

In 2003 I published an essay entitled “Capitalism as World-Ecology: Marx and Braudel on Environmental History.” This talk extends that exploration. From Marx and Braudel, I took the insights of the *longue durée*, and the geohistorical problematic of both meanings of conjuncture – the French inflection of cyclical history and the Anglophonic rendering of turning point. Braudel realized an unprecedented application of Marx and Engels’ insight in *The German Ideology*: the idea that social relations developed through the web of life. “Environments” were at once, but unevenly and distinctively, producer and product of the human experience and the tension between “modes of life” and “modes of production.” In this light, the genius of Braudel, who was not a Marxist but also not allergic to Marxism, was twofold. On the one hand, Braudel was the greatest historian of his era to break the deadlock of social and environmental determinism, and advance a new synthesis, which today we might call *socio-ecological*. He was not alone: the frontier studies of Innis and Webb predated and prefigured Braudel. But no one carried its world-historical implications further than Braudel. On the other hand, Braudel refused the temptation of an environmental determinism in slow motion. The wheels of history may grind exceedingly slowly, as he reminds us, but not always and not everywhere. Hence the famous Braudelien temporality of structure, conjuncture, event. Crucially, physical environments – as both producer and product – were fundamental to that trinity. Events may be dust, but dust storms can alter the secular trend – and these can occur exceedingly quickly. Such is that case with key moments in the rise of capitalism – in this instance the geohistorical pivot from the Mediterranean to northwestern Europe. Through a critical retrospective and a dialectical prospective, this lecture seeks to extend the possibilities of geohistorical synthesis: historical capitalism as a synthesis of power, profit, and life. Rather than assert Marxist or Braudelien verities, this synthesis engages the “anything but environmental history” perspectives of ecological Marxism, and the “anything but class” perspectives of environmental historiography. On closer inspection, the methodological and geohistorical insights of Braudel and Marx can be mobilized to identify and interpret the turning point of the “long, cold seventeenth century” (Ladurie and Daux) in the history of capitalism as world-ecology. In so doing, we can make better interpretive – and political – sense of today’s climate crisis and its trinity of structure, conjuncture, and event.