his doctorate in Health

and Public Policy in 1969 and joined the faculty, holding a full professorship in Health and Public Policy since 1977. He has been an adviser to the United Nations, to many European and Latin American governments, to the President's Office of the European Parliament, and to both the U.S. government and the U.S. Congress. In 1984 and 1988, he was senior health adviser to Jesse Jackson in the Democratic presidential primaries in the United States. In 1992, Hillary Rodham Clinton, presiding over the working group on the reform of the public health system, invited Navarro to become a member of the group, working at the White House during 1993. He is the author of 25 books, translated into many different languages, and has written more than 400 scientific articles. He is the founder of the *International Journal of Health Services*, one of the best-known quarterlies in health and social policy.