

Review – Against the Crisis: Economy and Ecology in a Burning World by Ståle Holgersen

Amongst the most overused terms in politics and journalism, 'crisis' must be a strong contender for the top spot. A quick glance at today's news headlines reveals – amongst others – a nightlife crisis, a tariff crisis, a cholera crisis, a housing crisis, and – heaven forbid – an injury crisis at a leading football club! More specifically, for the Marxist left, the notion of 'the capitalist crisis' has played an important role in our collective political imaginary. How many times have we heard something to the effect that "as the crisis deepens", the working class will shed its illusions and in due course will rally to the socialist cause? Stale Holgersen recent book, *Against the Crisis*, takes issue with both the conceptual confusion surrounding the concept of crisis and, more importantly, at the notion that capitalist crises should be conceived as opportunities for the left.

In relation to the first point, Holgersen proposes a working definition of crisis which comprises three essential elements, as he writes, "*Crises are events that 1) come relatively quickly, 2) are embedded in underlying structures and processes, and 3) have negative effects on people or nature*" (p.5) Thus, as a consequence, he is sceptical about the concept of a 'permacrisis' (the Financial Times' word of the year 2022). As to the second, he stresses the role that crises play in sustaining the system and the political difficulties that they pose for the left:

"While crises can – in theory – help us to reveal and expose capitalism's weaknesses and problems, they are also – in the

actual political economy – central to the reproduction of capitalism. Crises are a good starting point for criticising capitalism, but they also make it harder to actually overthrow the system”; (p.10) moreover,

“If opportunities – as defined in textbooks – are occasions or situations that make it possible to do something you want or have to do, and if opportunities – as conventionally understood – entail moments of excitement, optimism and hopefulness, and chances for advancement, then we must refrain from referring to crises as opportunities for the working class, the environmental movement or the political left” (p.16).

‘Make the Rich Pay for the Crisis!’ may be an attractive slogan but, as Holgersen points out, it is rarely the case that they ever actually do.

Against the Crisis focusses on the nature of the recurrent economic crises under capitalism and on the overarching issue of the ecological crisis. One of the main strengths of the book is how it analyses the specifics of each of these, their similarities and differences, and the complex relationship between them. Holgersen takes issue with the (reassuring?) view that the ecological crisis, in itself, poses a threat to the continued existence of capitalism. Paraphrasing Lenin he wryly observes, “[It] is more likely ... that the last capitalist will sell a jug of gasoline to his last customer in a world on fire; or that the last capitalist will order workers to use the latest technology to produce even more survival kits” (p.106).

In attempting to understand these economic and ecological crises, Holgersen applies an approach which combines both empirical data and structural analysis by way of a series ‘abstractions’. Thus crises, Holgersen argues, need to be understood simultaneously (1) at the ‘surface level’ (e.g. a financial crisis), which is in turn related to (2) the

concrete organisation of nature/capitalism (e.g. 'neoliberalism'), rooted in (3) the crisis tendencies of the system (e.g. the increase in the 'organic composition of capital') which are finally associated with (4) the profit-driven nature of the system and (5) ultimately, with the underlying contradiction between use-value and exchange value which characterises the capitalist system as a whole. It is at these, more fundamental levels of abstraction, that both the economic and the ecological crises – despite their specificities and important differences – can be conceptualised as different manifestations of the same systemic imperatives and contradictions.

Holgersen applies this overall framework to a number of specific issues associated with crises under capitalism. Above all, he underlines the essential class dimensions of such crises. Far from us all being in the 'same boat', crises are caused by one class but typically paid for by another. More broadly he writes,

"[t]hat class struggle intensifies during crises of capitalism may sound like a dream to the left, who might be more than happy to welcome some extra class struggle. But most of this is nothing to cheer about. This is class struggle from above, subtly and quietly, often with murderous efficiency" (p.142).

Against the Crisis also includes a very useful discussion of the relationship between racism, fascism and capitalist crises. For Holgersen racism is a permanent feature of such crises, a predictable response "within a capitalism built for centuries on colonialism and imperialism", but "[w]here racism is the rule, fascism is the exception; if racism is the eternal answer to crisis, fascism is the exceptional solution" (p.187) and "[f]ascism is a solution when it seems that the crises will not be able to reproduce capitalism. In other words, fascism becomes a possibility when the basic hypothesis of this book is challenged. Fascism is the shock therapy when capitalism really needs to change in order to survive"

(p.194).

Holgersen applies a variety of theoretical frameworks to help illuminate the nature of capitalist crises, drawing on both the Trotskyist tradition, especially the work of Ernest Mandel and Daniel Bensaid, and on the 'left eurocommunism' of Nicos Poulantzas, and specifically, on the latter's concept of the 'relative autonomy' of the capitalist state. This represents a potentially innovative fusion of traditions that have traditionally been somewhat remote and indeed hostile to each other; the resumption of a dialogue that briefly took place in the late 1970's and was subsequently lost to history, not least by the virtual disappearance of the 'left eurocommunism' perspective by the early 1980's [\[1\]](#).

However, whilst Holgersen's book is theoretically rich and stimulating, in a refreshing contrast with much current leftwing theorising, it also focusses on the practical responses which capitalist crises demand of the left. Paralleling the analytical abstractions that he employs to understand the nature of crises; he distinguishes between three 'levels' around which the left should formulate such a response. In particular, he distinguishes between (1) crisis management (2) crisis policy and (3) crisis critique and argues convincingly that the left needs all of the above. In fact, it is the weakness of the left at the level of crisis management/policy, in contrast to its relative sophistication at the level of crisis critique, which leaves us vulnerable to collapsing into essentially 'Keynesian' solutions to when the crisis actually hits. Holgersen rightly stresses the urgent need for the left to develop its own distinctive and credible crisis policies and proposes several possible sources for these; including a renewed programme of 'transitional demands', the advocacy of anti-capitalist 'structural reforms' and a strategy which operates simultaneously 'in and against' the capitalist state. As he notes:

"Crisis and its causes are something we must fight against.

Rather than opportunities we look forward to exploring, or moments when the fight for socialism is put on hold, the crises are problems we must solve” (p.19).

Overall, *Against the Crisis* is a fascinating and rewarding read providing useful material on a host of topics. If I have one reservation about the book it would be that whilst correctly stressing the ‘destructive functionality’ of cyclical crises under capitalism and their essential role in ensuring the reproduction of the system, it is not at all clear that similar considerations apply to the more long-term ‘organic’ downturns of the system which can and do span numerous cyclical ‘booms’ and ‘bursts’. It is not of course that Holgersen is unaware of the distinction here and in fact discusses it at various points, but perhaps the relationship between these different ‘crises’ (indeed whether the latter is correctly regarded as a ‘crisis’ in the sense that Holgersen defines the term) could have been explored more thoroughly. The ‘functionality’ of capitalism’s cyclical undulations makes much more intuitive sense than those of its ‘long downturns’, especially when the latter – for example in the case of the ‘Great Depression’ of the 1920’s and 30’s – required a cataclysmic world war to finally resolve. In a similar vein, whilst there is no guarantee that any particular crisis will be the ‘final’ crisis of capitalism, it doesn’t follow that we can’t or shouldn’t talk in terms of an overall systemic decline.

Notwithstanding this, Holgersen’s overall thesis is thoughtful, important, and timely. We can’t rely on the crisis of capitalism to deliver the transition to socialism; on the contrary, it is only by finding the political resources to struggle effectively ‘against the crisis’ that we will find our way to a better society. Although crises typically and paradoxically strengthen the system, the ultimate challenge is, as Holgersen concludes, to definitively ‘falsify’ this very thesis.

[\[i\]](#) See 'L'État et la transition au socialisme. Interview de Nicos Poulantzas par Henri Weber', *Critique communiste* (the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire journal), no. 16, June 1977 translated to English as 'The State and the Transition to Socialism', in *The Poulantzas Reader*, ed by James Martin (Verso, 2008) pp. 334-360

Reviewed by Iain Gault, *Against the Crisis: Economy and Ecology in a Burning World* is published by Verso and is available [here](#)

There is a *Scotonomics* You Tube interview with Holgersen which outlines the main themes of the book and which is well worth a look. It can be accessed [here](#)

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Review – For the Earth to Live: The Case for Ecosocialism by Allan Todd

“For the Earth to Live” is a compelling and essential read for anyone seeking a radical and comprehensive understanding of the interconnected ecological and social crises facing our world. Written by Allan Todd, with a foreword by Professor Julia Steinberger, it emerges as an unapologetic and

passionately argued case for ecosocialism.

The book distinguishes itself by its direct and unwavering commitment to ecosocialist principles, boldly asserting the necessity of uniting ecological concerns with socialist solutions. In an era often characterised by cautious and diluted discourse, "For the Earth to Live" offers a bracingly clear analysis and position, advocating for a political direction that is uncompromisingly pro-ecology and pro-socialism. It actively seeks to combine "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will," drawing on the wisdom of Antonio Gramsci to provide both a stark awakening to the realities of our situation and a powerful call to action.

A significant strength of this work lies in its well-informed and thoroughly cited analysis. Todd presents a treasure-trove of political, historical, and scientific evidence to contextualise the climate, biodiversity, and health threats we face within our prevailing political and economic systems. The book is structured logically, building from an exposition of ecological dangers to examining political and economic threats, culminating in a powerful argument for revolutionary ecosocialist politics as the necessary response. The extensive referencing provides readers with an excellent foundation for further exploration and independent understanding.

"For the Earth to Live" makes a significant contribution by aiming to articulate a majoritarian perspective for ecosocialism. It moves beyond the notion of ecosocialism as a fringe ideology, presenting it as the potential "political home of the majority of humans on planet earth" and of the rest of life on Earth. This book offers a more accessible pathway for arguing for ecosocialism as a vital project for the 99 percent.

Furthermore, the book actively seeks to counter the understandable despair that can arise when confronting the severity of the ecological and political challenges. By

promoting Gramsci's "optimism of the will," it encourages readers to see "horizons even in the darkest night," fostering the determination needed to continue the struggle for a better future. It explicitly states that ecosocialism offers the "best hope for replacing today's 'old order' with a new one".

The author doesn't shy away from highlighting the dire warnings from climate, ecological, and pandemic-health science reports, illustrating the interconnected crises facing our environment and the failures of current political responses. The book also touches upon the historical context of humanity's relationship with nature, including the more harmonious approaches found in Indigenous societies, suggesting important ways forward.

In conclusion, "For the Earth to Live" is a vital and inspiring contribution to the literature on ecosocialism. It combines a rigorous and well-researched analysis with a passionate and hopeful call to action. By directly confronting the crises of our time and offering a clear and compelling alternative, this book will likely be an essential resource for activists, scholars, and anyone seeking a pathway towards an ecologically sustainable and socially just world. It encourages readers to embrace "optimism of the will" grounded in a clear understanding of the challenges, ultimately arguing that our best chance for the Earth to live lies with ecosocialism.

Reviewed by Duncan Chapel, "For the Earth to Live" is published by Resistance Books and is available [here](#).

Allan Todd is an ecosocialist/environmental and anti-fascist activist. He is a member of Anti-Capitalist Resistance and Extinction Rebellion North Lakes (Cumbria), and is the author of *Revolutions 1789-1917* (CUP), *Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword), *Ecosocialism Not Extinction* (Resistance Books), and *Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword).

Allan will speaking about the book at a free event in Glasgow at 7pm on 21st May 2025. For further details of the event and to reserve a copy of the book see [Mount Florida Books](#)

Manifesto for an Ecosocialist Revolution – Break with Capitalist Growth

Introduction

This Manifesto is a document of the Fourth International, founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky and his comrades to save the legacy of the October Revolution from Stalinist disaster. Rejecting sterile dogmatism, the Fourth International has integrated the challenges of social movements and the ecological crisis into its thinking and practice. Its forces are limited, but they are present on every continent and have actively contributed to the resistance to Nazism, May 68 in France, solidarity with anti-colonial struggles (Algeria, Vietnam), the growth of the anti-globalization movement and the development of ecosocialism.

The Fourth International does not see itself as the sole vanguard; it participates, to the extent of its strength, in broad anti-capitalist formations. Its objective is to contribute to the formation of a new International, of a mass character, of which it would be one of the components.

Our era is one of a double historic crisis: the crisis of the socialist alternative in the face of the multifaceted crisis of capitalist “civilization”.

The Fourth International is publishing this Manifesto now because we are convinced that the process of ecosocialist revolution, at different territorial levels but with a planetary dimension, is more necessary than ever: it is a question of not only of putting an end to the social and democratic regressions that accompany global capitalist expansion, but also saving humanity from an ecological catastrophe without precedent in human history. These two objectives are inextricably linked.

However, the socialist project which forms the basis of our proposals requires a broad refoundation fed by a pluralistic assessment of experiences and by the major movements fighting all forms of domination and oppression (class, gender, oppressed national communities, etc.). The socialism we propose is radically different from the models that dominated the last century or from any statist or dictatorial regime: it is a revolutionary project, radically democratic, to which feminist, ecological, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, antimilitarist and LGBTQI+ struggles contribute.

We have used the term ecosocialism for some decades now because we are convinced that the global threats and challenges posed by the ecological crisis must permeate all struggles within/against the existing globalized order. The relationship with our planet, overcoming the “metabolic rift” (Marx) between human societies and their living environment, and the respect for the planet’s ecological equilibrium are not just chapters in our programme and strategy, but its common thread.

The need to update the analyses of revolutionary Marxism has always inspired the action and thought of the Fourth International. We are continuing this approach in writing this Ecosocialist Manifesto: we want to help formulate a revolutionary perspective capable of confronting the challenges of the 21st century. A perspective that draws inspiration from social and ecological struggles, and from the

genuinely anti-capitalist critical reflections that are developing around the world.

The objective necessity of an ecosocialist, antiracist, antimilitarist, anti-imperialist, anticolonialist and feminist revolution

All over the world, far-right, authoritarian and semi-fascist forces are gaining power and influence. The lack of an alternative to the crisis of late capitalism is breeding despair which feeds misogyny, racism, queerphobia, climate change denial and reactionary ideas in general. Frightened because the ecological crisis objectively threatens accumulation for profit, billionaires are turning to a new far right that offers its services to save the system through lies and social demagoguery. Authoritarian policies and oligarchs form a powerful alliance to safeguard the power of capital. They target environmental protection but also social programmes, and wage a war against workers and the poor, all the while claiming to represent them against the liberal establishment.

Capital triumphs, but its triumph plunges it into the insurmountable contradictions highlighted by Marx. Faced with these, Rosa Luxemburg issued her warning in 1915: "Socialism or barbarism". One hundred and ten years later, sounding the alarm is more urgent than ever, as the catastrophe growing around us is unprecedented. To the plagues of war, colonialism, exploitation, racism, authoritarianism, oppressions of all kinds, is added a new scourge, which exacerbates all the others: the accelerated destruction by capital of the natural environment on which the survival of humankind depends.

Scientists identify nine global indicators of ecological sustainability. They estimate that danger limits have been reached for seven of them. Due to the capitalist logic of accumulation, at least six have already been crossed (climate, functional integrity of ecosystems, the nitrogen and

phosphorus cycles, ground- and freshwater, land use change, pollution by new chemical entities). The poor are the main victims of this destruction, especially in poor countries.

Under the whiplash of competition, big industry and finance strengthen their despotic hold on people and the Earth. The destruction continues, despite the warning cries of science. The craving for profit, like an automaton, demands ever more markets and ever more goods, hence increased exploitation of the labour force and plundering of natural resources.

Legal capital, so-called criminal capital and bourgeois politics are closely intertwined. The Earth is bought on credit by the banks, the multinationals and the rich. Governments increasingly strangle human and democratic rights through brutal repression and technological control.

The same causes underlie social inequality and environmental degradation. It is an understatement to say that the limits of sustainability have also been crossed on the social level.

Capitalism entails scarcity for billions of people and infinite wealth for a tiny number. On the one hand, the shortage of jobs, wages, housing and public services fuels the reactionary idea that there aren't enough resources to satisfy everybody's needs. On the other, with their yachts, their jets, their swimming pools, their exclusive massive golf courses, their many SUVs, their space tourism, their jewellery, their *haute couture* and their luxurious homes in all four corners of the world, the richest 1% own as much as do 50% of the world's population. The "trickle-down theory" is a myth. Wealth "trickles" towards the rich, not the opposite. Poverty is increasing even in "developed" countries. Labour income is squeezed ruthlessly, and social protections – where they exist – are dismantled. The world capitalist economy floats on an ocean of debt, exploitation and inequalities.

Within the working classes, the most vulnerable populations

and racialized groups are hardest hit. Ethnic and racial communities are deliberately placed in areas contaminated by often toxic and hazardous waste, in more polluted, as well as in high-risk areas, lacking urban planning (hillsides, for example). Victims of environmental racism, these populations are also systematically excluded from the design and implementation of environmental policies.

Assigning women the duty of caring for others allows capital to benefit from cheap social reproduction and encourages the implementation of brutal austerity policies in public services. Generally speaking, inequality and discrimination particularly affect women, who continue to provide most domestic and care work, whether free or paid. They receive only 35% of labour income. In some regions of the world (China, Russia, Central Asia), their share is declining, sometimes significantly. Beyond work, women are under attack on all fronts as women, from sexist and sexual violence – femicides, rapes, sexual harassment, sex and labor trafficking – to the right to food, to education, to be respected and to control their own bodies.

LGBTQI+ people, particularly transgender people, are the target of a global reactionary offensive that exacerbates their precariousness and discrimination, compromises their access to healthcare, and consequently, public health.

People with disabilities are discarded by capital because they cannot work for profit, or their work requires adjustments that reduce profits. Some are victims of forced sterilization. The spectre of eugenics is resurfacing.

While old people of the working classes are also discarded, the lives of future generations are generally mutilated in advance. Most working class parents no longer believe that their children will live better than they do. A growing number of young people observe the organized destruction of their world with dread, rage, sadness and grief, as it is raped,

gutted, drowned in concrete, engulfed in the cold waters of selfish calculation.

The scourges of famine, food insecurity and malnutrition had receded at the end of the 20th century; they are now burgeoning again as a result of a catastrophic convergence of neoliberalism, militarism and climate change: almost one in ten people are hungry, almost one in three suffer from food insecurity, and more than 3 billion cannot afford a healthy diet. One hundred and fifty million children under the age of five are stunted by hunger. The vast majority of them have the sole fault of having been born on the periphery of capitalism.

Hope for a peaceful world is evaporating. More than 30 countries are or have recently been in wars of considerable dimensions, including Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar. The climate crisis itself, weather phenomena, and the resulting intense migratory flows are fuelling many conflicts around the globe. The suffering, displacement and death of populations is tremendous.

While imperialisms squabble, urgent measures for climate transition and a sustainable future are called into question. Wars, besides being calamitous in terms of human lives, attacking women's bodies, using rape as an instrument of terror and dehumanizing collective life, are harmful to the planet we live on. They destroy habitats, cause deforestation, poison the soils, the waters and the air, and are major sources of carbon emissions.

The brutal Russian war against Ukraine and the new level of ethnic cleansing perpetrated in Gaza and against the Palestinian people in general are major crimes against humanity. Both cases confirm the barbarian nature of capitalism. The Russian imperialist aggression against Ukraine has fostered geopolitical tensions on a global scale. It confirms the entry of a new era of inter-imperialist

competition for global hegemony. Land, energy and mineral resources are an important stake of this inter-imperialist competition.

Everyone could have a good life on Earth, but capitalism is an exploitative, macho, racist, warlike, authoritarian and deadly mode of predation. In two centuries, it has led humanity into a deep ecosocial impasse. Productivism is destructivism. The overexploitation of natural resources, rampant extractivism, the pursuit of maximum short-term yields, deforestation and land-use change are leading to a collapse of biodiversity, that is, of life itself.

Climate change is the most dangerous aspect of ecological destruction, it is a threat to human life without precedent in history. The Earth is in danger of becoming a biological wasteland uninhabitable for billions of poor people who are not responsible for this disaster. To stop this catastrophe, we must halve global carbon dioxide and methane emissions before 2030, and reach zero net greenhouse gases emissions before 2050. So, a priority is to banish fossil fuels, agribusiness, the meat industry and hyper-mobility... that is to say, produce less globally.

In this context, is it possible to meet the legitimate needs of 3 billion people living in appalling conditions, mainly in the countries of the Global South¹? Yes. The richest 1% emit nearly twice as much CO₂ as the poorest 50%. The richest 10% are responsible for more than 50% of CO₂ emissions. The poor emit far less than 2-2.3 tonnes of CO₂ per person per year (the average volume that must be reached in 2030 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 with a 50% probability). A dollar spent to meet the needs of the richest 1% emits 30 times more CO₂ than a dollar invested to meet the social needs of the poorest 50% of the world's population.

The climate impact of production aimed at satisfying human needs – especially when democratically planned and assumed by

the public sector in a context of social equality – is much lower than that of production aimed at satisfying the needs of the rich through GDP growth and blind market competition for profit. It would be largely offset by the radical reduction of the carbon footprint of the richest 1% – they must divide their emissions by 30 in a few years in the North as in the South! – and sobriety for all. In fact, stopping the catastrophe needs a society that provides well-being and guarantees equality like never before. Yet the rich refuse to make even the slightest effort! On the contrary: they want ever more privileges!

Governments have pledged to stay below +1.5°C, to maintain biodiversity, to achieve so-called “sustainable development” and to respect the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and capacities” in the ecological crisis, while producing ever more goods, using ever more energy. These combined promises will not be respected by capital. The facts show this: 33 three years after the Earth Summit in Rio (1992), the global energy mix is still completely dominated by fossil fuels (84% in 2020). The total production of fossil fuel has increased by 62%, from 83 000 Terawatt-hour (TWh) in 1992 to 136 000 TWh in 2021. Renewables add to the mainly fossil energy system, offering more capacities and new markets to capitalists.[2](#)

- With the energy crisis unleashed after the pandemic and deepened by the Russian imperialist war on Ukraine, all capitalist powers revived coal, oil, natural gas (including shale gas), and nuclear power.

- The promotion of artificial intelligence (AI) by Big Tech companies and capitalist governments poses a new threat. Data centres and crypto-mining already consume nearly 2% of the world’s electricity. This consumption will increase dramatically with the expansion of AI, which requires enormous amounts of energy and water. People’s lives will be affected in numerous ways. The capitalist use of AI threatens tens of

millions of jobs, degrades and undermines artistic and cultural creation, reinforces systemic racism, and accelerates the spread of far-right lies. Moreover, AI and data centres accelerate the frenzy of restless capitalism, which monopolizes people's attention, thus corrupting their free time and social connections.

- The main force historically responsible for climatic shift, US imperialism, has enormous means to fight against the catastrophe, but its political representatives criminally subordinate this fight to the protection of their world hegemony, when they do not simply deny the crisis.

- The measures big polluters implement under the label of "decarbonization" not only fail to address the magnitude of the climate crisis but also accelerate extractivism, mostly in the dominated countries, but also in the North and in the oceans, at the expense of both populations and ecosystems.

- This so-called "decarbonization" exacerbates imperialist land grabbing and exploitation of labour in the South, with the complicity of the local bourgeoisies (as illustrated by various projects using solar and wind energy in the territories of traditional communities, indigenous peoples, farmers and small-scale fishermen in the countries of the South as well as in "free zones", in order to produce "green hydrogen" for industries in developed countries).

- "Carbon markets", "carbon offset", "biodiversity compensations" and "market mechanisms" based on the understanding of nature as capital weigh on the least responsible, the poor, in particular indigenous people, racialized people and the peoples of the South in general.

Valid in theory, abstract concepts such as "circular economy", "resilience", "energy transition", and "biomimicry" become hollow formulas in practice as soon as they are used in the service of capitalist productivism. If there is no plan

implemented by society as a whole for the conversion of production, then technical improvements (e.g. to make energy production cheaper) have a rebound effect³: a reduction in the price of energy generally leads to higher energy and material consumption.

The right blames global warming and the decline in biodiversity on “galloping” population growth. In this way, they seek to blame the oppressed for the crisis and their own misery, in order to impose population control measures on them. In reality, high population growth rates are a consequence rather than a cause of poverty. Income security, access to food, education, healthcare, and housing, gender equality, and women’s empowerment all contribute to the demographic transition because mortality rates, and then birth rates, decline.

The capitalist fetish for accumulation prevents recognition of this truth. In the face of the climate crisis, the fetish will ultimately leave only two options: deploy sorcerer’s-apprentice technologies (nuclear, carbon capture/sequestration, geoengineering) or sacrifice billions of poor people in poor countries, saying that “nature” has so decided.

Politically, the impotence and injustice of green capitalism play into the hands of a fossil, conspiratorial, colonialist, racist, violently macho and LGBT-phobic neo-fascism, which is not put off by this second possibility. A sector of the wealthy is marching towards a huge crime against humanity, cynically betting that their wealth will protect them, letting the poor die.

World capitalism is not progressing gradually towards peace and sustainable development, it is going backwards and with great strides towards war, ecological disaster, genocide and neo-fascist barbarism.

In the face of this challenge, it is not enough to question the neoliberal regime and to revalue the role of the state. It would not even be enough to stop the dynamic of accumulation (an impossible goal under capitalism!). Global final net energy consumption must decrease radically – which means producing less and transporting less globally – while increasing energy consumption in poorer countries to meet social needs.

It is the only solution that makes it possible to reconcile the legitimate need of well-being for all, and the regeneration of the global ecosystem. Just sufficiency and just degrowth – ecosocialist degrowth – is a *sine qua non* condition of rescue.

Getting out of the productivist impasse is only possible under the following conditions:

- abandon “techno-solutionism”, that is, the idea that the solution will come from new technologies (their impact on energy and resources is often underestimated, or not taken into account). In an ecologically wise way, decide to use the means we have – they suffice to meet the needs of all;
- drastically reduce the ecological footprint of the rich to permit a good life for all;
- put an end to the free market in capital (stock markets, private banks, pension funds);
- regulate markets for goods and services;
- maximize direct relationships between producers and consumers at all levels of society, and the processes of evaluating needs and resources from the perspective of use values and ecological and social priorities;
- determine democratically what needs these use values must satisfy, and how;

- include, at the centre of this democratic deliberation, taking care of humans and ecosystems, careful respect for living things and for ecological boundaries.
- consequently, suppress useless production and useless transport, rethink and reorganize all productive activity, its circulation and consumption.

These conditions are necessary but not sufficient. Social and ecological crises are one. We must rebuild an emancipatory project for the exploited and the oppressed. A class-based project which, beyond basic needs, favours being over having. A project that profoundly changes behaviour, consumption, the relationship with the rest of nature, the conception of happiness and the vision that humans have of the world. An anti-productivist project to live better by taking care of living things on the only habitable planet in the solar system.

Capitalism has plunged humanity into such a bleak situation before, notably on the eve of the First World War. Nationalist hysteria gripped the masses and social democracy, betraying its pledge to respond to war with revolution, gave the green light to the greatest massacres in human history. Nevertheless, Lenin defined the situation as “objectively revolutionary”: only revolution could stop the slaughter, he said. History proved him right: the revolution in Russia and its tendency to spread forced the bourgeoisies to put an end to the massacre. The comparison obviously has its limits. The mediations towards revolutionary action are infinitely more complex today. But the same awakening of consciousness is necessary. In the face of the ecological crisis, an anti-capitalist revolution is even more objectively necessary. It is this fundamental judgement that must serve as a foundation for the elaboration of a programme, a strategy and a tactic, because there is no other way to avoid catastrophe.

The world we fight for

Our project for a future society articulates social and political emancipation with the imperative to stop the destruction of life and to repair as much as possible of the damage already done.

We want to (try to) imagine what a good life would be for everyone, everywhere, while reducing the consumption of matter and energy, taking into account differentiated responsibilities, and therefore reducing material production. It is not a question of giving a ready-made model, but of daring to think of another world, a world that makes us want to fight to build it by breaking with capitalism and productivism.

“Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too.”

A good life for all requires that basic human needs – healthy food, health, shelter, clean air and water – are met.

A good life is also a chosen life, fulfilling and creative, engaged in rich and equal human relationships, surrounded by the beauty of the world and human achievements.

Our planet (still) has enough arable land, drinking water, sun and wind, biodiversity and resources of all kinds to meet legitimate human needs while renouncing climate-damaging fossil fuels and nuclear power. However, some of these resources are limited and therefore exhaustible, while others, although they are inexhaustible, require for their human consumption materials that are exhaustible or even rare and whose extraction is ecologically damaging. In any case, as their use cannot be unlimited, we must use them carefully and sparingly, in an ecologically wise way.

Essential to our lives, they must be excluded from private appropriation, considered as common goods because they must benefit humanity as a whole both today and in the long term.

In order to guarantee these common goods over time, collective rules defining the uses but also the limits of these uses, the obligations to take care of or repair, must be drawn up.

Because a mangrove is not cared for in the same way as an icecap, a wetland in the same way as a sandy beach, a tropical forest in the same way as a river, because solar energy does not obey the same rules, does not impose the same material constraints as wind or water power, the elaboration of rules can only be the fruit of a democratic process involving those immediately concerned, workers and inhabitants.

Our common good includes all the services that allow us to respond in an egalitarian way, and therefore free of charge, to the needs of education, health, culture, access to water, energy, communication, transport, etc. They, too, must be managed and organized democratically by the whole of society.

Services that deal with people and the care they need at the different stages of life break down the separation of public and private, all the while respecting the privacy of all, and end the assignment of women to these tasks by socializing them, i.e. by making them the business of the whole of society. These services for social reproduction are essential tools, among others, to fight patriarchal oppression.

All these decentralized, participatory, community-based "public services" form the basis of a non-authoritarian social organization.

On the scale of society as a whole, democratic ecological planning allows people to reappropriate the major social choices relating to production, to decide, as citizens and users, what to produce and how to produce it, what services must be provided, and the acceptable limits for the use of material resources such as water, energy, transport, land, etc. These choices are prepared and enlightened by collective deliberation processes that rely on the appropriation of

knowledge, whether scientific or derived from the experience of populations, on the self-organization of the oppressed (women's liberation movements, racialized peoples, people with disabilities, etc.) to push back the barriers to development and to continue the conscious fight against discrimination and oppression.

This global economic and political democracy is articulated with multiple decentralized collectives/committees: those that allow decisions to be taken at the local level, in the city or neighbourhood, on the organization of public life and those that allow workers and producers to control the management and organization of their workplace, to decide on the way to produce and therefore to work. It is the combination of these different levels of democracy that allows cooperation and not competition, a management that is fair from an ecological and social point of view, fulfilling from a human point of view, at the level of the workplace, the company, the branch ... but also of the neighbourhood, the city, the region, the country and even the planet!

All decisions on production and distribution, on how we want to live, are guided by the principle: Decentralize as much as possible, coordinate as much as necessary.

Taking charge of one's life, and participating in social collectives, requires time, energy, and collective intelligence. Fortunately, the work of production and social reproduction only takes a few hours a day.

Production is exclusively devoted to the satisfaction of democratically determined needs. Production and distribution are organized in such a way as to minimize the consumption of resources and to eliminate waste, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. It constantly aims at sobriety and "programmed sustainability" (as opposed to the programmed obsolescence of capitalism whether planned or simply due to the logic of the race for profit). Producing as close as possible to the needs

that are to be met allows for a reduction in transport and a better understanding of the work, materials and energy required.

Thus, agriculture is ecological, small-scale and local in order to ensure food sovereignty and the protection of biodiversity. Processing workshops and distribution channels ensure that most of the food is produced in short circuits.

The energy sector based on renewable sources is as decentralized as possible to reduce losses and optimize sources. Activities related to social reproduction (health, education, care of the elderly or dependent persons, childcare, etc.) are developed and enhanced, taking care not to reproduce gender stereotypes.

Although work occupies less time, it occupies an essential place because, together with nature and by taking care of it, it produces what is necessary for life.

Self-management of production units combined with democratic planning allows workers to control their activity, to decide how to organize work and to question the division between manual and intellectual work. This deliberation extends to the choice of technologies according to whether or not they allow the work collective to control the production process. Giving pride of place to concrete, practical and real knowledge of the work process, to collective and individual know-how, and to creativity, makes it possible to design and produce robust goods that can be dismantled and repaired, reused and, if necessary, recycled, and to reduce the consumption of materials and energy from manufacture to use.

In all areas, the conviction of doing something useful and the satisfaction of doing it well are combined. As for tedious tasks, everyone pays attention to reducing the load and difficulty. However, there remains an essential part which is performed by everyone in turn.

A large part of material production, because the volume is greatly reduced, can be deindustrialized (all or part of clothing or food) and artisan skills, in which everyone could be trained, should be better valued.

Liberating labour from alienation allows us to abolish the boundary between art and life in a kind of “luxury communism”. We can keep or share tools, furniture, a bicycle, clothes ... all our lives, because they are ingeniously designed and beautiful.

Being rather than having

“Only that which is good for all is worthy of you. Only that is worthy of being produced which neither privileges nor demeans anyone.” (A. Gorz)

Freedom lies not unlimited consumption, but in chosen and understood self-limitation, defined against consumerist alienation. Collective deliberation makes it possible to deconstruct artificial needs, to define “universalizable” needs – i.e. not reserved for certain people or certain parts of the world – which must be satisfied.

True wealth does not lie in the infinite increase of goods – having – but in the increase of free time – being. Free time opens up the possibility of fulfilment in play, study, civic activity, artistic creation, interpersonal relationships and with the rest of nature.

So we are opening the way to a lot of activity because we have time to think about it and because we can do it keeping care for people and the rest of nature at the centre.

The places where we live, each space in which we socialize, belong to us for building other interpersonal social relationships. Freed from land speculation and the car, we can rethink the use of public spaces, bridge the separation between the centre and the periphery, multiply recreational,

meeting and sharing spaces, restoring nature to cities with urban agriculture and community market gardening, restoring biotopes embedded in the urban fabric... And beyond that, implement a long-term policy aimed at rebalancing urban and rural populations and overcoming the opposition between town and country in order to reconstitute liveable, sustainable human communities on a scale that allows for real democracy.

Our desires and emotions are no longer things to be bought and sold, the range of choices is greatly enlarged for everyone, everyone can develop new ways of having sexual relationships, of living, working and raising children together, of building life projects in a free and diverse way, respecting each person's personal decisions and humanity, with the idea that there is no one possible option, or one option better than the others. The family can stop being the space for the reproduction of domination, and stop being the only possible form of collective life. We can thus rethink the form of parenthood in a more collective way, politicize our personal decisions about motherhood and parenthood, reflect on how we consider childhood and the role of the elderly or disabled, the social relations we establish with them, and how we are able to break the logic of domination that we have internalized, inherited from previous societies.

We are building a new culture, the opposite of rape culture, a culture that recognizes the bodies of all cis and trans women, and their desires, that recognizes everyone as subjects capable of deciding about their bodies, their lives and their sexualities, that makes it visible that there are a thousand ways of being a person and of living and expressing our gender and sexuality.

Sexual activity that is freely consented to and enjoyable for all who take part in it is its own sufficient justification.

We must learn to think about the interdependence of living beings and develop a conception of the relationship between

humanity and nature that will probably resemble in some respects that of indigenous peoples, but will nevertheless be different. A conception in which the ethical notions of precaution, respect and responsibility, as well as wonder at the beauty of the world, will constantly interact with a scientific understanding that is both ever more refined and ever more aware of its incompleteness.

Our transitional method

From our analysis of capitalism and specifically the policies of the ruling class in relation to ecological dangers and climate change, it follows:

First, that there is a need for an overall alternative and a social plan based on production and reproduction oriented towards the satisfaction of human needs and not towards profits (producing use values rather than exchange values). Adjusting this or that screw within the system without changing the mode of production will not avert or even significantly mitigate the crises and catastrophes we are facing and those to come, due to the permanence of the capitalist system. One of the important tasks of revolutionary politics is to convey this insight.

The understanding of the need for global revolutionary change is a task that cannot be solved directly and without difficulty in practice. That is why, second, it is important to combine the presentation of the global perspective with putting forward immediate demands for which mobilizations can really be developed or promoted.

Third, it must be emphasized that people cannot be convinced by argument alone. To win people to turn away from the capitalist system, to encourage them to resist, successful struggles are needed that give courage and demonstrate that partial victories are possible.

And fourth, successful struggles require better organization.

This is always true in principle, but today – in times when trade unions have in many parts of the world largely disappeared politically and the left is fragmented – it is important to promote practical cooperation in a non-sectarian way, especially among the anti-capitalist left, and at the same time to support workers in their self-organization.

On the one hand, time is pressing if we do not want to go beyond crucial tipping points and see global warming accelerate beyond control. On the other, the vast majority of people are not ready to take up the fight for a different system, i.e. to overthrow capitalism. This is partly due to a lack of knowledge of the overall situation, but more to a lack of perspective on what the alternative could or should look like. What is more, the social and political relationship of forces between the classes does not exactly encourage confrontation with the rulers and the profiteers of the capitalist social order.

However, a programme that wants to reform capitalism or overcome it piecemeal (especially if directed from above) also has no chance of success. Reforms that accept the rules of the capitalist system are unable to confront the challenges of the ecological crisis. And gradual changes in the economy and state have never led to a change of system. The owners and profiteers of capitalism will not peacefully watch as their wealth is confiscated and their way for enrichment is deprived of its basis bit by bit.

Time is short, and there is the need for urgent measures. Some opponents of ecosocialism argue for mild reforms “because we cannot wait for world revolution”. Well, partisans of ecosocialism do not propose to wait! Our strategy is to begin NOW, with concrete transitional demands. It is the beginning of a process towards global change. These are not separate historical stages, but dialectical moments in the same process. Each partial or local victory is a step in this movement, which reinforces self-organization and encourages

the fight for new victories.

In the upcoming class struggles – a basis for the battle of hegemony involving broader layers of the working class, the youth, women, indigenous peoples etc. – it must become clear that ultimately there is no way around a real change of system and the question of power. The ruling class must be expropriated and its political power overthrown.

For an anticapitalist transitional programme

The transitional method was already suggested by Marx and Engels in the last section of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). But it is the Fourth International that gave it its modern meaning, in the *Transitional Programme* of 1938. Its basic assumption is the need for revolutionaries to help the masses, through the daily struggle, to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class; the aim being to lead social struggles towards the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Of course, revolutionaries do not discard the programme of the traditional old "minimal" demands: they obviously defend the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. However, they propose a system of transitional demands, which can be appropriately understood by the exploited and the oppressed, but at the same time directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime.

Most of the transitional demands mentioned in the programme of 1938 are still relevant today: sliding scale of wages and sliding scale of hours; worker's control of the factories; open the "secret" business accounts; expropriation of private banks; expropriations of certain groups of capitalists; among others. The purpose of such proposals is to unite the broadest

possible popular masses in struggle around concrete demands that are in objective contradiction with the rules of the capitalist system.

But we need to update our programme of transitional demands, in order to take into account the new conditions of the 21st century, in particular the new situation created by the ecological crisis and the imminent danger of catastrophic climate change. Today these demands must have a socio-ecological and, potentially, an ecosocialist nature.

The aim of ecosocialist transitional demands is strategic: to be able to mobilize large sections of urban and rural workers, women, youth, victims of racism or national oppression, as well as unions, social movements and left parties in a struggle that challenges the capitalist system and bourgeois rule. These demands, which combine social and ecological interests, must be considered as necessary, legitimate and relevant by the exploited and the oppressed, according to their given level of social and political consciousness. In the struggle, people become conscious of the need to organize, to unite and to fight; they also begin to understand who is the enemy: not only local forces, but the system itself. The aim of transitional eco-social demands is, thanks to the struggle, to enhance the social and political consciousness of the exploited and the oppressed, their anti-capitalist understanding, and, hopefully, an ecosocialist revolutionary perspective.

Some of these demands have a universal character: for instance, free and accessible public transport. This is both an ecological and a social demand, and it contains seeds of the ecosocialist future: public services vs market, and free vs capitalist profit. However, their strategic significance varies according to the society and the economy. Ecosocialist transitional demands must take into account the needs and aspirations of the masses, according to their local expression, in the different parts of the world capitalist

system.

Main lines of an ecosocialist alternative to capitalist growth

Satisfying real social needs while respecting ecological constraints is only possible by breaking with the productivist and consumerist logic of capitalism, which widens inequalities, harms the living and “ruins the only two sources of all wealth – the Earth and the workers” (Marx). Breaking this logic implies fighting for the following lines of action. They form a coherent whole, to be completed and broken down according to national and regional specificities. Of course, in each continent, and in each country, there are specific measures to be proposed in a transitional perspective.

Against disasters, public prevention plans adapted to social needs, under popular control

Some effects of the climate catastrophe are irreversible (rising sea levels) or will last for a long time (heatwaves, droughts, exceptional precipitation, more violent tornadoes, etc.). Capitalist insurance companies do not protect the popular classes, or (at best) protect them poorly. Faced with these scourges, the wealthy talk only of “adaptating”. “Adaptating” to warming, for them, serves 1) to divert attention from the structural causes, for which their system is responsible; 2) to continue their harmful practices focused on maximum profit, without worrying about the long term; 3) to offer new markets to capitalists (infrastructure, air conditioning, transport, carbon compensation, etc.). This technocratic and authoritarian capitalist “adaptating” is in fact what the IPCC calls “maladaptation”. It increases inequalities, discrimination and dispossession. It also increases vulnerability to rising temperatures, with the risk of seriously jeopardizing the very possibility of adaptation in the future, especially in poor countries. To capitalist

“maladaptation” we oppose the immediate demand for public prevention plans adapted to the situation of the popular classes. They are the main victims of extreme meteorological phenomena, especially in dominated countries. Public prevention plans must be designed according to their needs and their situation, through dialogue with scientists. They must encompass all sectors, in particular agriculture, forestry, housing, water management, energy, industry, labour legislation, health and education. They must be the subject of broad democratic consultation, with the right of veto of the local communities and work forces concerned.

Share the wealth to take care of humans and our living environment, free of charge

Quality health care, good education, good care for young children, a dignified retirement and a care system that respects dependency, accessible, permanent and comfortable housing, efficient public transport, renewable energy, healthy food, clean water, internet access and a natural environment in good condition: these are the real needs that a civilization worthy of its name should satisfy for all humans, regardless of their skin colour, gender, ethnicity or beliefs. It is possible to achieve this while significantly decreasing the global strain in our environment. Why have we not got this? Because the economy is tuned to induce consumption created as an industrial byproduct by capitalists. They consume and invest ever more for profit, appropriate all resources, and transform everything into commodities. Their selfish logic sows misfortune and death.

A 180° about turn is required. Natural resources and knowledge constitute a common good to be managed prudently and collectively. The satisfaction of real needs and the revitalization of ecosystems must be planned democratically and supported by the public sector, under the active control of the popular classes, and by extending free access as much as possible. This collective project must harness scientific

expertise to its service. The necessary first step is to fight inequalities and oppression. Social justice and a good life for all are ecological demands!

Expand commons and public services against privatization and marketization

This is one of the key aspects of a social and ecological transition, in many areas of life. For instance:

- **Water:** The present privatization, wasteful consumption and pollution of water – rivers, lakes and subterranean – is a social and ecological disaster. Water scarcity and floods due to climate change are major threats for billions of people. Water is a common good, and should be managed and distributed by public services, under the control of consumers. Landscapes and cities should be made permeable to water and able to store water to avoid massive flooding.
- **Housing:** The basic right of all people to decent, permanent and ecologically sustainable housing cannot be guaranteed under capitalism. The law of profit entails evictions, demolitions and criminalization of those who resist. It also entails high energy bills for the poor and subsidized renewables for the rich. Public control of the real estate market, lowering and freezing of interest rates and profits of the banks, a radical increase in good, public, social and cooperative housing, a public process of climate insulation of houses and a massive programme of building energetically autonomous houses, are first steps of an alternative politics.
- **Health:** The results of the Covid-19 pandemic are crystal clear: privatization and cuts in the care sector fragilize the popular classes – in particular children, women and the elderly – and are strong threats to public health in general. This sector must be refinanced massively and the whole played into the hands of the collective. Investments priority must be in front-line medicine. The pharma industry must be

socialized.

- Transport: Individual transport in capitalism privileges private cars, with dire health and ecological consequences. The alternative is a large and efficient system of free, accessible public transport, as well as a great extension of pedestrian and cycling areas. Commodities are transported great distances by trucks or container ships, with enormous gas emissions; reductions in wasteful consumption and relocalization of production and transport of goods by train are immediate necessary measures. Air transport should be significantly reduced. No air traffic for distances less than 1,000 km where operational rail systems exist.

Take the money where it is: Capitalists and the rich must pay

A global transition strategy worthy of the name must articulate the replacement of fossil fuels by renewable energy sources, protection against the already perceptible effects of climate change, compensation for losses and threats, assistance for reconversion (in particular guaranteed income for the workers concerned) and the repair of ecosystems. Between now and 2050 this needs several trillion dollars. Who should pay? Those responsible for the disaster: multinationals, banks, pension funds, imperialist states and the rich of the North and South. The eco-socialist alternative requires a broad programme of tax reform and radical reduction of inequalities to take the money from where it is: progressive taxation, the lifting of banking secrecy, a register of land assets, taxation of assets, exceptional single tax at a high rate on inherited wealth, elimination of tax havens, abolition of tax privileges for companies and the rich, opening of company account books, capping of high incomes, abolition of public debts recognized as "illegitimate" (without compensation, except for small investors), compensation by rich countries for the cost of renouncing exploitation of fossil resources by dominated

countries (e.g. the Yasuni Park project). Above all, genuine ecosocialist democratic planning is not possible without the public socialization of banks. "Credit for the common good" means definitively eliminating profit in determining interest rates and transaction margins, supporting the public and popular function of credit, and guaranteeing the public and cooperative role of banks.

No emancipation without anti-racist struggle

Racial oppression is a structural and structuring element of the capitalist mode of production. It accompanied the primitive accumulation of capital through colonization, the slave trade, and slavery. The forced displacement of millions of Africans, their commercialization in the Americas, and the exploitation of their labour ensured the enrichment of Europeans and still guarantees their privileges today.

Racism manifests itself centrally as a mechanism of oppression of sectors of the working class, the reservation of specific positions and socially determined access for whites (the supposedly universal subject) and for people perceived as racialized. It shapes social relations, reinforcing and complicating the mechanisms of bourgeois exploitation and wealth accumulation. Diversity that deviates from the norms of whiteness is transmuted into oppression.

Building a new world free from all oppression and exploitation requires a head-on struggle against racism. This is a central task of ecosocialist strategy. We must break with the genocidal logic against non-white groups and strengthen the anti-prison struggle against mass incarceration, imposed in particular through the liberal tactic of the so-called war on drugs.

The fight against police militarization must be at the heart of anti-racist struggle, as must access to decent living conditions in general. It is necessary to combat all austerity

policies, which primarily and increasingly affect non-white people. They structure the environmental racism that unequally distributes the deadly consequences of capitalist production. It is necessary to confront all fiscal austerity policies, which deepen the precariousness of life for the working class as a whole and fall mostly and more heavily on non-white people. They structure environmental racism which, in this climate emergency, distributes the deadly consequences of capitalist production unevenly.

Freedom of movement and residence on Earth! Nobody is illegal!

The ecological catastrophe is a growing driving force for migration and displacement of populations. An annual average of 21.5 million people were forcibly displaced by weather-related events between 2008 and 2016. Most of them are poor people from poor countries who are displaced within their own countries or in poor neighboring countries. Climate migration is expected to surge in coming decades: 1.2 billion people could be displaced globally by 2050. Unlike asylum-seekers, "climate refugees" do not even have any status. They bear no responsibility for the ecological catastrophe but the capitalist system, which is responsible, condemns them to swell the ranks of the 108.4 million people worldwide who were forcibly displaced in 2020 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations. The basic rights of these people are under constant attack: the right to be protected against violence; to have enough water and food; to live in a safe house; to keep their family united; to find a decent job. A growing number of them (4,4 million, probably much more) are even considered stateless by the UNHCR. All this is contrary to the most basic justice. It feeds the fascists who scapegoat the migrants and dehumanize them. This is a huge threat for the democratic and social rights of all. As internationalists, we fight for restrictive policies against capital, not against migrants. We oppose the building

of walls, confinement in centres, the building of camps, expulsions, deportations, and the racist rhetoric. Nobody is illegal on Earth, everybody must have the right to move and to leave everywhere. The borders must be open to all those who flee their country, whether it is for social, political, economic or environmental reasons.

Eliminate unnecessary or harmful economic activities

Stopping the climate catastrophe and the decline of biodiversity necessarily requires a very rapid and significant reduction in net energy consumption at the global level. This discipline is unavoidable. First steps include drastically reducing the purchasing power of the rich, abandoning fast fashion, advertisement and luxury production/consumption (cruises, yachts and private jets or helicopters, space tourism, etc.), scaling down mass-produced meat and dairy and ending the accelerated obsolescence of products, extending their lifespan and facilitating their repair. Air and maritime transport of goods should be reduced drastically by relocation of production, and be replaced by train transport whenever possible. More structurally, energy constraint can only be respected by reducing economic activities that are useless or harmful as quickly as possible. The main productive sectors to consider are: arms production, fossil energy and petrochemicals, extractive industry, non-sustainable manufacturing, the wood and pulp industry, personal car construction, planes and shipbuilding.

Food sovereignty! Get out of agribusiness, industrial fishing and the meat industry

These three sectors pose serious threats to the climate, human health and biodiversity. Dismantling them requires measures at the level of production but also significant changes at the

level of consumption (in developed countries and among the rich in all countries) and in our relationship with living things. Proactive policies are needed to stop deforestation and replace agribusiness, industrial tree plantations and large-scale fishing with small farmer agroecology, ecoforestry and small-scale fishing respectively. These alternatives consume less energy, employ more labour and are much more respectful of biodiversity. Farmers and fisherfolk must be properly compensated by the community, not only for their contribution to human food but also for their ecological contribution. The rights of first peoples over the forest and other ecosystems must be protected. Global meat consumption must be drastically reduced, particularly in countries and among social classes that consume too much meat. The meat and dairy industry must be dismantled and a diet based mainly on local vegetable production be promoted. By doing that, we put an end to the abject treatment of animals in the meat industry and to industrial fishing. Food sovereignty, in line with the proposals of Via Campesina, is a key objective. It requires radical agrarian reform: the land should go to those who work it, especially women. Expropriation of big landowners and capitalist agribusiness who produce goods for the world market. Distribution of land to peasants and landless peasants (families or cooperatives) for agro-biological production. Abolition of old and new genetically modified crops in open field and elimination of toxic pesticides (starting with those whose use the imperialist countries prohibit but whose export they authorize in the dominated countries!).

Coexist with living things, stop the massacre of species

Respect for non-human life is fundamental to preserving the conditions for reproduction and evolution of the human species. Production methods must take into account relationships with other living things from the very beginning. Immediate action must be taken against the

patenting of living things, the destruction of wetlands, and the exploitation of the seabed. Although partial and insufficient in the long term, the expansion of wildlife conservation areas must be encouraged, provided it does not lead to further social injustice, particularly to the detriment of indigenous peoples and rural communities.

Popular urban reform

More than half the world's population now lives in increasingly large cities. At the same time, rural regions are becoming depopulated, ruined by agribusiness and mining, and increasingly deprived of essential services. So called "developing countries" have some of the largest megacities on the planet (Jakarta, Manila, Mexico City, New Delhi, Bombay, Sao Paulo, and others), a growing number of homeless people and slums where millions of human beings (around Karachi, Nairobi, Baghdad...) survive and work informally in undignified conditions. It is one of the most hideous wounds left by capitalist development and imperialist domination. In addition to violence, heat waves make survival increasingly difficult in slums and poor neighbourhoods, especially in humid climates. The ecosocialist alternative demands the launch of a vast social housing construction programme accompanied by a popular urban reform that changes the organization of large cities, designed in cooperation with homeless associations. This has to be combined, on the one hand, with labour legislation that protects workers and, on the other, the attraction of agrarian reform, in order to initiate a movement of rural counter-emigration.

Socialize energy and finance without compensation or buyback to get out of fossil fuels and nuclear power as quickly as possible

The energy multinationals and the banks that finance them want to exploit every last tonne of coal, every last litre of oil, every last cubic metre of gas. They initially hid and denied

the impact of CO2 emissions on climate change. Now, in order to continue to exploit these resources despite everything, and while soaring prices ensure them gigantic surplus profits, they promise all kinds of phony techniques (greenwashing, exchange of “polluting rights”, “emissions offsetting”, “Carbon capture, sequestration and utilization”) and promote nuclear energy as “low carbon”. Have no doubt: these profit-hungry groups are taking the planet from climate catastrophe to cataclysm. At the same time, they are at the forefront of capitalist attacks on the working classes. They must be socialized by expropriation, without compensation or buyback. To stop the social and ecological destruction, to determine our future collectively, nothing is more urgent than constituting public services of energy and credit, decentralized and interconnected, under the democratic control of the people.

Open the “black box” of data centres, socialize Big Tech

Data centers owned by Big Tech companies consume increasing amounts of energy and water. They are “black boxes”: what happens there is covered by trade secrets. In addition to the fact that these centres power surveillance capitalism, create algorithms for targeted advertising, and artificially generate new needs, a growing part of their activity involves supporting AI. This “black box” must be opened. People must be able to control energy usage and decide which functions are socially useful and which are not. Big Tech and social media giants must be socialized and democratically managed to create truly public digital spaces.

For liberation and the self-determination of peoples; against war, imperialism and colonialism

We defend an internationalist programme based on social justice, and an ecosocialist transition led by liberating and collective forces, and peace among peoples, confronting

oppressive policies. We oppose NATO and other military alliances, which drive the world towards new inter-imperialist conflicts. We fight against increases in military budgets, for the dismantling of manufacturing and stocks of all nuclear, chemical and bacteriological armament and cyber weapons, for dismantling of all private military companies. Weapons must not be commodities; their use must be under political control for the purposes of defence and protection against aggression.

The sole road to peace is through the victorious struggles for the right to self-determination, the end of occupation of lands and ethnical cleansing. As internationalists, we are in solidarity with the oppressed people fighting for their rights, notably in Palestine and in Ukraine.

Guarantee employment for all, ensure the necessary retraining in ecologically sustainable and socially useful activities

Workers engaged in wasteful and harmful fossil fuel activities, in agribusiness, big fishing and the meat industry should not pay the price of capitalist management. A green job guarantee must be instituted to ensure their collective retraining, without loss of income, in the activities of the public plan to meet real needs and restore ecosystems. This green jobs guarantee will overcome the legitimate fears of the workers concerned. Thus, there will be an end to the cynical instrumentalization of these fears by the capitalists, in the service of their productivist/consumerist interests. On the contrary, the green jobs guarantee will encourage and motivate workers in condemned sectors to train and mobilize to actively take charge of carrying out the plan, in dialogue with the public benefiting from it, by investing their knowledge, their skills and their experience in an activity rich in meaning, emancipatory, truly human because concerned with the lives of future generations.

Work less, live and work better, live a good life

Radically reducing energy consumption by eliminating useless and harmful production/consumption logically has the effect of reducing the time of salaried social work. This reduction must be collective. Capitalist waste is of such magnitude that its suppression will undoubtedly open up the concrete possibility of a very significant reduction in weekly working time (about a half-day's work) and a significant lowering of the retirement age. This trend towards reduction will be partly offset by the necessary reduction in work rhythms and increase in social and ecological reproduction work necessary to take care of people (including by socializing part of the domestic work carried out for free mainly by women) and ecosystems. Democratic planning will be essential for the articulation over time of these movements in various directions. The ecosocialist break with capitalist growth implies a double transformation of work. Quantitatively, we will work much less. Qualitatively, it will create the conditions for making work an activity of the good life – a conscious mediation between humans (therefore also between men and women), and between humans and the rest of nature. This deep transformation of work and life will more than compensate for the changes in consumption affecting the best paid layers of the working class, mainly in the developed countries.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

The concepts of product life cycle, recycling, repair, and circularity are essential. Their consistent application requires production focused on meeting real human needs. However, the production of organic and solid waste is an unavoidable reality of life in society. It is therefore essential to have adequate means for its disposal, treatment, and reuse. Therefore, alongside drastically reducing consumption, it is necessary to implement adequate methods for treating organic waste (such as composting) and to develop techniques for recycling and reusing solid waste, based on the

knowledge accumulated by science and workers collectively organized in waste collection and recycling. Ecosocialist policies will promote the adequate collection and treatment of hospital, contaminated, and toxic waste, aiming for the lowest possible socio-environmental impact.

Guarantee the right of women to control over their own bodies and a life without violence

Humanity will not be able to consciously manage its relationship to the rest of nature without consciously managing its relationship to itself, that is to say its own biological reproduction, which passes through the body of women. It is not by chance that patriarchal attacks on women's rights are intensifying everywhere: these attacks are an integral part of political projects that seek to establish strong powers at the service of the rich and the capitalists. They are most often carried out in the name of a reactionary "pro-life" ideology, which incidentally denies anthropogenic climate change. But, alongside these reactionary forces, there are also technocratic currents that blame the ecological crisis on "overpopulation" and thereby attempt to impose authoritarian policies of birth control. Faced with these two types of threats, we maintain that no morality, no higher reason, even ecological, can be invoked to deny women their elementary right to control their own fertility. The denial of this right is consubstantial with all other mechanisms of domination, including "human domination" over the rest of nature, for the benefit of patriarchy and its current capitalist form. Human emancipation includes the emancipation of women. This implies as a priority that women must have free access to contraception, abortion, education on how to use them, and reproductive care in general. This also involves the fight against all forms of physical, psychological, social or medical violence against women and LGBTQI+ people.

Knowledge is a common good: Reform of the education and research systems

Knowledge is a common good of humankind. Implementation of the ecosocialist emergency programme has a crying need for decolonized and decapitalized knowledge, embodied by numerous and competent teachers and researchers in all disciplines. For reform of the education system, expansion of public schools and universities, an end to discrimination in education, of which girls are particularly victims in certain countries. For recognition and integration of indigenous knowledge and know-how. Deep reform of research in order to put an end to its submission to capital. Research to be directed primarily towards repairing ecosystems and meeting the needs of the working classes, and determined in consultation with them.

Hands off democratic rights! Popular control and self-organization of struggles

Powerless to curb the ecological catastrophe it has created, the ruling class is toughening its regime, criminalizing resistance and picking on scapegoats. Its policies pave the way for nihilistic, nationalist, racist and macho neo-fascism. Faced with the bourgeoisie unmasked, ecosocialism raises the flag of extending rights and freedoms: right of association, of demonstration, right to strike; free election of parliamentary bodies in a multi-party system; a ban on private financing of political parties; legalization of popular initiative referendums; abolition of non-democratic institutions (such as an autonomous Central Bank); prohibition of private ownership of major means of communication; abolition of censorship; a fight against corruption; dissolution of militias serving leaders; respect for the rights and territories of indigenous communities and other oppressed peoples, etc. Ecosocialism is a societal alternative that requires the broadest democracy. It is being prepared now through the democratic self-organization of popular struggles and the demand, at all levels, for transparency and popular

control, with the right of veto.

Foster a cultural revolution based on respect for the living and “love for Pachamama”

A radical break with the ideology of human domination of nature is essential for the development of both an ecological and a feminist (an ecofeminist) culture of “caring” for people and the environment. The defence of biodiversity, in particular, cannot be based solely on reason (the human interest properly understood): it requires just as much empathy, respect, prudence and the kind of global conception that the first peoples sum up by the phrase “love of Pachamama”. Maintaining this global conception or reacquiring it – through struggles, artistic creation, education and production/consumption alternatives – is a major ideological challenge in the ecosocialist struggle. Western modernity has systematized the idea that human beings are divine creatures whose mission is to dominate nature and instrumentalize animals, which are reduced to the rank of machines. This non-materialist conception, intimately linked to colonial and patriarchal dominations, is completely disqualified today by scientific knowledge. We are part of the living Earth; human life would be impossible in the absence of the network of life on this planet.

Self-managed ecosocialist planning

The ecosocialist transition needs planning. In particular, the transformation of the energy system (exit from nuclear and fossil fuels, energy savings and development of renewables) needs to be planned. Contrary to what is often claimed, planning is not contradictory to democracy and self-management. The disastrous example of the countries of so-called “really existing socialism” shows that self-management is incompatible with authoritarian, bureaucratic planning, imposed from above in contempt of all democracy. What does democratic ecosocialist planning mean? Concretely, that the

whole of society will be free to democratically choose priorities for production and the level of resources which must be invested in education, health or culture. Far from being “despotic” in itself, democratic ecosocialist planning is the exercise of freedom of decision-making of the whole of society, at all levels, from local to national to global. It is a necessary exercise to free oneself from “economic laws” and “iron cages” that are alienating and reified within capitalist and bureaucratic structures. Democratic planning associated with the reduction of working time would be a considerable step forward for humanity towards what Marx called “the kingdom of freedom”: the increase in free time is in fact a condition for the participation of workers in the democratic discussion and self-management of the economy and society. Ecosocialist democratic planning is about key economic choices and not about local restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, small stores, craft businesses. Likewise, it is important to emphasize that ecosocialist planning is not in contradiction to the self-management of workers in their production units. Self-management therefore means democratic control of the plan at all levels – local, regional, national, continental and planetary, since ecological issues such as climate change are global and can only be addressed at that level. Ecosocialist democratic planning is opposed to what is often described as “central planning” because decisions are not taken by a “centre” but determined democratically by the populations concerned, according to the principle of subsidiarity: responsibility for public action, when necessary, must be allocated to the smallest entity capable of solving the problem itself.

Material global degrowth in the context of uneven and combined development

There will be no national solution. A just ecosocialist alternative can begin in one country but its full implementation requires the abolition of capitalism at the

global level. From now on, the exploited and the oppressed therefore need a consistent anticapitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and internationalist strategy, aiming at a global outcome. This strategy must articulate the struggles that unfold in very different contexts. It means that the main lines of an ecosocialist programme breaking with capitalist growth have general relevance but they apply differently in different countries. Some demands are more important in some countries than others, according to their place in the uneven and combined development of capitalism under imperialist rule.

After centuries of slavery and colonial plunder, the populations of so-called “developing” countries are victims of a new monstrous injustice. While their responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions is small, almost nil in the poorest countries, the climatic shift caused by two hundred years of imperialist capitalist growth places 3.5 billion women, men and children in the front line of catastrophes that are hitting them harder and harder.

The populations of the dominated countries have the basic right to access dignified living conditions. Imperialist governments, international institutions and the governments of the peripheral countries themselves claim that capitalist growth will enable people in the South to “catch up” with the standard of living of the developed capitalist countries. All it would take is “good governance” to “adjust” societies to the needs of the global market. But this is a dead end, as shown by the fact that inequalities continue to grow (between countries and, more and more, within countries), while the “carbon budget” compatible with 1.5°C is vanishing rapidly.

In reality, the imperialist model of development keeps the dominated countries in a neocolonial position of subordination, as suppliers of raw materials and low-cost labour power, producers of plant and animal goods for export, places for storing waste – among others carbon sinks appropriated by capitalists for their profit – and the chief

victims of the ecological crisis. Added to this now are the scandalous policies of developed countries to pay dominated countries to play the role of border police. The local corrupt “elites” carry a major responsibility. Instead of promoting an alternative development, based on alternative social values, they have come to serve imperialism.

The discourse of the “the South catching up with the North” is a chimera, a smokescreen to conceal the continuation of capitalist and imperialist exploitation, which widens inequalities. With the increase in ecological disasters, this discourse is losing all credibility.

The multipolar world of the BRICS is not an alternative to imperialism, as shown by the politics of Russia and China, the two main leaders of this bloc. Their autocratic leaders do not oppose the imperialist and oppressive practices of “classic” Western imperialism – they want to have the same rights. Likewise, what they object to is not the gap between rights and realities in the practices of Western societies, it is the rights themselves (of workers, women, LGBTQ+, etc.). Putin wants to rebuild a colonial empire by force and coercion. Taking advantage of the huge fossil fuels reserves, he seeks alliances with oil monarchies, other dictatorships and powerful interests in the energy and crime industry to prolong the exploitation of fossil fuels as long as possible. The Chinese Communist Party claims to show the countries of the South that they can escape domination and develop by entering the New Silk Roads, but its project of global capitalist hegemony is one of the main drivers of ecological destruction and accumulation by dispossession.

Now is not the time for “catching up” but for planetary sharing. The great mass of the working people, of women, of youth, of the ethnic minorities in the “North” and in the dominated countries are victims of climate change. According to scientific analysis of current climate policies, the richest 1% will emit even more CO₂ by 2030; the poor 50% will

emit a little bit more but remain largely under the level of individual emissions compatible with 1.5°C; the intermediate 40% will support the greatest part of the emissions reduction (with the proportionally greatest effort imposed on low incomes in rich countries). This is the basis for an international struggle for justice and equality. The meagre carbon budget still available must and can be shared according to historical responsibilities and capacities, not only between countries but more and more between social classes. Mineral resources and the wealth of biodiversity must be harvested carefully, according to the real needs of all.

The capitalists of the imperialist countries are by far the most responsible for the ecological crisis and they must pay the consequences. The bill must be paid, too, by countries like the “oil monarchies”, Russia, and China, although their historical responsibility is not the same. The industrialized countries of the “North” – Europe, North America, Australia, Japan – must make the greatest efforts in terms of a rapid degrowth in useless and/or harmful productions. They are also responsible for giving the dominated countries access to alternative technologies, and to provide funding for an ecological transition and real reparation for the loss and damage. The abolition of patents must allow the peoples of the South to freely access technologies that can meet real needs without using even more fossil energy.

To satisfy their needs, the people in dominated countries need a development model radically opposed to the imperialist and productivist one, a model that prioritizes public services (health, education, housing, accessible transport, sewage, electricity, drinking water) for the mass of the population, and not the production of goods for the world market. This anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist model expropriates the monopolies in the sectors of finance, mining, energy, agribusiness, and socializes them under democratic control.

Especially in the poorer countries, the necessity to meet the

needs of the population will require increased material production and energy consumption over a period of time. Within the framework of the alternative development model and other international exchanges, the contribution of these countries to global ecosocialist degrowth and respect for ecological balances will consist of:

- Imposing just reparation on imperialist countries.
- Cancelling the conspicuous consumption of the parasitical elite.
- Fighting ecocidal megaprojects inspired by neoliberal capitalist policies, such as giant pipelines, pharaonic mining projects, new airports, offshore oil wells, large hydroelectric dams and immense tourist infrastructures appropriating natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of the rich.
- Ecological agrarian reform to substitute industrialized agro-business.
- Refusing the destruction of biomes by breeders, palm oil planters, agribusiness in general and the mining industry, “forest compensation” (REDD and REDD+ projects) as well as “fishing agreements” which offer fishery resources to industrial fishing multinationals, etc.

Through their struggles, the popular classes of the dominated countries can contribute in a decisive way by engaging the exploited of the whole world in this path, the only one compatible with both human rights and with terrestrial limits.

Against the tide, make the struggles converge to break with capitalist productivism. Seize the government, initiate the ecosocialist rupture based on self-activity, self-organization, control

from below, and the broadest democracy

The economy, the state, the politics of the bourgeoisie and its international relations are deeply affected by the eco-social impasse in which capitalist accumulation and imperialist plunder have plunged humanity. Around the world, the exploited and the oppressed are gripped by deep anguish.

Movements of resistance are developing against the tide. Even in extremely difficult contexts, people stand up for their social, democratic, anti-imperialist, ecological, feminist, LGBTQI, anti-racist, indigenous, and peasant rights. Significant struggles have been waged and sometimes remarkable victories have been won: the Yellow Vest movement and the movement to defend pensions in France, the ecosocialist struggle of the GKN factory workers in Italy, the struggle of the auto workers union in the United States, the closure of a copper mine owned by First Quantum in Panama in 2023, the victory of the Indian peasants against the Modi government, the victory of the “zadists” in France against the airport of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, the victory of women in the fight for abortion in Argentina, and of the Sioux in the United States against the XXL pipeline... But the enemy is on the offensive and many struggles are defeated. Our task, as activists of the Fourth International, is to help organize and extend the struggles, bringing our ecosocialist and internationalist perspective to bear.

While the history of the labor movement is rich in struggles for workers' health and environmental protection, the productivism of the hegemonic forces of the left, parties and trade unions, is a serious obstacle on the road to an ecosocialist response commensurate with the objective situation. Most of the leaderships have abandoned any anti-capitalist perspective. Social democracy and all other variants of reformism have become social-liberal, their only ambition being to bring some social correction to the market within the limits of the neoliberal framework. Most

leaderships of the big trade union organizations limit themselves to accompanying neoliberal policies with the illusion that capitalist growth will improve employment, wages and social protection. Instead of organizing an awareness of the ecosocial impasse, these policies of class collaboration deepen it and conceal its gravity.

Fortunately, some political forces and trade union currents – notably in Europe, the United States and Latin America – are beginning to distance themselves from productivism and neoliberalism. In the trade unions, activists aware of the ecological challenge have advanced the concept of a “just transition”. Social democracy and ITUC trade union leaders have hijacked this in the direction of supporting productivism and business competitiveness. The dominant class is expert in manipulation. This is how “just transition” has joined “sustainable development” in the discourse of governments that trample on justice and organize unsustainability.

In the “developed” capitalist countries, the ranks of the traditional forces have been reinforced by the green parties. It took four decades for the vast majority of these parties to join the layer of the political managers of capitalism. Their pragmatism based on the individual responsibility of consumers is extended in civil society by numerous environmental associations. It has allowed social democracy and traditional labour leaderships to disguise their class collaboration in defence of the “lesser social evil” in the face of ecotaxes and other so-called “realistic” solutions of “neither left nor right” ecology.

In other parts of the world, although still in a minority, ecosocialism is beginning to gain an influence on social movements and the radical left. Some important local experiences – in Mindanao, Rojava, and Chiapas, among others – have affinities with the ecosocialist perspective. However, capitalist growth still falsely appears to most as the only way to improve social conditions.

Given the depth of the crisis and disarray, there is a real risk of seeing a growing tendency in sectors of the working classes to sacrifice ecological objectives on the altar of development, job creation and increased income. This trend would only accelerate the catastrophe of which these same classes are already the first victims and would deepen the loss of legitimacy of the unions. It would also create fertile ground for neo-fascist attempts to greenwash racist, colonialist and genocidal projects. The migrants fleeing their devastated lands are the main targets of these hate campaigns.

The socialist project is deeply discredited by the record of Stalinism and social democracy. It is from struggles that we must reinvent an alternative, not from dogmas.

Who is today on the front lines of the real ecosocial movement? Indigenous peoples, youth, peasants, racialized people who pay a heavy price for the social and ecological destruction. In these four groups, women play a decisive role, in connection with their specific, ecofeminist demands, for which they fight and organize themselves autonomously.

The international peasant alliance Via Campesina offers numerous examples that demonstrate that it is possible to combine the defence of the rights of poor peasants and indigenous peoples, the fight against extractivism and agro-industry, the fight for food sovereignty and the preservation of ecosystems with feminism.

The vast majority of wage-workers is absent or standing back from anti-productivist struggles. Some then infer that the class struggle is outdated, or must be waged by an "ecological class" that exists only in their imagination. But stopping the catastrophe is only possible by revolutionizing the mode of production of social existence. This revolution is not possible without the active and conscious participation of producers, who also form the majority of the population.

Others, on the contrary, deduce that it is necessary to wait for the moment when the mass of workers in struggle for their immediate socio-economic demands will have reached the level of consciousness that allows them to participate in the ecological struggle on a "class line". However, how would the level of consciousness of the mass of employees integrate ecological issues in time if no major social struggle comes to shake up the productivist framework within which they, increasingly on the defensive, spontaneously raise their immediate socio-economic demands? Moving beyond the productivist framework requires a logic of public initiative and planning of the necessary reconversions, with guaranteed employment and income.

The class struggle is not a cold abstraction. "The real movement that abolishes the current state of things" (Marx) defines it and designates its actors. The struggles of women, LGBTQI people, oppressed peoples, racialized peoples, migrants, peasants and indigenous peoples for their rights are not simply adjacent to the struggles of workers against the exploitation of labour by the bosses. They are part of the living class struggle.

They are part of it because capitalism needs the patriarchal oppression of women to maximize surplus value and ensure social reproduction at a lower cost; needs the discrimination against LGBTQI people to validate patriarchy; needs structural racism to justify the looting of the periphery by the centre; needs inhuman "asylum policies" to regulate the industrial reserve army; needs to submit the peasantry to the dictates of junk food-producing agribusiness to compress the price of labour power; and needs to eliminate the respectful relationship that human communities still maintain within themselves and with nature, to replace it with its individualistic ideology of domination, which transforms the collective into an automaton and the living into dead things. In particular, indigenous peoples and traditional communities

are at the forefront of the struggle against the destructive domination of capitalism over their bodies and territories. In many regions, they are even the vanguard of new revolutionary movements of the subaltern classes. Therefore, we recognize that they are a fundamental part of the revolutionary subject of the 21st century.

All these struggles and those of workers against capitalist exploitation are part of the same fight for human emancipation, and this emancipation is only really possible and worthy of humanity in the awareness of the fact that our species belongs to nature while at the same time having, because of its specific intelligence, the responsibility, now unavoidable and vital, of taking care of it. Such is the strategic implication arising from the fact that the destructive force of capitalism has ushered the planet into a new geological era.

This analysis is the basis of our strategy of convergence of social and ecological struggles. Whenever possible, this convergence should also be coordinated at the international level through democratic forums. The struggle is global, and our movement must be too.

This convergence of struggles should not be limited to the search between social movements, or between apparatuses of social movements, for the greatest common denominator in terms of demands. This conception can imply the disregard of certain demands of certain groups – to the detriment of the weakest among them – that is to say, the opposite of convergence.

The convergence of social and ecological struggles includes all the struggles of all social actors, from the most seasoned to the most hesitant. It is a process of dynamic articulation, which raises the level of consciousness through action and debate, in mutual respect. Its goal is not the determination of a fixed platform but the constitution of the unity in combat of the exploited and the oppressed around concrete

demands opening a dynamic aiming at the conquest of political power and the overthrow of capitalism in the whole world.

In practice, the ecosocial convergence of struggles implies above all that those sectors most aware of ecological threats address themselves to the sectors most aware of social threats, and vice versa, in order to overcome together the false capitalist opposition between the social and ecological.

In this approach, the defence of an eco-unionism that is both class struggle and anti-productivist plays an essential role, based on the concrete concerns of workers for the preservation of their health and safety at work and on the role of whistle-blowers about [\[1\]](#) the damage to ecosystems and the danger of production that they are best placed to play.

As ecosocialist activists, we encourage resistance in the workplace through strikes and all initiatives that promote the organization and control of workers. We work to strengthen mobilizations by combining the extension of strikes, building ever greater demonstrations, by promoting all forms of self-organization and self-protection in the struggle against repression, as well as its popularization to counter the lies of the dominant media and the government apparatus.

We are also inspired by forms of civil disobedience, from blocking sites to boycotting rent payments, which have also proven their effectiveness.

Experiences from struggles help to feed the strategic debate.

Anti-productivist struggles are diverse, but generally their starting point is very concrete, often local, in opposition to new transport infrastructure (motorway, airport, etc.), commercial or logistical infrastructure, extractivist infrastructure (mines, pipelines, mega-dams, etc.), the grabbing of land or water, the destruction of a forest or a river, etc. It is, first, the threat to daily life, to livelihoods and health that mobilizes people, not a

generalizing discourse. By confronting political decision-makers, capitalist groups and the institutions that protect them, by forging alliances between actors with different histories and commitments, the struggle becomes more and more global and political.

These combinations of struggles anchored in a specific territory with a precise objective and general combat exist throughout the world and form a new political reality which may be called "Blockadia".

The formation of an ecosocialist class consciousness also implies a convergence in struggles in which (young) scientists can contribute by using and sharing their knowledge (agronomic, climatic, naturalist).

Strike committees, community health centres, company takeovers, land occupations, self-managed living spaces, repair workshops, canteens, seed libraries, etc., allow the experimentation of a social organization free of capitalism. They allow those who are deprived of political and economic power to experience their collective power and intelligence. Contradicting the illusions about possibly bypassing or simply adjusting the system, they sooner or later come up against the state and the capitalist market, showing that it is impossible to do without political power and the necessary overthrow of the system. In industrialized countries, the general political strike will be a decisive instrument. However, by establishing, even temporarily, another legitimacy that is popular, democratic and based on solidarity, the concrete alternatives allow the oppressed to become aware of their own power and to work towards the construction of a new hegemony.

More globally, the construction of self-organized organs of popular power is at the heart of our strategy.

The systemic crisis of "late capitalism" dominated by transnational finance nurtures both a disgust in the face of

the phenomena of the decay of the bourgeois regime and a feeling of helplessness in the face of the profound deterioration, both quantitative and qualitative, of the balance of power between classes. In this context, the question of government takes on increased importance. The seizure of political power by the working classes is a prerequisite for the implementation of a plan initiating a policy of rupture. At the same time, recent years have shown the deadly illusions of political projects which exploit popular aspirations, channel mobilizations, even stifle them in the name of realpolitik, and thus strengthen the far right.

There is no shortcut. An ecosocialist strategy of rupture involves the struggle for the formation of a popular power, fighting for a transition plan, emanating from the self-activity, control, and direct intervention of the exploited and oppressed at all levels of society. No consistent measures against exploitation, oppression, and the destruction of ecosystems can be imposed without a balance of power based on this self-organization. Self-emancipation is not only our goal; it is also a strategy for overthrowing the established order.

New institutions must be built to deliberate, to decide democratically, to organize production and the whole of society. These new powers will have to confront the capitalist state machine, which must be broken. The overthrow of the social order, the expropriation of the capitalists, will inevitably come up against the violent, armed response of the ruling classes. Faced with this violence, the exploited and the oppressed will have no choice but to defend themselves, it will be a question of democratically self-organizing legitimate violence while refusing virilism and substitutionism.

Everything depends on the outcomes of the struggles. No matter how deep the disaster, at every stage, the struggles will make the difference. Within them, everything depends on the ability

of ecosocialist activists to organize in order to orient themselves in practice according to the compass of a historically necessary option. Reflecting and acting, building struggles and tools of struggle, comparing experiences and learning from them: the international implementation of this immense task requires a political tool, a new International of the exploited and oppressed. Through this Manifesto, the Fourth International expresses its readiness to help meet this challenge.

[Adopted by the World Congress February 2025](#)

Notes

1 We use the term “Global South” to describe dependent countries, dominated countries, and peripheral countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We use all these expressions to refer to the same reality. We do not include in the Global South countries like China, Russia, the oil monarchies, or substantially autonomous middle powers like India, etc., which occupy a specific place in the global capitalist system of domination and cannot be considered “dominated”.

2 Terawatt-hour (1 TWh = 1 billion kWh). This energy unit is used to measure the electricity production of a power plant (a few TWh) or a nation state. A kilowatt hour is equivalent to a steady power of one kilowatt running for one hour and is equivalent to 3.6 million joules or 3.6 megajoules.

3 This rebound effect is also known as “Jevons’ paradox”.

ACR has joined the Fourth International

As part of our ongoing commitment to revolutionary ecosocialism, AntiCapitalist Resistance has joined the Fourth International (FI). With the growth of the authoritarian populist right, the collapse of the biosphere and rapid global warming, the worsening global crisis means that we must get organised across borders. From solidarity with the Kazakh uprising in 2022, the conflicts in Palestine and Ukraine to building links with ecosocialists in numerous countries through the Global Ecosocialist Network, internationalism is at ACR's heart. Being an isolated group in England and Cymru/Wales was not part of our perspectives – we need a practical internationalism, not just fine words on a page.

Some of our members were already in the Fourth International through their affiliation with Socialist Resistance, one of the founding organisations of ACR. After several internal discussions within ACR, we agreed to apply for membership as a section together with comrades in Scotland. The International agreed upon this at its 18th World Congress, held in Belgium at the end of February.

The Fourth International was set up by revolutionary Leon Trotsky and his allies in 1938. It is named the Fourth International because there had been three others before. The First International (1864-1876) was led by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and brought together working class organisations and revolutionaries worldwide. The Second (Socialist) International was founded in 1889 and brought together mass socialist parties like the Labour Party in Britain and the German SDP. This international split at the start of World War One when the different national parties supported their capitalist classes in the war. The Third (Communist) International was set up in 1919 after the Russian

Revolution to collect revolutionaries in sympathy with the ideas of the Bolsheviks, who set up communist parties worldwide dedicated to getting rid of capitalism.

The Third International politically degenerated during the 1920s and 30s after Stalin took power in Russia, becoming bureaucratically dominated by the Soviet state and subordinated to Stalin's foreign policy goals. Trotsky and his sympathisers attempted to challenge this by forming a new, fourth international, which was in the tradition of revolutionary socialists who opposed both capitalism and Stalinism and who fought for consistent internationalism.

ACR is itself a product of the regroupment of different socialists from different traditions, so we are not expecting all our members to defend every historic position that the FI has taken. We join the FI because of its clear commitment to ecosocialism as a strategic approach to the crisis of the modern age and its openness to help regroup revolutionary Marxists and other class struggle activists.

At the same World Congress, the FI admitted the MES in Brazil, an organisation from a different revolutionary background, and admitted Solidarity in the USA as a full section. Fraternal relations with Socialist Action were ended due to their pro-Moscow position around the Ukraine war.

ACR is represented in the international leadership of the FI, and we are keen to deepen our connections with ecosocialist revolutionaries worldwide and learn from their struggles. We will work for wider regroupment and to build mass revolutionary organisations that can make a difference in the late capitalist hellscape we live and struggle in.

The Fourth International has also published [a report of the Congress here](#). You can get the resolutions and other documents from the Congress at [this link](#).

Originally posted on 10th March 2025 at

Why do socialists organise internationally?

[Dave Kellaway](#) examines the arguments for eco socialists to be part of a revolutionary international

'I mean you guys have less than a thousand members in most countries and you want to build an International? Esperanto has more chance becoming an international language than you lot building an International with any relevance.'

How often have revolutionary Marxists heard this retort? Mind you the same objection is often made to attempts to building a revolutionary socialist party just in one nation. Members of Anti*Capitalist Resistance are meeting in the New Year to decide whether to fully join up to the [Fourth International](#). So what is the point of building a revolutionary International?

1. An International is the historical legacy of our movement

Marx himself set up the First International, if you read the [Communist Manifesto](#) it is written as a draft programme for an international party – the Communist League, precursor of the International – for its Congress in 1848. Already in that year it was translated into a number of European languages. It was never a document for one nation. Given that at that time capitalism was at quite an early state of globalisation it is remarkable how far sighted Marx and Engels were. Since then

capitalism has come to dominate the planet, even recapturing societies like the Soviet Union that had begun a transition to socialism to its rule. If capitalism is a global system since corporate investment and imperialism knows no borders then workers of all the world have to unite. The Manifesto ends with that slogan. It states that workers have a 'world to win'. The chains of nationalism had to be broken.

Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg broke from the Second International over the capitulation of the German Social Democrats and their co-thinkers elsewhere to their own bourgeoisie's support for the inter-imperialist First World War. At that time the revolutionary internationalist position was a very small minority. However the victory of the Russian Revolution and its impact among workers and peasants worldwide enabled Lenin and Trotsky to set up the Third International. This functioned as a revolutionary force for change with its parties having a real mass base. It did not get everything right, but if you read the documents of the [first four congresses](#) there are rich debates about revolutionary tactics and strategy that still have some relevance today.

Stalin's rise to power in the Soviet Union and the physical repression of Trotsky, the Left Opposition and any other challenge to his rule resulted in the destruction of the democratic Third International. Thereafter Stalin set up the Comintern which was totally controlled from Moscow and defended the interests of the bureaucratic dictatorship rather than those of the international working class.

In the Spanish Civil war, for example, the Comintern's role included dividing the anti-Franco forces. Independent revolutionary parties like the POUM were repressed. Its leader, Andres Nin, and other fighters, were murdered by Stalin's agents. Trotsky, before his assassination by a Stalinist operative, set up the Fourth International in 1938 with the few revolutionary currents which were both anti-Stalinist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

2. Ecological crises make international organisation even more relevant today

Over the last few decades we have become increasingly aware that capitalism does not just exploit the majority of people for profit but threatens all human, animal and plant life because of its never-ending need to grow and exploit the natural world. Marxists, revolutionaries and eco activists are more and more seeing themselves in practice as ecosocialists. Pollution does not recognise borders. Extractive and fossil fuel companies operate indiscriminately throughout the globe.

Such an eco-socialist international is a change from the one that Marx, Lenin, Luxembourg, Trotsky envisaged. Even the new post-1968 New Left was slow to see the importance of the ecological struggle. A new revolutionary international does not just aim for working people to own and control the means of production. We also need an ecological plan to remodel production in harmony with Mother Earth. The bureaucratic dictatorship in the former Soviet Union polluted and destroyed nature just as much as the capitalists in the west. For example industrialised cotton farming destroyed the Aral Sea.

A revolutionary international today has to interrogate traditional notions of growth and abundance put forward by our movement. So the need for a revolutionary International does not just depend on some sort of ritualistic bow to our Marxist or Leninist forebears. It has to respond to today's conditions and how they affect workers and peasants.

3. Forming internationalists

Building international parties helps to break down ingrained nationalist/imperialist reflexes that can even affect Marxist radicals who proclaim themselves internationalists. Centuries of empire, colonialism and imperialism will leave deep ideological and psychological traces, just as sexist behaviour

can persist among radicals. Actively building an international party can lesson these risks.

It is interesting how the experience of some currents building internationals can replicate this ideology as the strongest section with funds that support the smaller groups becomes the motherboard of these currents. The self-designated centre essentially decides the political line at all times, intervening in its satellite groups if they go off message. Getting real input and balanced leadership that includes the global south is difficult although the extension of new technology can help.

Class struggle parties emerged to the left of reformism such as Syriza (Greece) or Podemos (Spain) in recent decades. They were not part of an international current and therefore more likely to succumb to pressures to join 'national unity' governments. Look at the *Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht* (BSW) in Germany, led by Sahra Wagenknecht, which split from Die Linke on a nationalist, anti-migrant line.

Groups and individuals who are inside revolutionary international currents can also do the same – this happened in Brazil and Sri Lanka with the Fourth International (FI) in the past. However by establishing structures and education that consciously operates to develop an internationalist culture you can try and minimise such losses.

4. Do you need a major breakthrough in one country first before building an International?

Some people on the left may accept the need for an international abstractly but say it is premature to set one up now or to give it too much priority. Don't we have to concentrate on making an anti-capitalist breakthrough in one country which can then provide a resource and a model for revolutionaries everywhere? Look at how the victory of the Russian revolution really boosted the structures of the Third

International. The period covering the first four congresses of the Third International was the only time we saw mass parties structured in an International.

Isaac Deutscher, the great biographer of Trotsky, argued it was premature to set up the Fourth International in 1938. But it is difficult to argue that it was any easier after the Second World War when Stalinist parties became stronger given the role of the Soviet Union in fighting Hitler and the CPs in the resistance movements.

Once you recognise that the revolutionary continuity is fatally broken you have to start again as Lenin did in 1914 with meagre support. The fact that some continuity through the Fourth International was maintained through to the post-1968 New Left meant that that generation was able to have access to an anti-Stalinist, revolutionary tradition going back to classical Marxism.

This argument is a bit like people saying in a national context that it is premature to set up a revolutionary organisation before there is a class struggle mass movement and a higher consciousness among masses of workers. The problem here is that you cannot leave it all to the last minute. Revolutionary crises will not provide the basis for a revolution if you have not achieved a specific weight of revolutionary cadre who can provide leadership to take the revolution forward.

How many times have we seen mass upsurges shake bourgeois states only to evaporate due to a lack of a conscious vanguard? It is also true that we should not get ahead of ourselves and have small groups proclaim that we already are the revolutionary nucleus and people should just join us.

5. Why an International is useful for revolutionary activists

It is useful both for political discussion and for taking action that has a political impact. Revolutionary

consciousness benefits from regular structured debate with others throughout the world. A functioning international provides that training, the opportunities to regularly talk and discuss. Debates documented inside the FI on women's liberation, socialist democracy and ecosocialism have often been useful for wide layers of activists. Sometimes these issues were taken up before they became more mainstream in the wider movement. Books and publications sponsored by the IIRE (International Institute for Research and Education) and International Viewpoint/Inprecor help diffuse these ideas.

International structures are not just about generating political analysis or even communiques on the issues of the moment but can help coordinate actions internationally. The FI was rebuilt partly through its solidarity with the liberation movements in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam. Later it made huge efforts to build solidarity with Nicaragua (in its radical phase), Solidarnosc in Poland and the 1982 British miners strike to just cite a few examples. Today comrades in Italy are at the centre of solidarity with the GKN factory occupation/cooperative. We have organised international meetings to share the experiences of organising in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

An international can quickly disseminate practical information about certain struggles. Tours of comrades involved in exemplary battles can be set up in a number of countries. Another useful activity is to bring together young activists in an annual youth camp that has a different country as the venue each year. Groups or individuals from the global south can be subsidized to a degree by sections in the more advanced capitalist countries. This applies also to the international educational schools that are run in Amsterdam with its dedicated base. These schools are open to activists who are not members of the FI.

We can benefit too from sharing articles written by comrades across the world and published in the International

Viewpoint [website](#). One thing that can be very irritating is when people from Britain pontificate about events in other places without giving voice to the activists in those countries. For example some people on the left here reduce the invasion and occupation of Ukraine to an inter-imperialist conflict provoked by US pressure on Russia. Contacts with sympathisers inside Ukraine allow us to counter such simplistic analyses and restore agency to Ukrainians.

With a functioning international structure, you can build a political culture that starts from understanding the conditions and interests of workers and peasants in different countries first hand. This is particularly important given the influence of campist sentiments today on the left. For campists revolutionary action is mainly determined by the conflict between the imperialist powers. If the main and only task is to weaken US interests that the needs and interests of workers in countries on the wrong side of this divide are sacrificed. So some left wing people defended Assad as a lesser evil since the US was attacking him. Russian bombing and war crimes there were downplayed or ignored because Putin was supporting a regime that supposedly was part of an axis of resistance against the US and Israel. They see the overthrow of Assad as a massive defeat for workers.

6. An International that does not sound or look weird

Listening to Aaron Bastani on Novara media's [review of the year](#) (well worth watching) I was impressed by his final comment about the need for the left to build an anti-capitalist current that is not 'weird'. I think he is absolutely right about the need for the left to be accessible and approachable for people outside the left bubble. This applies to our championing of the need for an International.

The first maxim must be: do not pretend to be the world party of the international proletariat, particularly do not proclaim this on your publications. Talk like that puts you in the

weirdo camp.

We must accept where we are. While we say we must not put off building an International today we see ourselves as a possible component of a much bigger one. Regrouping with currents coming from within or outside the Trotskyist tradition is essential. Indeed officially the FI does not define itself as Trotskyist and there are sections that come from Maoist or other traditions.

In Britain both the Socialist Party with the CWI (Committee for a Workers International) and the SWP with the IST (International Socialist Tendency) organises with its co-thinkers internationally. Neither is as present internationally as the FI or as structured, but we do not rule out working towards a convergence with such currents.

An international has to reject any pseudo Leninist idea that some sort of centre has to determine the political line to take in each country. Each section has to determine its own strategy and tactics. It is only when a section in a country decides to cross class lines by for example joining a bourgeois government or breaking a strike that the International leadership would take action repudiating it. Just to give an example of democratic functioning today in the FI. There are nuances today on the line to take on Ukraine. While all groups call for the withdrawal of Russian troops not everybody agrees with Ukraine getting arms from Western governments. Publications of the International reflect that pluralism while making clear when positions are actually taken by international bodies.

Finally we should also keep in mind another reason for international organisation. The far right are organised internationally and they have a lot more resources than we do. Steve Bannon and others are always organising international meetings and funnelling money from their rich backers to groups around the world. Money from Putin's Russia also finds

its way into the coffers of the far right. The left should organise on an international level, whether this is us as revolutionary ecosocialists or broader mass organisations like trade unions or Labour parties.

Dave Kellaway is on the Editorial Board of Anti*Capitalist Resistance, a member of Socialist Resistance, and Hackney and Stoke Newington Labour Party, a contributor to International Viewpoint and Europe Solidaire Sans Frontieres.

Originally posted as [Why do socialists organise internationally? – Anticapitalist Resistance](#) by Anti*Capitalist Resistance on 30th December 2024

Fund drive for the Congress of the Fourth International

The Fourth International is organizing its world congress in February 2025. This will be an opportunity for around 200 delegates from all over the world to meet and exchange views.

We note that the world is particularly complicated to grasp at the moment, with the multiple crises that capitalism is experiencing, combining economic, social, political and ecological crises, the rise of the far right, and so on. Comparing the situations in different countries, as we are doing by exchanging texts and organizing discussions in all the countries before we meet for the congress, is extremely useful for better analysis and action.

To meet these challenges, we are discussing a new Manifesto

for the Fourth International based on our ecosocialist orientation and outlining the world we want to build. We will also discuss the state of the world as it is around our international resolution with two specific focuses on Palestine and Ukraine, our activity in the social movements of the exexploited and oppressed where we build class struggle forces, and of course strengthening our own International.

Organizing a congress costs a lot of money, because we have to have a residential centre where the delegates are housed, a full team of interpreters and secretariat, and subsidize comrades from the Global South – from Asia, Africa, Latin America – for their transport tickets, which have become much more expensive since the covid pandemic.

If you can contribute financially, please make your transfers to

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And of course, take part in the discussions in your country!

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Documents of the Fourth International

[Manifesto of Revolutionary Marxism in the Age of Capitalist Ecological and Social Destruction](#)

[International Situation; Social Movements; Role & Tasks; Minority Texts](#)

Texts submitted for discussion at the 18th World Congress of the Fourth International by the International Committee of the Fourth International

Agriculture is killing the planet

Alan Thornett writes on his Ecosocialist Discussion blog <https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/> .

This is a revised version of chapter 16 of my book Facing the Apocalypse—Arguments for Ecosocialism, published in 2019, which might be useful today in the current debates on the role of agriculture.

In 2007 and 2008, dramatic increases in world food prices created economic instability and social unrest, in the poorest regions of the world. Those ‘normally’ subjected to famine and

starvation were joined by seventy-five million more.

It was this that triggered the Tunisian revolution in January 2011, which led to the Arab Spring.

A young Tunisian vegetable seller, the lone breadwinner of a family of seven, set himself on fire in front of a government building after police confiscated his unauthorised cartload of vegetables. It was followed by protests over food prices as well as corruption, social inequalities, unemployment and political repression.

In the Global South today, over 800 million people are malnourished and 40 million die every year from hunger or diseases caused by hunger. Another 2 billion people have no regular access to clean drinking water, and 25 million die every year as a result. Sixty-six million primary children go to school hungry across the developing world—23 millions of them in Africa.

The plight of these countries is compounded by the domination of the WTO the IMF and the World Bank. These are the neoliberal gatekeepers that have saddled them with massive debt and forced them to produce monoculture crops for the multi-national companies whilst their own farmers are bankrupt by subsidised competition from the Global North.

This destroys the economic and social conditions of these countries and distorts the markets in which they operate, and leaves them powerless to combat the gathering climate catastrophe.

Meanwhile, desertification, salinification and floods are making large areas of the planet unsuitable for growing food. Climate chaos is creating extreme weather events, in which loss of life and destruction of dwellings and infrastructure have inflicted death, disease and further poverty on millions.

The big question

The salient question, therefore, is not just whether enough food can be produced, and distributed, to feed the existing human population of 7 billion (now 8bn-AT), or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century without destroying the biosphere of the planet in the process. In other words without a massive extension of industrialised/intensified agriculture and by the ever-increasing use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and mono-cropping techniques?

Already, 60 per cent of current global biodiversity loss—i.e. the sixth great extinction of species that we are witnessing—is directly due to food production including the catastrophic destruction taking place the Amazonian rain forest, the most environmentally rich and diverse habitat on the planet.

At the same time agriculture is a massive contributor to GHG emissions, including methane from livestock, nitrous oxide from the soil, CO₂ from machinery. Perhaps the most remarkable statistic concerning food production is that the GHG emissions generated by meat production for human consumption are at 17 percent is almost equal to the 20 per cent generated by the entire world-wide transportation system combined: cars, trucks, trains, ships and aircraft! Yes, cars, trucks, trains, ships and aircraft!

Industrialised/intensive farming

Today, 70 billion land animals (*i.e.* excluding fish) are slaughtered every year for human consumption. This has doubled in the last 50 years, and is set to double again by 2050.

Two-thirds of these are reared by industrialised/intensive methods—or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)—as they are known in the trade. This requires vast quantities of corn, maize, and soy that could be eaten directly, and far more effectively, by the human population itself. There are

now more than 50,000 facilities classified as CAFOs in the US, with another quarter of a million industrial-scale facilities just below that threshold.

In his 2017 book *Dead Zone-where the wild things were*, Philip Lymbery– who is also author of *FARMAGEDDON-the true cost of cheap meat*, published in 2014–points to a study by the University of Minnesota found that for every 100 grams of grain fed to animals only a fraction convert into human food: i.e. 43 in the case of milk, 35 with eggs, 40 with chicken, 10 with pork, and just 5 in the case of beef. My contemporaneous review of *Dead Zone* can be found [here](#).

The [UN Food and Agriculture Organisation 2006 Report](#) *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options*, concluded that global meat production will more than double to 465 million tonnes by 2050; and that milk production will grow from 580 million tonnes to 1,043 million tonnes in the same period. The environmental impact of livestock production will have to be cut in half, it says, just to keep the damage at the present level.

Beef consumption

The average American consumes 120 kg of meat a year, and the average Brit 80 kg. Whilst these levels are stable at the moment, meat consumption in the developing countries is rising rapidly. The global livestock sector currently produces 285 million tonnes of meat altogether—or about 36 kg (80 lb) per person, if divided evenly.

This involves the use of huge quantities of mineral fertiliser and pesticides as well as antibiotics to control the infections that result from confining them in too small a space and of hormones to fatten them faster.

The methane produced by cattle is also huge, putting the equivalent of 2.8 billion tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Globally cattle produce 150 billion gallons of methane every day from their digestive processes—and methane is 86 times more potent as a GHG than CO₂.

In their 2016 film *Cowspiracy* Kip Anderson and Keegan Kuhn concluded that livestock along with their feed, their waste, and their flatulence account for up to 32 billion tonnes of CO₂ per year, or 51 per cent of all worldwide CO₂ equivalents. Livestock also generate 53 per cent of all emissions of nitrous oxide (mostly from manure) which is a greenhouse gas with 298 times the warming potential of CO₂.

Soy beans and palm oil

Between 1960 and 2009, *global soy production* increased by nearly ten-fold, and it has doubled again since then. The USA used to be the major producer of produce of soy, but there has since been explosive growth in Latin America, particularly in Brazil. Today, China, at 55 million tonnes, is by far the biggest importer of soybeans and is expected to increase its imports by 5 per cent a year. Soy bean imports to Asia are also expected to grow from approximately 75 million tonnes in 2009 to 130 million tonnes in 2019.

The global palm oil trade is worth \$40 billion a year, accounting for over 30 per cent of the world's vegetable oil production. Malaysia and Indonesia are now the two biggest palm oil producing countries and are rapidly replacing their abundant rainforests with oil palm plantations. They account for 84 per cent of the worlds palm oil production. In South America palm oil production has recently increased in Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala. The second largest global vegetable oil, soya, takes up 120 million hectares, producing 48 million tonnes of soya oil.

Chickenisation

If red meat is the most damaging to the planet, that does not

mean that mass produced chicken is a benign product. Lymbery calls this chickenisation, and points out that around 60 billion chickens a year are currently produced for meat. It comes, he says, at a terrible cost to the birds as well as massive pollution of the environment.

He points out that:

Poultry meat and eggs are a major source of infection from another serious food-poisoning bug: salmonella. Keeping chickens in large flocks or in cages can dramatically boost the risk: studies have shown that caged hens are up to ten times more at risk of salmonella than birds kept free-range... Farmers routinely attempt to safeguard their birds against such bugs by dosing them with antibiotics... Indeed, half of all the antibiotics produced in the world are fed to chickens, cows, pigs and other farmed animals.

There are serious implications in this for human health in terms of antibiotic immunity.

Oceanic Dead zones

Philip Lymbery—as the title of his book suggests—also points in some detail to the development of oceanic dead zones, or hypoxia as they are scientifically known, in what is possibly the most terrifying upshot of meat production. They are caused by agricultural run-off which often reach the sea via the river systems. They are not new but they are now multiplying rapidly.

He focuses on a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico that forms every year from February to October, and is the second biggest in the world. Dead zones are generated by a lack of oxygen, creating a lifeless bottom layer of water which most creatures are unable to tolerate. Bottom-dwelling animals with no escape – crustaceans for example – are wiped out.

Lymbery points out that the number of dead zones around the

world doubles every decade. There are now more than 400 dead zones covering some 95,000 square miles. Most are found in temperate waters off the coast of the USA and Europe. Some are also brewing in the waters off China, Japan, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand. The biggest in the world is in the Baltic. The Gulf of Mexico dead zone stretches from the shores of Louisiana to the upper Texan coast, covering an area the size of Wales.

The responsibility for dead zones, Lymbery says, is clear. It is the fertilizer used to produce the vast grain crops of the American Mid-West—an area of intensive corn and soya production where large amounts of nitrogen are applied to the soil every year to produce grain mainly for meat production. Whilst 160 million tons of nitrogen is produced every year for agricultural purposes, only a fraction of that which is spread on the fields ends up being absorbed by the crops: the rest ends up as run-off.

The run-off that feeds the Gulf of Mexico dead zone originates in the American Mid-West and arrives via the Mississippi River. The Mississippi drains from land in more than 30 states, making it by far the biggest drainage system in North America. Nitrogen applied to the vast cornfields of the Mid-West to increase the crop yield makes its way through the tributaries upstream into the Mississippi itself, and on into the Gulf of Mexico to fuel the dead zone. The more nitrogen is applied to the crops, the bigger the resulting dead zone.

Fresh water consumption

Another massive impact that agriculture on the planet has been its relentless consumption of fresh water.

Fred Pearce, in *When the Rivers Run Dry* points out, for example, contends that it takes between 2,000 and 5,000 litres of water to grow one kilo of rice. That is more water than most households use in a week. It takes 1,000 litres to grow a

kilo of wheat and 500 for a kilo of potatoes. And when it comes to feeding grain to livestock to produce meat and milk, the numbers become even more startling.

It takes 24,000 litres to grow the feed to produce a kilo of beef, and between 2,000 and 4,000 litres for a cow to produce a litre of milk. It takes 5,000 litres to produce a kilo of cheese and 3,000 litres to produce a kilo of sugar. It takes around 2,000 litres to produce a kilo jar of coffee, around 250 litres to produce a glass of wine or a pint of beer, and a staggering 2,000 litres to produce a glass of brandy.

He argued that:

The water footprint of Western countries on the rest of the world deserves to become a serious issue. Whenever you buy a T-shirt made of Pakistani cotton, eat Thai rice, or drink coffee from Central America, you are influencing the hydrology of those region—taking a share of the River Indus, the Mekong or the Costa Rican rains. You may also be helping the rivers run dry.

He introduces the concept of ‘virtual water’—the water used in the production or manufacture of a product. Those countries exporting such products, he argues, are in fact exporting ‘virtual water’. The USA, he says, is rapidly depleting crucial underground water reserves in order to export a staggering 100 cubic kilometres of virtual water in beef production alone. Other major exporters of virtual water include Canada (grain), Australia (cotton), Argentina (beef) and Thailand (rice).

The agricultural transition

During the twentieth century, agriculture underwent what is known as the agricultural transition—ushering in not just fertilisers and pesticides but mechanisation—bringing about the greatest change since agriculture was first developed by human beings some 13,000 years ago.

Today fewer and fewer people are farmers, agriculture employs 1.3 billion men and women: 40 per cent of the working population. Peasants are still the majority of working people in Africa and Asia.

Over the past two decades, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, peasants have faced 'conservative modernisation' policies, posing deep challenges to peasant societies in the attempt to adapt them to capitalist globalisation. Land grabs are now global phenomenon, undertaken by local, national and transnational elites as well as investors and speculators, with the complicity of government and or local authorities.

Land grabbing goes hand in hand with increasing control by big business over agriculture and food, through greater control over land, water, seeds and other natural resources. In this race for profit, the private sector has strengthened its control over food production systems, monopolising resources and gaining a dominant position in the decision-making processes.

The countries of the global South are often under the pressure of debt payments that have increased sharply in recent years.

Crucial tipping-points

Philip Lymbery argues that although the planet is remarkably resilient, we are now reaching a tipping point in its ability to take any more punishment; and that agriculture is playing a major role in this, feeding a global population that is now over 7 billion (now 8 billion AT), but swallowing up nearly a half of the planet's useable land and two-thirds of its fresh water, and inflicting damage on the soil that is vital for the food we eat. As the human population rises, Lymbery argues, 'so the quest intensifies for more land to cultivate'. Right now, we are in no danger of running out of food (distribution problems notwithstanding), but the environmental damage attached to the way we are choosing to produce it may be

irreversible.

An area of cereal cropland the size of France and Italy combined will be needed by 2050 to keep pace with the demand for food. Up to a fifth of the world's remaining forests, he argues, will be gone in the next three decades – much of it to grow crops for feeding animals for the meat trade:

Great swathes of extra cropland look set to join the chemical-soaked arable monocultures of East Anglia in England. The seas of swaying corn in the Midwest of America and soya in Brazil are set fair to extend still further. There'll be more fields of maize like the ones I saw in rural Asia... The encroachment of agriculture into the remaining wildlands, together with the onward march of industrial farming, will almost certainly cause irreversible damage to biodiversity, forests soil and water.

He is cautious about giving an opinion on the rising human population of the planet, but he is clearly concerned. 'To me', he says, 'the link is obvious. An extra billion people come with 10 billion extra farm animals, together with what that means in terms of land water and soil.'

Throughout human history, he goes on:

for better or for worse, *Homo sapiens* have outdone all comers, from the magnificent mammals like the bison that roamed the American plains in vast numbers, to birds like the passenger pigeons that once flocked in great grey rivers through the sky, and to species of fellow humans like the Neanderthals. Whatever has stood in our way, and more often just in our reach, we have erased it. Now we have met our match. The great irony is that our most fearsome competitor for food – livestock – has been put there by us.

The conclusion to all this is clear. Although food continues to be produced (globally) by small and medium sized producers, industrialised agriculture is the predominant producer and is

now irreplaceable without major changes both in food production and consumption, particularly in regard to the increasing demand for meat.

Food sovereignty

The problem is clear. Big business dominates our global food system. A small handful of large corporations control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. This concentration of power enables big businesses to wipe out competition and dictate tough terms to their suppliers. It forces both farmers and consumers into poverty. Under this system, around a billion people are hungry and around 2 billion are obese or overweight.

Peasant and farmer movement across the world are therefore fighting for 'food sovereignty'—a term coined in 1996 by *La Via Campesina*.

Food sovereignty, they argue, allows communities to maintain control over the way food is produced, traded and consumed. It seeks to create a food system that is designed to help people and the environment, rather than make profits for multinational corporations.

The food sovereignty movement is a global alliance of farmers, growers, consumers and activists. It is counterposed to the demands of governments around the world for 'food security' a concept that instead aims to ensure that the global demand for food is met by free market methods and ever more industrialised farming systems.

La Via Campesina is one of the biggest social movements in the world, bringing together more than 200 million small and medium-scale farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, migrants and agricultural workers from 70 countries. The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), with 1.5 million members, is one of the biggest components of *Via Campesina*. It campaigns for access to land by the poor and for

land redistribution. It has led land occupations by the rural poor, forcing the Brazilian government to resettle hundreds of thousands of families.

Small farmers lack access to natural resources—in particular land, water and seeds—since most of the best land is in the hands of the big transnational companies, which impose a model of agricultural production designed for export rather than for local consumption. They impose a commercialised, intensive agriculture, that puts economic interests before the needs of people.

Food sovereignty, on the other hand, puts the local agricultural producers at the centre of the system, supporting the right of the people to produce their own food independent of the conditions established by the market. It is about prioritising local and national markets, and reinforcing agriculture by promoting food production, distribution and consumption on the basis of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The industrial/intensive agriculture model threatens the existence of traditional farming and fishing and small-scale food production. Women have a central role to play: in the Global South they produce 80 per cent of food. At the same time women and children world-wide are the most affected by hunger and famine. In many parts of the Global South, the law denies women the right to own land, and even where they can legally own it, they are denied that right. As a result of this, many individual and groups of women are joining the farmers' movements to seek protection.

In Latin America those struggling for the rights of indigenous communities and the right to the land often face murderous repression, as in Brazil and Honduras. In Asia, in Africa—for example, in Mali—on all continents, peasant movements lead the mobilisations against land monopolisation.

Peasant women and men, landless people and indigenous peoples, and especially women and youths and precarious farm workers, are dispossessed of their means of subsistence by practices which also destroy the environment. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are excluded from their lands, often by force, making their lives more precarious and in certain cases examples of modern slavery. Although the concept of food sovereignty relates most strongly to the countries of the impoverished Global South, it also exists in the Global North. In fact the first European forum on food sovereignty was held in Krems in Austria in 2011.

La Via Campesina's seven principles of food sovereignty are as follows:

Food as a basic human right. Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. Each nation should declare that access to food is a constitutional right and guarantee the development of the primary sector to ensure the concrete realisation of this fundamental right.

Agrarian reform. A genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people – especially women – ownership and control of the land they work and returns territories to indigenous peoples. The right to land must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology; the land belongs to those who work it.

Protecting natural resources. Food Sovereignty entails the sustainable care and use of natural resources, especially land, water, and seeds and livestock breeds. The people who work the land must have the right to practice sustainable management of natural resources, and to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights. This can only be done from a sound economic basis with security of

tenure, healthy soils and reduced use of agrochemicals.

Reorganising the trade in food. Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices.

Ending the globalisation of hunger. Food sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organisations such as the WTO, World Bank and IMF. Regulation and taxation of speculative capital, and a strictly enforced Code of Conduct for TNCs, is therefore needed.

Social peace. Everyone has the right to be free from violence. Food must not be used as a weapon. Increasing levels of poverty and marginalisation in the countryside, along with the growing oppression of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness. The ongoing displacement, forced urbanisation, repression and increasing incidence of racism against smallholder farmers, cannot be tolerated.

Democratic control. Smallholder farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policy at all levels. The UN and its related organisations will have to become more open and democratic for this to become a reality. These principles form the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation in economic, political and social life, free from all forms of discrimination. Rural women, in particular, must be granted direct and active decision making on food and rural issues.

This article was first published in my book Facing the Apocalypse—arguments for ecosocialism published on December

2019.

George Monbiot

As additional reading on this would strongly recommend George Monbiot published an excellent book last year (2023) entitled: *Regenesi—feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet*, which picks up some of the themes that I have raised in the above article.

Agriculture, he tells us is: “the most destructive human activity ever to have blighted the Earth”. That “We are farming the planet to death”, and that “agriculture is the greatest single cause of both climate change and species extinction. “This, he says, is the ‘grand dilemma’ we face.” It is a dilemma he confronts fearlessly, and with little regard to who’s toes, or indeed vested interests, he might be trampling on. His alternative vision is the resurgence of nature – and he makes a very strong case for it.

My review of his book can be found [here](#).

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Alan Thornett is a retired trade union activist and ecosocialist writer. His books [‘Facing the Apocalypse – Arguments for Ecosocialism’](#) and [‘Militant Years: Car workers’ struggles in the 60s and 70s’](#) are available from [Resistance Books](#)

Five reasons why agriculture should be central to our ecosocialist vision

Agriculture (including marine and fishing) are important parts of the Scottish economy. Jess Spear from the Irish ecosocialist magazine [Rupture](#) writes about why it is central to an ecosocialist vision.

1. Industrialised agriculture is undermining our life support systems.

Wildlife populations are collapsing and many species, unable to scrape a living, are simply going extinct. Deforestation and land clearance destroys ecosystems and replaces them with monoculture crops (eg, wheat, barley, soy) or farmed animals. Big monoculture farms effectively starve wildlife of food and pollute the soil and adjacent lakes, rivers and streams. The continuing expansion of intensive farms means further destruction of ecosystems, more wildlife starvation, and more animals going extinct.

2. And fueling the rise of new pandemics.

Loss of habitat drives wildlife into areas inhabited by humans and increases contact between human populations and wildlife, which then increases the likelihood of zoonotic spillover (that is, infectious diseases jumping from animal to human). In fact, [most human diseases originated this way](#). Big factory farms, with billions of chickens, pigs, and cows reared in often cramped and unsanitary conditions, are also breeding grounds for new pandemics.

3. Climate change will disrupt our food supply.

Millions of people are already suffering from food insecurity because of our rotten, for-profit food system. However, the

situation stands to get worse with multiple extreme weather events happening simultaneously – such as a heatwave and drought at the same time, as we saw this summer and last – lead to harvest failures and disrupt supply chains. A decrease in the overall food supply will undoubtedly lead to price spikes and more people suffering deprivation. We are already seeing this and should expect more to occur with increased magnitude and frequency as Earth's temperature rises. In fact, a study published this summer outlines how [current models underestimate the risk of harvest failures in multiple breadbaskets](#).

4. Top-down changes in agriculture are fueling the rise of the far right.



Not only is the capitalist response to the climate and biodiversity crises inadequate, what little is being done is far too often unplanned and under the control of private industry. Farmers in Europe in particular are greatly impacted by new regulations meant to curb nitrogen fertiliser pollution. But, rather than working with small farmers and assisting them in the necessary transition away from intensive farming, governments have dragged their feet – in Ireland they continue to drag their feet – and now are forcing farmers to rapidly change the way they farm. This haphazard approach opens the door to the far right, who deny climate change and spread conspiracy theories about land theft. We should all

take note of what took place in the Netherlands where the farmer-citizen movement, founded only four years ago, won the municipal elections and immediately cancelled the new environmental policies.



5. We must oppose the new enclosures.

Since the economic crash in 2008, international investors have been [buying or leasing huge tracts of agricultural land](#) used by subsistence farmers or indigenous peoples. While the global working class, with its tremendous latent power and common interest in overthrowing capitalism, will undoubtedly play a leading role in transforming society, peasants and indigenous peoples are already battling big corporations and states that support them (and winning in some cases). Ecosocialists should support these struggles unconditionally. Additionally, we support the international peasant movement – La Via Campesina – for food sovereignty and for getting rid of the transnational agribusinesses dominating our food system.



[Interview: Jess Spear- Agriculture and Eco-socialism](#)

[Rupture Radio By Rupture Media Jan 09, 2024](#)

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- *Toward an Irish Marxist Political Economy, by Conor McCabe*
- *The Fight Against Extractivism, interview with Fidelma O'Kane (Save Our Sperrins)*
- *Trees, for example, Ash, by R.S.*
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COP28: Trashing the UN is easy, but where is the alternative?

Alan Thornett writes on Ecosocialist Discussion blog about COP28 and debates the key issues raised.

Despite being held in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – the sixth biggest oil producer in the world, and presided over by a top oil executive with the biggest fossil fuel lobby ever seen at a COP conference, COP28 was a surprisingly productive event.

It met at a time of dramatic acceleration in global warming, of course. 2023 was not only the hottest year since records began, but it did so by an unprecedented margin. The global average figure for 2023 was 14.98°C, a massive 0.17°C above the previous record. For the first time, every day in that year was 1°C above the pre-industrial level. Almost half were over 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level, and two were more than 2°C above it.

It was against this background that COP28 agreed—after a heated debate and an overrun of the conference—that the conference agreed unanimously to call for “a transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science”.

UN Secretary General António Guterres told the [Guardian](#) on December 13 that. “Whether you like it or not fossil fuel phase-out is (now) inevitable”. “Let’s hope it hasn’t come too late.” I agree with him on both points. Fossil fuel is now an obsolescent energy source in which investment will become increasingly problematic and which must be replaced by renewables with the utmost urgency.

He is absolutely right. It is an important strategic breakthrough that could eventually spell the end—or at least the beginning of the end—of fossil fuels and the fossil industry. He is also right to question whether it has come too late to save the planet from catastrophe, which only time will tell, unfortunately. We are, however, better placed to defend the planet with this agreement in place than without it.

It is of comparable importance, in my view, to the two key decisions agreed in Paris in 2015. The first was that global warming is anthropogenic, i.e., a product of human activity. The second was the recognition that achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 could only be achieved by holding the global average temperature increase over preindustrial levels to below 1.5°C.

A last-minute decision to remove all references to oil and gas sabotaged a similar proposal to phase out fossil fuels at COP26 in Glasgow in 2022. Remarkably, fossil fuels had never been mentioned as such before at a COP conference, presumably to avoid frightening the horses.

Johan Rockström, a hugely respected Earth systems scientist, a member of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, and the leader of the team that developed the concept of planetary boundaries, welcomed the decision.

He told the Guardian that the agreement is a “pivotal landmark” in the climate struggle. It does, he says, deliver on making it clear to all financial institutions, businesses,

and societies that we are now finally—eight years behind the Paris schedule—at the true ‘beginning of the end’ of the fossil fuel-driven world economy.”

[Greenpeace](#) said that while there are still some important loopholes to address, this package is “a powerful milestone.” While much more campaigning will be needed over the next year to make this happen as soon as possible, “its game on from here!”

Other key decisions

The first item on the agenda in Dubai was the “loss and damage fund,” which was agreed upon in principle at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh. It was declared operational on the first day of COP28, with an initial \$700 million to fill the fund. This is a drop in the ocean, however, compared to the \$580 billion in damage that vulnerable countries will face by [2030](#).

A stocktake of the “Nationally Determined Contributions” was also conducted as a part of the “ratcheting up process” adopted in Paris in 2015, after which it was reported that there had been a collective effort to meet the \$100 billion target set in Paris and that new pledges would be sought to make up the shortfall. There were also policy discussions on a wide range of important issues, including the following:

- *Renewable energy.* The conference agreed to triple [renewable energy](#) globally, double its energy efficiency by 2030, and accelerate emissions reductions from road transport. It was also agreed to [cut methane](#) by at least 30 percent by 2030.
- *The internal combustion engine.* It was agreed that the [internal combustion engine](#) would be phased out by 2030. Electric vehicles powered by renewable energy, it said, are the future, and we can’t achieve global decarbonisation of transport without them.
- *Low-carbon cities.* There was a report from the

Local [Climate Action Summit](#) regarding energy consumption in cities. It was noted that cities are responsible for more than [three-quarters](#) of global energy consumption and more than [half](#) of global greenhouse gas emissions. Navigating this within a low-carbon and resilient framework can foster a more equitable and just future. Cities need to start building much more eco-friendly infrastructure at a much faster pace.

- *Public transport.* It was agreed that global public transport capacity should be [doubled](#) by 2030.
- *Food and agriculture.* The [World Resources Institute](#) reported that there were six major food and agriculture breakthroughs made in Dubai. Food and land, they say, drive one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, food systems around the world are vulnerable to droughts, flooding, extreme heat, and other impacts of climate change. The issue is particularly critical in many developing countries—for example, in Brazil, where food and land use drive [70% of emissions](#) while over half the population remains food insecure.
- *Deforestation.* The Brazilian delegation successfully proposed [a new global fund](#) to pay countries to keep their tropical forests intact. The proposal called for the creation of a massive global scheme to help preserve rainforests in scores of countries, called the “Tropical Forests Forever” fund. The concept would pay residents and landowners who help preserve forested areas like the Amazon. Finance would initially be raised from sovereign wealth funds as well as from other investors, such as the oil industry.
- *The biodiversity crisis.* There was strong support for the landmark agreement for nature recovery that was signed last year at the UN COP51 conference on biodiversity, which included protecting 30% of nature by 2030.

Carbon taxes

There was a remarkable intervention by IMF chief [Kristalina Georgieva](#) (no less) on carbon pricing and carbon taxes. In what was the first time the subject had been discussed at a COP conference, she made a two-part proposal on behalf of the IMF:

- First, the abolition of all subsidies for fossil fuel production
- Second, put an explicit charge (or tax) on CO₂ emissions at the point of production. This, she said, would raise the trillions of dollars that are needed to tackle the climate crisis.

She claimed that because right-wing climate denial politicians and parties all over the world have targeted them, governments have delayed implementing such taxes. However, she said, “When you put a price on carbon, decarbonisation accelerates.” The IMF, World Bank, OECD, and World Trade Organisation, she said, have set up a taskforce to examine carbon pricing policies and their application around the world.

As someone who has been arguing for exactly this many years, I found this intervention staggering. It appears that a large section of the ruling elites have adopted one of the key elements of an exit policy from fossil energy. The IMF is not only a capitalist institution but one that was founded precisely in order to oversee the international market on behalf of global capitalism.

COP conferences have traditionally resisted discussing this kind of specific emissions reduction demand in favour of general principles. It is important that they are now discussing both.

The harsh reality

This positive outcome in Dubai reinforces what has long been

clear: i.e., that at this stage of the climate crisis, with global temperatures rising at an ever faster rate and time running out, the only way to avoid catastrophic damage to the planet is by making the COP process work.

Any other proposition is leftist posturing. The science is irrefutable. The global temperature is rising at an ever-increasing rate. Dangerous tipping points are starting to trigger. Time is running out. The 1.5°C limit hangs by a thread, climate chaos could be irreversible within a decade, and in the end, nothing can be built on a dead planet.

At this stage, moreover, only governmental action—and action taken by governments prepared to go on a war footing—can make the changes necessary to stop climate change in the limited time we have left, and only the UN COP process has a chance of achieving it.

Not that it will be easy, of course. The implementation of COP policies has been a battle from the outset. Member states are quick to exploit any loopholes on offer, including, for example, carbon capture and storage and the notion of transitional fuels, both of which provide the opportunity to hang on to fossil fuels for a bit longer.

Others simply ignore their previous commitments—flagrantly, if necessary—if they cut across their domestic political interests. A prime current example is the UK Tory government, which has dumped a raft of previous ecological commitments in order to exploit a backlash from car drivers against measures to improve air quality in London, which it thinks it can use against Labour in the general election later this year.

These include delaying the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035; delaying the ban on the sale of fossil-fuel heating boilers from 2035 to 2040; deprioritizing the transition to electric vehicles; issuing over a hundred new licences for oil and gas exploration; and a completely new

oil field in the North Sea.

Such governments, however, have to be faced down if there is to be a solution, and that can best be done within the COP process.

The role of the left

Most of the left denounce the UN COP process at every opportunity, in the most vitriolic terms they can find, with no regard to factual or historical accuracy, while having no viable alternative to offer itself. This is a big problem, in my view.

George Monbiot, for example, whom I greatly respect and who should know better in my view, declared in the [Guardian](#) of December 9 that the whole COP process had broken down, had “achieved absolutely nothing since it started in 1992, and are now they are talking us into oblivion.” “Let’s face it,” he goes on: “climate summits are broken. The delegates talk and talk, while Earth systems slide towards deadly tipping points”. In other words, it is a roadblock to doing anything positive about climate change, and the sooner it gets out of the way, the better.

The Swedish writer and climate campaigner Andreas Malm, author of *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, told the [Guardian](#) on April 21, 2023, that “climate diplomacy is hopeless” and that he does not have “a shred of hope that the elites are prepared to take the urgent action needed to avert catastrophic climate change.”.

The COP conferences, he tells us, “have degenerated into kind of an annual theatre for pretending that we’re doing something about global warming while, in fact, we’re just letting fuel be poured on the fire. “If we let the dominant classes take care of this problem,” he said, “they’re going to drive at top speed into absolute inferno. Nothing suggests that they have any capacity to do anything else of their own accord because

they are totally enmeshed with the process of capital accumulation.”.

They reflect Greta Thunberg’s Glasgow “blah, blah, blah, blah” speech when, in fact, crucial debates were taking place into which she should have been intervening.

George Monbiot says that he had considered proposing changes to the decision-making procedure at COP summits but had decided against it. Andreas Malm proposes that the climate movement should have some kind of military wing, which would get us nowhere when it comes to building the kind of broad global mass movement that is going to be necessary.

The revolutionary left

The revolutionary overthrow of global capitalism, which they imply is imminent, is the solution that the revolutionary left advocates, whether explicitly or implicitly. The fact that the far-right is growing dangerously across Europe, and Trump stands a very good chance of winning the US Presidency in November (for example), does nothing to deter them in this.

This kind of maximalism, however, has many consequences beyond wishful thinking. It implies that anything short of a global revolution is a reformist diversion and that victories are not victories but defeats if a reformist institution like the UN COP process is involved.

It implies that the collapse of the COP process, which is entirely possible as the crisis sharpens, would be good for the future of the planet, when in reality it would let global warming rip and leave us facing a catastrophe situation without a global project by which to confront it and with the right-wing waiting in the wings.

It also leads many on the radical left to oppose the placing of environmental demands on the COP process because, they say, it is a capitalist institution. This is not only wrong and

ultra-left, but strange, since the left demands such institutions in other arenas of struggle all the time. We put demands on the employers, who are capitalists, and on governments that are also capitalist institutions. The fire service is a capitalist institution designed first and foremost to protect private property, but we would not refuse its help if our house was burning down.

A transitional approach

The task we face today is not whether global capitalism can be overthrown by revolutionary means in the next few years, but whether it can be forced to take the measures necessary to save the planet from global warming today as a part of a longer-term struggle to eventually replace capitalism with an ecosocialist society. If we are unable to build a movement capable of forcing change under capitalism, how are we going to build a movement capable of its revolutionary overthrow?

It is not true—as many on the left insist—that capitalism cannot be forced to make structural changes that are contrary to the logic of its existence. In fact, it made concessions when it agreed under pressure to support a maximum global temperature increase of 1.5°C in Paris and when it agreed under similar pressure to transition away from fossil fuels in Dubai.

We need a transitional approach, built around a set of transitional demands, that, as well as addressing the immediate needs of the struggle today, also has a strategic logic towards a post-capitalist solution. Reforms are not necessarily reformist. The road to revolutionary change is forged in the struggle for reform. In fact, the struggle for reform is often the only real road to revolutionary change. Depending on the dynamics of struggle they generate, in fact, both the 1.5°C limit and the temperature increase and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 are transitional demands.

The ruling elites, in any case, are deeply divided on the future of the planet. While its more enlightened wing recognises the approaching climate catastrophe and supports the COP process as the only way to save the planet—and within the capitalist order, of course—its dystopian, anti-woke, climate-denying wing, such as Trump, Bolsonaro, and Orbán, are prepared to gamble on the future of the planet against their climate denial, fight it out on the streets, and impose an authoritarian regime if they get the chance.

These people are deeply hostile to the progressive agenda required to save the planet, i.e., humanitarianism, collectivism, environmentalism, and the defence of nature and the natural environment, that are involved in saving the planet on a sustainable basis.

The role of the left and progressive forces in the climate struggle must be to exploit this division on behalf of the future of the planet.

The role of the UN

I am not a natural defender of the UN—the “thieves kitchen,” as Lenin called its predecessor, the League of Nations—or even of its environmental work.

It is important, however, to recognise the positive role that the UN has played in global warming over the last 35 years, decades before the socialist left showed any interest. In fact, it is difficult to play a useful role in the climate struggle today without an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of that contribution and what it represents as a focus for international campaigning and mobilisation.

The idea that the UN could have resolved the climate crisis many years ago if only it had been prepared to snap its fingers hard enough—which is implicit in the left critique—is nonsense. As is the notion that it has “achieved absolutely nothing since it was launched in 1992” or that its conferences

are “a kind of annual theatre for pretending that we’re doing something about global warming.” Such caricatures contribute nothing to the struggle.

The UN’s engagement with the ecological crisis began in 1972 with the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The [International Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), a scientific body comprising 2,500 scientists from 130 countries, was launched in 1989. It’s mandated to “prepare a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to the state of knowledge of the science of climate change, the social and economic impact of climate change, and potential response strategies and elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate.”

It coincided with James Hansen’s [historic address](#) to the US Senate on global warming and climate change.

The [Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) was launched in 1993 at the Earth Summit in Rio. Its mandate was to establish an international agreement in order to “stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate systems.” What it did in practice was establish the COP process.

The Convention, in particular, was a frontal challenge to the petrochemical industry and what it produced, which had dominated planet Earth for almost a century and had shaped it in its image. Abolishing fossil fuels and replacing them with renewable energy was always going to mean uniting every country in the world in a monumental confrontation.

The fossil fuel industry responded with extreme hostility to all this and went on over the next 30 years to spend billions of dollars on the next opposing COP process, including the mobilisation of an army of climate deniers around the world to discredit the science, and they were initially very

successful.

Legally binding votes

The most contentious issue in the COP process faced from the outset was the issue of legally binding (or non-legally binding) votes at conferences. While the Framework Convention did not provide for binding votes, it had the authority to require them on carbon reduction pledges by way of a protocol to the Convention. Such a protocol, called the Kyoto Protocol, was agreed upon at COP3 in Kyoto in 1997. It was, however, highly contentious and difficult to implement.

This came to a head at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, when 25 countries, including some of the world's biggest polluters—the USA, China, Canada, and Australia—refused to accept a legally binding vote over a proposal to restrict the global temperature increase to no more than 2°C above the preindustrial level. They all walked out, and the conference broke up in disarray.

The split effectively paralysed the COP process until COP21 in Paris in 2015, where legally binding votes on carbon reduction pledges were replaced by a consensus system, i.e., by unanimous, non-binding votes. Member states failing to meet their pledges would have to face the political and reputational consequences involved at the next COP, and under conditions where the crisis itself would inevitably be even worse.

This was correct, in my view. This has certainly been more effective, both in holding the whole thing together and in implementing decisions. Although getting 198 diverse and complete countries to act together to save the planet is always a formidable task, it is better than endless splits with no dialogue and no progress.

Meanwhile, the COP process, we should recognise, has been instrumental in defeating the climate deniers and winning the

overwhelming majority of the scientific community over on the science of climate change—without which we get nowhere. Additionally, the COP process, without which the fight against climate change would be ineffective, has significantly contributed to a seismic shift in the public's awareness of the climate crisis in recent years.

An exit strategy from fossil fuels

Any campaign against climate change, if it is to be successful, must have a viable existing strategy for fossil fuels based on a socially just transition to renewables, whether it is the UN or the left. While the exit strategy being pursued by the COP process until now has been net-zero emissions by 2050, it does not propose by what mechanism this should be achieved.

I have long argued that the most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly and in a way compatible with social justice is by making fossil fuels far more expensive than renewables by means of carbon taxes, as argued (remarkably) by the IMF in Dubai. When properly managed and carried out as a part of the significant transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor, this can both provide a socially just transition for the most vulnerable members of society and shield it from right-wing forces like the far right in Britain or the yellow vests in France.

The best way of doing this, in my view, is through a fee-and-dividend project along the lines proposed by climate scientist James Hansen in his 2012 book *Storms of My Grandchildren*. He set out the main points as follows:

- Fossil-fuel companies would be charged an easily implemented carbon fee imposed at the well head, mine shaft, or point of entry.
- 100% of the revenue collected would be distributed

monthly to the population on a per capita basis as dividends, with up to two-half shares for children per family.

- Dividends would be sent directly via electronic transfers to bank accounts or debit cards.
- The carbon fee would be a single, uniform amount in the form of dollars per tonne of carbon dioxide emitted from the fuel.
- The carbon fee would then gradually and predictably be ramped up so as to achieve the necessary carbon reductions.
- At the same time, current subsidies to the fossil fuel industry would be eliminated.

When applied to the USA, he argued that 60% of the population would receive net economic benefits, i.e., the dividends they received back would exceed the increased prices paid. As the IMF speaker concluded in Dubai, as mentioned above, “when you put a price on carbon, decarbonisation accelerates.”.

The best exposition of Hansen’s proposal can be found in *The Case for a Carbon Tax* by Shi-Ling-Hsu, published by Island Press in 2011.

Cutting emissions from the demand side in this way is the only socially just way of doing it since it can be carried out within the framework of an overall taxation system that is heavily progressive and brings about a major transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor. Other alternatives, often advanced by the left, such as production cuts by government decision or the rationing of energy, not only do not work but can generate popular backlashes along the lines of the yellow vests, and rationing would create a black market.

It might be expected that the left would support such taxes since it supports taxing the rich, but this is not the case. Most on the radical left oppose carbon taxes, I presume, because they do not involve the revolutionary overthrow of

capitalism.

Mass movements

It is unlikely that the climate struggle will be resolved without big confrontations and mass movements, for which ecosocialists have a responsibility to make preparations.

The best scenario, of course, is that a mass movement is built out of the existing global justice movement and includes everyone who is prepared to fight to save the planet on a progressive basis.

There is another scenario, however, which is that a mass movement or movements arise spontaneously following ecological or societal breakdown as a result of the failure of humanity to stop runaway global warming, resulting in catastrophic impacts on the planet, and with ultra-right and fascist forces waiting in the wings.

While any movement capable of saving the planet will initially be (hopefully) progressive rather than ecosocialist in character, it will be crucial that there are ecosocialists inside it able to fight not just for a sustainable energy transition but one based on social and economic justice and in an anti-capitalist direction.

It is the need to address these eventualities that makes the strategic discussions we have today around the climate and ecological struggle so important. The challenge for ecosocialists in such a situation is not just to be on the right side but to be able to make a contribution to the line of march and the principals involved.

Alan Thornett January 24th 2024

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<https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/2024/01/25/cop28-trashing-the-un-is-easy-but-where-is-the-alternative/>

2023 was hottest year on record, close to 1.5°C

Every day was over a degree above the pre-industrial level, writes the [Climate & Capitalism blog](#).

The European Commission's [Copernicus Climate Change Service \(C3S\)](#) says 2023 was the first year on with all days over 1°C warmer than the pre-industrial period.

Unprecedented global temperatures from June onwards led 2023 to become the warmest year on record – overtaking by a large margin 2016, the previous warmest year. The 2023 Global Climate Highlights report presents a general summary of 2023's most relevant climate extremes and the main drivers behind them.

C3S Director Carlo Buontempo comments:

“The extremes we have observed over the last few months provide a dramatic testimony of how far we now are from the climate in which our civilization developed. This has profound consequences for the Paris Agreement and all human endeavor's. If we want to successfully manage our climate risk portfolio, we need to urgently decarbonize our economy whilst using climate data and knowledge to prepare for the future.”

Global surface air temperature highlights

- 2023 is confirmed as the warmest calendar year in global temperature data records going back to 1850.
- 2023 had a global average temperature of 14.98°C, 0.17°C higher than the previous highest annual value in 2016.
- 2023 was 0.60°C warmer than the 1991-2020 average and

- 1.48°C warmer than the 1850-1900 pre-industrial level.
- It is likely that a 12-month period ending in January or February 2024 will exceed 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level.
 - 2023 marks the first time on record that every day within a year has exceeded 1°C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial level. Close to 50% of days were more than 1.5°C warmer than the 1850-1900 level, and two days in November were, for the first time, more than 2°C warmer.
 - Annual average air temperatures were the warmest on record, or close to the warmest, over sizeable parts of all ocean basins and all continents except Australia.
 - Each month from June to December in 2023 was warmer than the corresponding month in any previous year.
 - July and August 2023 were the warmest two months on record. Boreal summer (June-August) was also the warmest season on record.
 - September 2023 was the month with a temperature deviation above the 1991–2020 average larger than any month in the ERA5 dataset.
 - December 2023 was the warmest December on record globally, with an average temperature of 13.51°C, 0.85°C above the 1991-2020 average and 1.78°C above the 1850-1900 level for the month. You can access information specific for December 2023 in our monthly bulletin.

Ocean surface temperature highlights

- Global average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) remained persistently and unusually high, reaching record levels for the time of year from April through December.
- 2023 saw a transition to El Niño. In spring 2023, La Niña came to an end and El Niño conditions began to develop, with the WMO declaring the onset of El Niño in early July.
- High SSTs in most ocean basins, and in particular in the

North Atlantic, played an important role in the record-breaking global SSTs.

- The unprecedented SSTs were associated with marine heatwaves around the globe, including in parts of the Mediterranean, Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and North Pacific, and much of the North Atlantic.

European temperature highlights

- 2023 was the second-warmest year for Europe, at 1.02°C above the 1991-2020 average, 0.17°C cooler than 2020, the warmest year on record.
- Temperatures in Europe were above average for 11 months during 2023 and September was the warmest September on record.
- European winter (December 2022 – February 2023) was the second-warmest winter on record.
- The average temperature for the European summer (June-August) was 19.63°C; at 0.83°C above average, it was the fifth-warmest on record.
- European autumn (September-November) had an average temperature of 10.96°C, which is 1.43°C above average. This made autumn the second-warmest on record, just 0.03°C cooler than autumn 2020.

Other remarkable highlights

- 2023 was remarkable for Antarctic sea ice: it reached record low extents for the corresponding time of the year in 8 months. Both the daily and monthly extents reached all-time minima in February 2023.
- Arctic sea ice extent at its annual peak in March ranked amongst the four lowest for the time of the year in the satellite record. The annual minimum in September was the sixth-lowest.
- The atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane continued to increase and reached record levels in 2023, reaching 419 ppm and 1902 ppb respectively.

Carbon dioxide concentrations in 2023 were 2.4 ppm higher than in 2022 and methane concentrations increased by 11 ppb.

- A large number of extreme events were recorded across the globe, including heatwaves, floods, droughts and wildfires. Estimated global wildfire carbon emissions in 2023 increased by 30% with respect to 2022 driven largely by persistent wildfires in Canada, greenhouse gas concentrations, El Niño and other natural variations.

First published by Climate & Capitalism:
<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2024/01/09/2023-was-hottest-year-on-record-close-to-1-5c/>

The Hydrogen Economy – yet another mirage

Sean Thompson writes on [Red Green Labour](#):

Over the past few years, much has been made (particularly by fossil fuel industry lobbyists) of the potential for the development of a 'hydrogen economy'. The great attraction of hydrogen to the proponents of the status quo, whether Tory or Labour, is that it feeds into their fantasies about 'green growth' – a lower carbon version of business as usual. Hydrogen, it is claimed, could replace fossil fuels as an energy source, not only for energy intensive heavy industries like steel and glass production but also for powering cars, public transport, aviation and home heating. However, as the estimable Ben Goldacre said of other sensational claims "I think you'll find it's more complicated than that."

Hydrogen comes in three colours:

- Grey: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock.
- Blue: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock with capture of the by-product CO₂.
- Green: Hydrogen produced by splitting water molecules through electrolysis using renewable energy sources

According to the International Energy Agency, 95 million tonnes (Mt) of hydrogen is produced worldwide and 99% is 'grey'. In 2022, hydrogen production generated more than 900 Mt of CO₂ emissions – more than the entire global aviation industry footprint of almost 800 Mt. At the same time, less than 0.1 per cent of the world's hydrogen production (less than 0.08 Mt) was green hydrogen.

In the run-up to COP28, its president, Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the United Arab Emirates and head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), repeatedly urged agreement by governments to almost double current global hydrogen production from 95 Mt to 180 Mt per year by 2030. Reaching that goal with green hydrogen would require a 2,068-fold production increase in seven years. This is, to say the least, a highly unlikely scenario, so the reality would be a massive boom in grey hydrogen and good news for ADNOC and the rest of the fossil fuel industry.

The idea that green hydrogen can replace the energy currently provided by fossil fuels for most transport and for domestic heating/cooling is fanciful in the extreme. Even more fanciful is the suggestion currently being promoted by aviation industry lobbyists that hydrogen might be used to power zero carbon flying, either by using it to manufacture yet to be discovered 'alternative' aviation fuels or via hydrogen fuel cells for electrically powered aircraft.

- A kilogram of hydrogen – the unit of measurement most often used – has an energy value of about 33.3 kWh. So a

tonne of hydrogen delivers about 33 MWh and a million tonnes about 33 terawatt hours (TWh). To provide a sense of scale, the UK uses about 300 TWh of electricity a year.

- Many estimates of the eventual demand for hydrogen are of at least 500 Mt. A world that requires 500 Mt of hydrogen will need to produce 22,000 TWh of green electricity a year just for this purpose. 22,000 TWh is roughly equivalent to 15% of total world primary energy demand, and today's global production from all wind and solar farms is a little more than 10% of this figure.
- A huge global increase in green energy generation capacity will thus be needed to produce 500Mt of hydrogen. As an example of the scale of increase needed, for every gigawatt of capacity, a well-sited North Sea wind farm will provide about 4,400 GWh a year, or 4.4 TWh. At a future efficiency level of about 75%, this will produce around 100,000 tonnes of hydrogen. Therefore most of the UK's current North Sea wind output from 13 GW of wind would be needed to make just one million tonnes of H₂.
- The amount of electrolysis capacity required to make 500 million tonnes of hydrogen a year depends on how many hours a year that the electrolyzers work and how efficient they are. If we assume an average of about 60% of the time, at a prospective 75% efficiency level, then the world will need around 4,500 gigawatts of electrolysis capacity – about five hundred times what is currently in place.

While the creation of such a vast new industry is clearly possible over a period of time, particularly if such an huge initiative isn't left to the hidden hand of the market or the not so hidden hands of the fossil fuel industry, it is clearly not possible in the time left to us to avoid global catastrophe. Nonetheless, the use of hydrogen and the development of green hydrogen production capacity will be

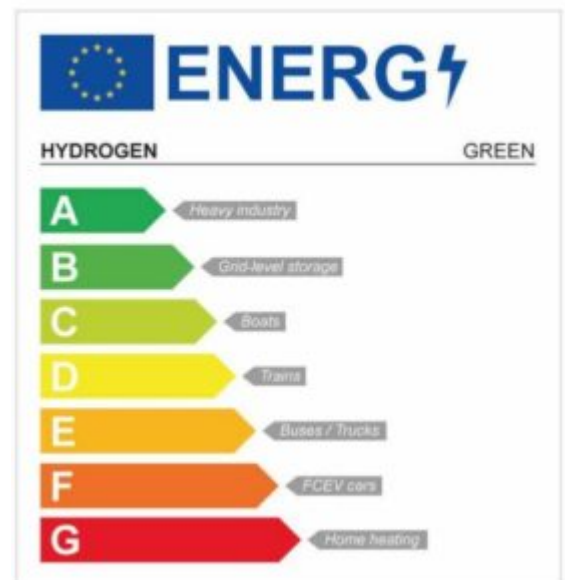
essential if we are to move to a zero carbon economy – but because the supply of truly clean hydrogen is going to be limited – certainly for the next two or three decades – it should be prioritised for uses where there are no alternatives.

In an analysis for Bloomberg in 2020, Michael Liebreich pointed out that hydrogen has serious limitations in many applications:

“as an energy storage medium, it has only a 50% round-trip efficiency – far worse than batteries. As a source of work, fuel cells, turbines and engines are only 60% efficient – far worse than electric motors – and far more complex. As a source of heat, hydrogen costs four times as much as natural gas. As a way of transporting energy, hydrogen pipelines cost three times as much as power lines, and ships and trucks are even worse.”...“What this means is that hydrogen’s role in the final energy mix of a future net-zero emissions world will be to do things that cannot be done more simply, cheaply and efficiently by the direct use of clean electricity and batteries”

The [UK] Government’s own Climate Change Committee (CCC) analysis in their [6th Carbon Budget Report](#), showed that hydrogen production is not the best use of renewable energy if it can be used in other ways, thus we should only use hydrogen where it is near-impossible to reduce demand or use electricity directly. As a leading analyst at CCC has put it: *“In our view, you should be looking to electrify wherever you can. Where that’s prohibitively expensive, or where that’s not feasible, that’s the role that you’re looking for hydrogen.”*

The EU Energy Cities network has actually put together [a hierarchy of uses for hydrogen](#) (see graphic) which seems a good starting point. A is use by energy intensive heavy industrial processes needing high temperature heat like steel, chemicals or glass, B is grid-level storage – storing otherwise ‘waste’ energy produced by off shore wind during periods of low electricity demand, C, D and E for powering heavy transport – shipping, trains and buses/HGVs respectively. Way down at F and G are hydrogen fuel cells for cars and home heating. Speculative technologies like synthetic aviation fuel don’t even figure on the list.



It’s important that an incoming Labour [UK] government doesn’t commit to high cost options involving blue – or even grey – hydrogen, which would suit the gas industry, but which would do little or nothing to reduce CO2 emissions. And it’s equally important that governments realise that, whilst green hydrogen is vital, it will not be available in infinite quantities and isn’t going to be a panacea for all the delivery challenges and investments that need to be made across buildings, transport and industry.

Despite this, both Tory and Labour politicians, along with a rag bag of lobbyists for various techno-fix solutions, from nuclear to carbon capture and sequestration and the wilder regions of geo-engineering, try to avoid the reality that there are no silver bullets that will somehow exempt capitalism from the laws of physics.

For example, in 2020, the Tory [UK] government launched its ‘Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution’, which included a commitment to investing up to £500m in new hydrogen

technologies. It claimed that the energy produced could be used *“to carry on living our lives, running our cars, buses, trucks and trains, ships and planes, and heating our homes while keeping bills low.”* It announced that as part of a trial of hydrogen heating, two ‘hydrogen villages’ of around 1,000-2,000 homes, in Whitby, near Ellesmere Port and Redcar, Teesside, where the homes would be converted to hydrogen for heating instead of natural gas. In July this year, the plans for the Whitby pilot were abandoned in the face of local opposition and in December the proposed Redcar pilot was also scrapped. This leaves National Grid’s £32m pilot project in Fife, where about 300 homes in Methil and neighbouring Buckhaven in Levenmouth were due to be converted from natural gas to hydrogen next year, as only remaining attempt in the UK by energy industry to show that hydrogen is a viable (and cost effective) alternative to natural gas for domestic heating. Unsurprisingly, the project is much delayed and there are doubts whether it will actually get going. Ofgem has warned that *“delay in the commencement of this project would materially impact the evidence base for an energy system transition to hydrogen as a means of decarbonising heat and industry”*.

Capitalism, dependent as it is on the constant and infinite expansion of the production of commodities, is being forced by the inescapable reality of climate change to move from denial to a (partial) recognition of the terrible price that humanity and the planet as a whole is beginning to have to pay. However, its enthusiasm for the mirage of ‘green growth’ is making it grab more and more desperately at technological straws – some of which, like green hydrogen, have the potential to actually play a valuable, if limited, role in combatting global heating.

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<https://redgreenlabour.org/2024/01/01/the-hydrogen-economy-yet-another-mirage/>

COP 28- what is at stake?

Alan Thornett writes:

COP28 (along with planet Earth) is faced with “an absolutely [gobsmackingly bananas](#) increase in the global temperature”

COP28 – the annual UN global summit on global warming – is taking place from November 30th until December 12 – under the auspices of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that was launched in 1992 to protect the planet against “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”, which now takes place annually. It is the 28th UN climate change summit since 1992, and will take place in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

COP28, along with other recent such summits faces a deadly, and indeed existential, contradiction between the relentless acceleration of global warming i.e. of the average global surface temperature of the planet – and the inability of the COP process to bring it under control, or even hold it to a maximum increase of 1.5°C in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

It became clear in August that 2023 would be of a different order of magnitude in terms of temperature when July turned out to be the world’s hottest month ever recorded.

The UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#) – the most radicle the UN has had on climate change – responded rightly by declaring that this meant that “the era of global warming had ended, and the era of global boiling has arrived”. It meant, he said, that: “Climate change is here, it is terrifying, and it is just the beginning. It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C (above pre-industrial levels), and

avoid the very worst of climate change, he said, but only with dramatic, immediate climate action.”

The September figure, however, was a whole lot worse. It was a staggering 0.5°C above the previous such record. The Guardian’s environmental editor [Damian Carrington](#) quoted climate scientist Zeke Hausfather who had tweeted that: “This month was, in my professional opinion as a climate scientist – absolutely gobsmackingly bananas. It beat the prior monthly temperature record by over 0.5°C, and was around 1.8°C warmer than preindustrial levels.” He noted that datasets from European and Japanese scientists confirmed the leap.

It’s worth noting that the difference in the average global temperature between now and the depths of the last ice age when these islands were under a kilometre of ice is around 5.0°C.

In mid-November [Guterres](#) went further warning that. “Present trends are racing our planet down a dead-end 3C temperature rise. This is a failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity. Renewables have never been cheaper or more accessible. We know it is still possible to make the 1.5 degree limit a reality. It requires tearing out the poisoned root of the climate crisis: fossil fuels.”

He added: “Leaders must drastically up their game, now, with record ambition, record action, and record emissions reductions. No more greenwashing. No more foot-dragging.”

The UK’s sellout

One member state that has not upped their game – scandalously – is the UK under Sunak’s Tory government – which has gone in exactly the opposite direction. In order to exploit a reactionary backlash from car drivers against Labour in a recent byelection Sunak has delayed the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035 will deprioritise the

transition to electric vehicles. He has also announced that a ban on the sale of fossil-fuel boilers from 2035 would be watered down and extra exemptions introduced.

Most significantly he has issued a new generation of oil and gas licences for the North Sea and given the go-ahead for a new oil and gas field. It is a monumental stab in the back for the whole COP decarbonisation process.

Sunak insists (ludicrously) that none of this will affect the ability of Britain can still reach his 2050 net zero target. The UN has strongly protested.

The venue

The venue of this COP is a major problem of course. Few countries could be less suitable for such a summit than the UEA. It is not only the 7th biggest oil producer in the world at 3,250,000 barrels a day. It also holds the 7th largest proven reserves of natural gas in the world at over 215 trillion cubic feet. It is also yet another host nation, following Sharm El-Sheikh, with an appalling history of human rights abuses and an economy based on fossil fuel exports, and the president of the COP will be Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber who is the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the UAE, and managing director and group CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

As a result of this, many campaigners will not travel to Dubai in person but will mount their protests at home or via the global day of action which has already been called for the last day of the summit which is Decembe12th. The problem has been compounded, however, by the astonishing revelation that the UEA has been using COP meetings to sell off oil and gas on the side. Guterres has denounced it as a serious breach of the standards of conduct expected of a COP president.

It would be a mistake, however, to allow the venue problem to

dominate our response. It is difficult for the UN to exclude a member state from the presidency when they are seeking to take their 193 member states together towards net zero and when hosting a COP often has a positive effect of the host nation in terms of its own record.

The primary role of a COP summit in any case in pushing the member states to meet their commitment takes place between COP meeting rather than at them when the die has often been cast, also to plan actions and interventions for the following year. In the end the COP process has to be bigger than this since it is dealing with a global existential emergence with a short time line for its conclusion.

The COP conferences, however, urgently need democratising in order to give the climate movement a lot more space and to severely restrict corporate lobbying the access to it given to the petrochemical industry.

The aim of the climate movement should be to maximise mobilisations around every COP summit and where it is not possible at the venue it should be done at the international level. This is important both in order to mobilise the movement and also because it is the best opportunity we have to put demands on the global elites at an international level.

Meanwhile Al Jaber, COP president on behalf of the UAE, has told the Guardian in an exclusive interview on the eve of the conference that he thought that the world could agree a “robust roadmap” of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that would meet scientific advice.

We shall see.

Key challenges in Dubai

The principal responsibility of each COP is to conduct a global stocktake of the carbon reduction targets—or “Nationally Determined Contributions”—to which each member

state is pledged as a part of the so-called “ratcheting up process” adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. This requires each member state to set its own carbon reduction targets and then review and enhance them annually at implementation conferences such as COP27 and now COP28.

In this case every member state must meet the commitments it made at COP27 in in Sharm El-Sheikh and adopt new ones set at a stricter standard – which must be backed by a credible plan for implementation. The stocktake that took place last year at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh revealed a disastrous situation, and this could be even worse.

The loss and damage fund

The other massive issue that will rear its head again – and rightly so – is the matter of a so-called “loss and damage fund”.

This fund was agreed in principle in Sharm El-Sheikh after a long and heated debate. It would provide a mechanism by which the rich countries, that are most responsible for climate change, would be required to pay into a fund that could mitigate the impact of climate change on the poor countries, who are the least responsible for climate change, and help them with a just transition to renewable energy. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) was, therefore, asked to prepare a recommendation, particularly on the size of the fund for the COP28 in Dubai.

The creation of such a fund had been blocked by the rich countries for over 30 years and was only forced onto the agenda this year after heavy pressure from the poor (or developing) countries themselves. Prior to COP27 Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called an “historic pact” between the rich

and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be doomed. In other words without a serious loss and damage fund to provide a socially and economic transition the UN will eventually, and inevitably, fail.

This issue has been given a substantial boost on the eve of the summit when 70 international figures led by Gordon Brown, and including former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, have sent a letter to the COP calling for the massive revenues of oil-producing states to be subject to a \$25bn levy to help pay for the impact of climate disasters on the world's [poorest and most vulnerable people](#).

Brown told the Guardian: "The deadlock on climate finance has to be broken if Cop28 is to succeed. After more than a decade of broken promises, a \$25bn oil and gas levy paid by the petrol states and proposed by the UAE as chair of Cop would kickstart finance for mitigation [reduction of greenhouse gas emissions] and adaptation in the global south".

Such a levy, he said, would shave off only a small fraction of the bonanza that oil-producing countries have made in recent years, but it would help to fill the "loss and damage" to poor countries afflicted by the impacts of the climate crisis.

The role of the UN

The state of the climate struggle today can be seen from the following harsh realities:

- the science remains irrefutable (though often understated by the scientific community)
- the time available to reach net zero is rapidly running out
- the limitations of the COP process become ever more apparent
- Anthropogenic global warming is accelerating at an unprecedented rate and dangerous tipping points are fast approaching – some have already arrived.

- The COP process has to be made to work because there is no alternative.

It is a pivotal moment for the UN since faced with such contradictions its entire carbon reduction project is falling apart leaving the global climate to spin out of control and cause more tipping points to trigger – which would be catastrophic for both the UN and the planet.

Many on the radical left argue that this failure was and is inevitable because the UN it is a capitalist institution, and as such is dedicated to the preservation of the fossil industry and prepared to use as much “greenwash” as necessary in order to do so and it is time for the left (however defined) to go it alone. There have been numerous proposals in recent years for the left to denounce the COP process as a road block and withdraw from it.

This would be a big mistake. The UN is, of course, a capitalist institution. It is comprised of 193 capitalist countries: how could it be otherwise. To its great credit, however, it recognised the danger of anthropogenic climate change as early as 1992 when the radical left still regarded the environment as a middle class diversion. Since then the COP process it established has been a battleground between the majority who recognise the problem and are prepared to decarbonise at least to some extent, and those who simply defend their own self-interest or who reject the concept of anthropogenic global warming on ideological grounds – i.e. the climate change deniers.

In the event the UN – along with its subdivisions such as the IPCC – were not only successful in defeating the climate deniers – despite the massive backing they received from the fossil fuel producers – but in winning the scientific community over to the climate struggle, without which we would be nowhere today. It has also been instrumental, along with the intensification of the climate crisis its self – in

transforming global awareness as to the dangers of climate change.

Today we are facing an existential climate emergency, which only the UN, or something with a comparable global reach and authority can successfully confront.

This is important since although the struggle against climate change must include individual responsibility, in the end it is only governmental action—and ultimately governments that are prepared to go on a war footing to do so—that can make the structural changes necessary to stop global warming in the few years that science is giving us to do it.

The role of the radical left

To the extent that the radical left in particular had or has a strategic approach by which to global warming and climate change it is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, though how clearly this has been thought through is not always clear. To be relevant to global warming, however, it would have to happen within this decade since nothing can be built on a dead planet.

The actual task we are faced with today, therefore, is not whether global capitalism can be abolished within 10 years, but whether it can be forced to take action to halt global warming

as a part of a struggle for its eventual overturn and its replacement by an ecosocialism. If we are unable to build the kind of movement capable of forcing major change under capitalism, how are we going to build a movement capable of overturning it. It is what I would call a transitional approach.

It is not true – as some on the left imply – that capitalism cannot be forced to make major changes that are contrary to the logic of its existence. In fact it was already making

concessions to this when it agreed under extreme pressure to support a maximum global temperature increase of 1.5°C in Paris and when it agreed to end the use of fossil fuels in Glasgow.

Capitalism would also be prepared, in my view – given the existential implications – involved to carry through decarbonisation its self rather than see societal collapse, since to do so would meet with massive resistance. It would do so completely in its self-interest and with extreme brutality. We cannot assume, in any case, that global warming will be halted incrementally – or indeed peacefully – before runaway climate chaos along with societal and ecological break downs and if so ultra-right and fascist forces will be waiting in the wings.

Mass movements will emerge spontaneously under such conditions, problem however, will be which class interests do they represent. Whether they are led by progressive forces (including the left) ultra-right populists with a reactionary agenda, that are already flexing their muscles around environmental issues.

A major task of the radical left today – as well as being involved in every aspect of the struggle –implies conscious preparation for such an eventuality, which could already happen at any time.

Meanwhile, the most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly and democratically is by making fossil fuels much more expensive than renewable energy, by means that are socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding popular support – and in the two or three decades that remain to us.

The UN COP process remains a crucial forum in the struggle for such demands remains. It is the best forum through which the global climate movement can place demands on the global elites

and the forum around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

Key carbon reduction issues

- The global average surface temperature to below a 5°C increase
- Demand net zero by 2030
- All new fossil fuel investment must be stopped
- The polluters must be made to pay
- Global biodiversity must be defended
- There must be a rapid transition to renewables: including solar, on-shore and off-shore wind, tidal and hydro carried out on a 'war footing'. (In UK Labour must maintain its commitment to £28 billion a year on renewables)
- The 2030 deadline for selling fossil fuel cars must be maintained
- SUVs must be banned other than in specialised circumstances
- Adequate production facilities for EV batteries must be established
- There must be a major extension of public transport and fewer cars
- The national grid must be upgraded

There must be a massive programme of home (and building) insulation. All new homes must meet strict environmental standards

- LTNs and 15 minute cities must be introduced to cut carbon emission and clean up the air we breathe
- Decarbonise agriculture, ban deforestation, a big reduction in meat production and consumption. End the ploughing of fields.
- Stop the pollution of land and sea and rivers
- Protect wetlands
- Far better recycling and the detoxification of waste

- disposal
- No to nuclear energy

29 November 2023

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Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

There is continuing widespread interest in debate on Degrowth. ecosocialist.scot is keen to encourage this debate. We published [Michael Lowy's Nine Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth](#) recently, and below we are republishing two more topical contributions. The first is an overview of the Degrowth debate from Alan Thornett's [Ecosocialist Discussion](#) site and the second is an introduction to degrowth concepts from the [Scotonomics](#) newsletter that was also published by Scottish daily newspaper 'The National'.

Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

This article was written for the current edition of the Green Left's publication Watermelon in advance of the Green Party conference AT

There has been an upsurge of interest in degrowth –a long-discussed strategic alternative to climate chaos and not just from the radical left. It is experiencing a renaissance

at the moment, driven by the relentless rise in global temperatures and the resulting climate chaos.

It was the theme of a three-day conference in May entitled '[Beyond Growth 2023](#)' which filled the main hall of the European Parliament with mostly young and enthusiastic people. It was organised by 20 left-leaning MEPs and it was opened by the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

According to the [Economist](#) report the young audience 'whooped and cheered' when it was proposed that some form of de-growth will be necessary to avoid societal collapse."

In July, Bill McKibben – the veteran environmental campaigner, founder of 350.org, and prolific author – had a major article in the [New Yorker](#) strongly advocating degrowth from an historical perspective.

Numerous books supporting degrowth – to varying degrees and stand points – have been also published recently from the left: *The Case for Degrowth* by Giorgos Kallis et al; *Less is More* how degrowth will save the world by Jason Hickel; *Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism* by Kohei Saito; and *The Future is Degrowth* by Matthias Schmelzer.

A recent book opposing degrowth is *Climate Change as Class War*, by Matt Huber – from, in my view, an ultra-left and voluntaristic position. He has reviewed himself in the current edition of [Jacobin](#).

Growth is the driving force of the environmental crisis. Over the past 60 years the global economy has grown at an average rate of 3 per cent a year, which is completely unsustainable. John Bellamy Foster has pointed out that a 3% p.a. growth rate of would grow the world economy by a factor of 250 over the course of this century and the next. Over the same period the global human population has risen from 3.6 billion in 1970 to 8 billion in 2022.

Such growth rates are incompatible with the natural limits of the planet, and will ultimately defeat any attempts to resolve the environmental crisis that fail to deal with it.

An early attempt to analyse this issue was undertaken in 1970 by Donella Meadows and a team of radical young scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was published in 1972 as the [Limits to Growth Report](#)

The Meadows Report, as it became known reached the monumental conclusion that: “if the present growth in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continues unchanged”, the limits to growth on the planet will be reached sometime around the middle of the 21st century. The most probable result “will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.”

It sold 12 million copies world-wide, was translated into 37 languages. and remains the top-selling environmental title ever published. It also became the driving force behind the emergence of the ecology and green movement in the 1970s, and the degrowth movement itself.

It was remarkably accurate, as Bill McKibben notes, and it’s conclusion puts us exactly where we are today, facing increasing frequent climate related societal breakdowns that may soon become generalised.

McKibben also notes that Ursula von der Leyen directly referenced to the Meadows Report at her opening speech in Brussels: “Our predecessors”, she had said, “chose to stick to the old shores and not lose sight of them. They did not change their growth paradigm but relied on oil. And the following generations have paid the price.”

The Report, however, was ignored by the socialist left, with a few exceptions. Tony Benn’s Alternative Economic Strategy of the 1980s, for example, made ever-faster economic

growth its key demand. No wonder the trade unions and the Labour Party remain dominated by growth productivism today because they have never been challenged by the left.

William Morris – the outstanding environmentalist in the 19th century – had also gone unheeded when he raged against useless and unnecessary production. In his lecture ‘How We Live and How We Might Live’, delivered in December 1884 in Hammersmith [Image above]– he raised the issue of how to live dignified and fulfilling lives without the need for mass produced commodities and consumerism, and what kind of future society could best provide such an approach.



What degrowth offers is a planned reduction of economic activity, within a different economic paradigm, and first and foremost in the rich countries of the Global North. Giorgos Kallis puts it this way in *The Case for Degrowth* (page viii): “The goal of degrowth is to purposefully slow things down in order to minimise harm to human beings and earth systems”.

Jason Hickel in *Less in More* (page 29) — tells us that degrowth is: “a planned reduction of excess energy and resource use in order to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a safe and equitable way”.

The adoption of such an approach will need a mass movement involving everyone who is prepared to fight to save the planet on a progressive basis, including environmental movements, indigenous movements, peasant movements, farmers movement as well as trade unions and progressive political parties. It must demand that the big polluters pay for the damage they have done. This means heavily taxing fossil fuels in order to both cut emissions and to ensure that the

polluters fund the transition to renewables as a part of an exit strategy from fossil fuel that redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor, and is capable of commanding popular support. Such an approach must be the cornerstone of ecosocialism and an ecosocialist strategy designed to save the planet from ecological destruction and create a post-capitalist, ecologically sustainable, society for the future.



Alan Thornett, ecosocialist writer and activist, was a leading British trade unionist and car worker in the 60s and 70s

Written by Alan Thornett September 2013. Republished from <https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/2023/09/16/degrowth-a-remarkable-renaissance/> Alan Thornett's 'Facing the Apocalypse – Arguments for Ecosocialism' is published by Resistance Books and available for £15 [here](#).

An introduction to degrowth: What is it and how does it work?

This is the latest edition of the Scotonomics newsletter – [click here](#) to receive it free to your inbox every week.



As a global society, we must pursue policies to reduce material consumption and increase our wellbeing. This is the core of degrowth. It is exceptionalism that leads us to think that our [economy](#), which grows by consuming natural resources, can grow forever. There must be a limit. That much is self-evident. However, even for those who agree that there is some future limit, many people think that we are a long way from that.

It is often a shock when you tell people that with an annual growth rate of only 3%, the economy doubles in only 24 years. By 2070, it would be four times bigger than it is today. Can we really look at our ecological problems and seriously picture an economy four times bigger?

2070 might seem too long a timeframe. So, let's look at 2050. There are approximately 9.7 billion people on the planet. If all of them were to live according to the living standards of a country like Scotland, assuming that 3% growth, our global resource use would be 15 times higher than it is today.

It is the bury-your-head-in-the-sand growth paradigm that is detached from reality.

Growth is not wellbeing

The mistake our society continues to make is to consider

growth the same thing as wellbeing. The growth of an economy can increase and reduce wellbeing. Degrowth makes this connection implicit; a degrowth economy is one in which wellbeing increases.

Ecological economist Herman Daly talked about “economic and uneconomic growth”, and he suggested that it is likely that economies in the global north became “uneconomic” at some point in the 1980s. Herman’s argument focused on the depletion of non-renewable resources, the ecological consequences of overfilling waste sinks and an understanding that not all expenditure is beneficial. Spending £10 billion to deal with an [oil](#) spill would increase GDP. But it is hard to argue that it improves wellbeing.

The idea that growth is always good has become what George Monbiot (above) calls a “root metaphor”. So deeply rooted is the idea that growth equals well-being that it frames our understanding and choices without us even being aware. Growth is now more than a simple process; it has become a powerful idea.

According to degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis: “Growth is not only a material process. It is also a cultural, political and social process. Growth is an idea, produced, imagined and instituted. An idea that growth is natural, necessary and desirable.”

Degrowth challenges that growth is natural, necessary or desirable.

Degrowth is a broad transformative process. It is a decrease in ecological damage and an increase in well-being.

In a degrowth economy, our human society reacts in a co-evolutionary way to its surroundings, in a way familiar to humans for around 99% of the last 100,000 years. In other words, we act more in tune with our environment.

Degrowth is selective and will involve increases in some things and decreases in others, such as less private and more

public [transport](#).

In a society guided by degrowth policies, we set limits on harmful activities and move our society to stay within specific and defined boundaries. Our life, not our economy, is placed within the planet's biophysical boundaries. Once we return to within our current constraints, these boundaries can be seen as fluid, advanced or reduced by managing technology and other factors to create a steady state or "Goldilocks" economy.

Degrowth policies, in general, are highly redistributive. It is degrowth for the global North to allow space for "economic" growth, as defined by Herman Daly, for the global south.

Within global north nations like Scotland, degrowth starts with the wealthiest in society. The actions and lifestyles of the wealthiest degrow before anyone else, and there is a clear rationale for this. In the UK, the top 1% emit 10 times as much carbon yearly as the poorest do in two decades. Where else could you possibly start if you wanted to be effective?

There are no "non-reformest reforms" in a degrowth paradigm. However, a degrowth economy would be familiar enough to today's economy that we can use today's economic terms to make sense of a degrowth economy.

The ecological economist Tim Jackson, who describes himself more as a "post-growth" economist, wrote in his book Prosperity Without Growth: "The economy of tomorrow calls on us to revisit and reframe the concepts of productivity, profitability, asset ownership and control over the distribution of social surplus."

"It calls for a renegotiation of the role of the progressive state." This would need to happen in a degrowth economy.

The end game for degrowth is a much more balanced society and

economy that prioritises planetary well-being. It is a post-capitalist world.

Common among those who support degrowth is the belief that degrowth is inevitable: We deal with the need to drastically reduce throughput by design or by disaster. Degrowth uses the agency we have to solve the problems we have created.

In next week's article, we will take a closer look at degrowth policies.

[Join us at 2.30pm on September 27](#) to discuss all of the topics we have discussed this month.

*Republished from The National.
<https://www.thenational.scot/politics/23800528.introduction-degrowth-work/>*

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Picture: 'How We Might Live' – from the cover of *How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris* by Suzanne Fagence Cooper