

# Questioni



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**COMBATTING THE  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

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# Quistioni

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Dear reader,

What you are reading is the third of three test issues of *Quistioni*, the quarterly magazine in three languages of the European Left. Our purpose is to create a public space for discussion and debate between those who want to build the alternative to this neo-liberal world. For this reason, it will include contributions from the member parties of the European Left, from intellectuals and movements.

The magazine is titled *Quistioni* (referring to the way in which Antonio Gramsci indicated the matters, the problems), because in each monographic issue of the magazine we want to tackle a problem and contribute, in this way, to the building of a common alternative project at European level.

We are very interested in your opinion, feedbacks and suggestions: you can write us at [magazinepge@libero.it](mailto:magazinepge@libero.it)

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# Index

## Editorials

- Heinz Bierbaum - *Combatting the climate change – left concepts* 4
- Paolo Ferrero - *Climate change and us* 6

## Interventions

- Didem Aydurmuş - *The Quest for Sustainability – and the Need for a Strong United Left* 9
- Leonardo Boff - *Do we have enough time and wisdom to avoid ecological catastrophe?* 13
- Hervé Bramy - *COP-26 in Glasgow. Getting out of capitalism to save the climate* 15
- Rena Dourou - *Our fight of the century* 19
- Felicity Dowling - *Mobilising for Ecosocialism* 21
- Gauche Républicaine et Socialiste - *The answer to the climate crisis lies in collective responsibility* 27
- Alain Pagano - *From the awareness of the ecological crisis, proceed to transformative solutions!* 29
- Vijay Prashad - *I Awakened Here When the Earth Was New* 31
- Filippo Savio - *The young men and women of Fridays For Future Italy speak out on the climate crisis* 34
- Eva García Sempere - *Who's afraid of degrowth?* 39

## Materials

- A “Red-Green Manifesto” for Hungary* 43

# Combatting the climate change – left concepts

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*Heinz Bierbaum*

We are confronted with a profound economic, social and political upheavals caused in particular by the ecological challenges under which the climate change is certainly the biggest one. The pandemic which at present determines our working and living conditions aggravates the crisis increasing also the already existing large social inequalities. The depletion of natural resources and the ecological disasters are a man-made reality and can be adjusted by the actions of human beings. This requires, however, a radical change in politics.

The causes of the climate catastrophe are linked to the profit-oriented capitalist system of production in general and to the neoliberal policy in particular. Our way to produce must be called into question. A drastic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> is needed. It's now evident, that a production based on fossil energies has no future anymore. But we need not only another energy policy. We have to rethink and to change our entire production system.

The concept of Socio- Ecological Transformation, or the Green New Deal, is an answer to this requirement and it is a key component of the European Left's political strategy. Nearly everybody talks about the necessity to launch a Green New Deal, but there are very different concepts. The European Commission, for example, has launched a "European Green Deal" intended to make the European Union climate-neutral by 2050. Key components of this Deal comprise investment in environmentally-friendly technologies, the decarbonisation of energy, the energy renovation of buildings, and cleaner, healthier private and public trans-

port. The EU as a whole should shift towards a green economy. The European Commission's Green Deal is certainly a point of reference but still by far inefficient to tackle the burning tasks from climate change and mitigating the loss of biodiversity.

The Left in the European Parliament (Gue/Ngl) has also developed a tangible proposal based on the Paris Agreement, which strives to limit global warming to 1.5 °C ("Towards a Green & Social New Deal for Europe"). It calls for a change in energy policy with the expansion of renewable energies, an environmentally sound agricultural policy, a massive reduction in emissions and an industrial and economic policy wholly based on sustainability. The proposal primarily focuses on the protection of workers and employees and better working and living conditions. The Green Deal is also seen as an opportunity for fair and equitable international trade. It calls for a fundamental change in policy whereby people and sustainability take precedence over profit.

The UK's Labour Party has probably put forward the most developed concept for a Green New Deal. The Labour Party Manifesto 2019 called for a green industrial revolution to create one million jobs in the UK. Industry, energy, transport, agriculture and even the construction sector would be transformed to align production with nature. Emissions would be significantly reduced by 2030. The economy would be reshaped to serve the interests of the many, not the few. The concept both calls for investment in an ecological transformation and raises the question of ownership. The needs of the people and

the preservation of the planet, not profit, would be the top key performance indicators. Above all, the concept sees energy and water as public assets accessible to all. Public assets should be used to guarantee decent work and equal rights for everyone

For the left, the combination of ecological and social needs is crucial. There is no doubt that a green industrial revolution, as the Labour Manifesto calls it, is necessary. But equally, workers affected by these changes must be protected. “Just Transition”, as promoted by the Ituc, is a concept that combines ecological transformation with social protection and aims to ensure that a green economy can provide decent work. Workers and citizens must not only see their rights strengthened in this transformation process; they must also be directly involved. Their direct involvement is indispensable for a left-wing Green New Deal. From a leftist perspective, therefore, the connection of the Green New Deal with economic democracy is paramount. This also distinguishes it from other concepts. A left-wing Green New Deal must go hand in hand with the expansion of workers’ rights. This can be linked to the pillar of social rights

as adopted by the European Commission. At the Social Summit in May in Porto an action plan was adopted to implement this pillar of social rights, which is, however, not very ambitious. The Etuc, supported also by the Trade Unionists Network Europe (Tune), demands a binding “Social Protocol” as a part of the European Treaties.

A Left Green New Deal must be understood as a comprehensive transformation concept that combines ecological and social requirements and ensures the direct involvement of the workers themselves. It breaks with neoliberal European policy of the Green Deal and goes beyond the limits of capitalist development.

Combatting the climate change is a huge challenge that the Left must face. The Green New Deal must become a focal point of cooperation with other left and progressive forces, especially movements like “Fridays For Future” and, above all, the trade unions.

*Heinz Bierbaum is President of the Party of the European Left. He is a sociologist and economist.*

# Climate change and us

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*Paolo Ferrero*

Climate change on the planet and the Covid syndemic that is continuing to claim victims are two sides of the same coin. They cannot be separated.

They tell us about the destructive aspect that capitalist development has taken on today and at the same time they tell us about the forms in which this destruction manifests itself. There will not be an X-hour with the end of the world or the disappearance of the human species on earth. There will be a degradation of the habitable conditions of the planet leading to shortages of drinking water, famine, floods, migration, racism, wars, further pandemics.

In other words, it is not death we should fear, but the unstoppable and exponential degradation of life and social relations that we should fear. The environmental disaster is not a sectoral problem, concerning the environment, but is destined to bring about a progressive catastrophe of human civilisation, starting with Western civilisation, within a short period of time. A catastrophe that obviously hits the most fragile and weakest people economically and socially the hardest, starting with the peoples and countries of the peripheries, the subordinate classes in general, migrants and women.

## Rapid and radical change is needed

This situation calls for a rapid and radical response, like those implemented in times of war. The ruling classes, although they have realised the problem, are tackling it by trying to make environmentally friendly production profitable and push polluting production out of the mar-

ket. Even practised with far greater rigour than at present, this response in terms of a capitalist green economy is bound to take too long to avoid catastrophe. Apart from any other consideration, the change they seek is dramatically too slow. It is based on the same paradigm that led us to the disaster.

It is therefore a question of having environmental and social reconversion processes of production and the economy that are much faster than those hypothesised by the President of the Ecb or the European Commission. It is a question of fully understanding that an economy based on profit is incompatible with maintaining an environmental balance on planet earth.

## The propulsive thrust of capitalism has been exhausted

Capitalism had the historical merit of having applied science to production processes, giving rise to a great impetus to technological development and thus to an increase in labour productivity. This development has produced enormous social suffering but also an overall improvement in the living conditions of humans. This fact has characterised the last three centuries of human life, in which capitalism and the labour movement have confronted each other. This contradictory but progressive element ended with the emergence of the general effects of the Anthropocene era. Capitalist development progressively became incompatible with the environmental balance of the planet. Schumpeter's "creative destruction" has increasingly

become the “creation of destruction” of a system that destroys nature, patents and privatises the living, induces ever more frequent pandemics, and produces ever more macroscopic and unacceptable inequalities. The very quest for an increase in Gdp that drives our rulers as a sign of recovery after Covid, is bound to exacerbate the problems and is ultimately incompatible with human life on the planet.

The driving force of capitalism has been exhausted. The capitalist mode of production based on profit is no longer able to produce prosperity, but rather destruction and barbarism. Not tomorrow, but today, as shown by the Covid question and the short-sighted response of the ruling classes based on the patenting of vaccines and the centrality of multinational profit. We are going against a cliff and we need to quickly reverse course, change the paradigm completely.

## Revolution is the “emergency brake of history”

Marx, who rightly recognised that capitalism had contradictorily set the conditions for humanity to emerge from economic scarcity. Marx, who had before his eyes the enormous potential of capitalism and could not foresee the scale of its destructive aspect, spoke of the revolution as the “locomotive of history”.

I think we are not doing Marx an injustice if today we adopt the thinking of Walter Benjamin, who instead spoke of revolution as the “emergency brake of history”.

It is a question of stopping to change, not speeding up to change.

Leaving aside the railway metaphor, which has its own effectiveness, it seems clear to me that our proposal for a plan for a drastic environmental reconversion of the economy and production, a public plan that for reasons of effectiveness is removed from the logic of profit, must

be accompanied by three decisive points.

## The alternative

Firstly, the redistribution of wealth. Because the reconversion of the economy and production cannot be offloaded onto the living conditions of the popular strata, otherwise there will be no consensus for doing so. The redistribution of wealth is the condition for social protagonism in environmental reconversion, particularly in western countries and in this Europe of ours.

Secondly, the redistribution of labour. The increase in labour productivity must result in a drastic reduction in working time and not in an increase in the goods produced. Demercifying our existence, broadening the satisfaction of social needs through the production of useable values that do not take the form of commodities is a decisive point for overcoming profit as the organising principle of social relations.

Thirdly, the socialisation of knowledge and science. Today, capital dominates creation through the private appropriation of the fruits of scientific research and turns nature itself into a manipulable commodity and an opportunity for profit. The monopoly of the fruits of science is the basis for the production of wealth, power and to some extent prestige, and the hegemony of capital. At the same time, we are seeing magical and unscientific forms of irrationalism re-emerge in the public squares which we did not think would ever return. The socialisation of science - and therefore of the power that derives from it - is a key factor in tackling humanity's problems in rational forms and in being able to solve them.

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# **Interventions**



# The Quest for Sustainability – and the Need for a Strong United Left

*Didem Aydurmus*

Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war.

World Meteorological Organization, 1988

There have been warnings for decades. They have been ignored by all players, left and right. And even worse, global destruction has accelerated as seemingly the End of History has come, not as overtly as Fukuyama would have thought in the sphere of politics, but in economics and hence public discourse. Political debate only knows one economic system with no alternatives. Capitalism and its spouse consumerism have penetrated the world more deeply than ever. Even in some activist groups, the idea of voting with your pocket book is often perpetuated without any reflection. It demonstrates how the current discourse disenfranchises those without financial means further. The difference between rich and poor is striking. We do not live in a postmaterialist (see Luke 1999), but a hypermaterialist world. New ‘wants’ are being manufactured by the second. At the same time, the number of people with access to basic goods such as clean air or water is decreasing. Water insecurity is already widespread. In the US, clean water is not guaranteed everywhere. Globally, water rights are still being sold off to the highest bidder. Rather than being protected, the commons are privatized, depleted and destroyed. Pollution already kills more than 400,000 Europeans annually (European Environmental Agency 2016). Not a single country’s trajectory is in line with the Paris Agreement.

## A Critique of Popular Fairy Tales

Capitalism is killing the planet. It may not be the only cause, but talks of sustainable or green capitalism are fairy tales (Jackson 2012 and Martin 2015). That a system based on continuous growth, the exploitation of humans, nature and animals, which externalizes costs, while privatizing profits, cannot be sustainable will not be surprising to any reader here. It is time to grow out of the fairy tales and show a leftist alternative based on solid science and climate justice.

The debates, or rather the non-debate, around CO<sub>2</sub> prices show how limited the contemporary discourse remains (I use Co<sub>2</sub> in its standard usage, although it should technically be Co<sub>2</sub>e given that there are other important greenhouse gases).

Monetizing nature via CO<sub>2</sub> prices is a policy that solidifies injustices by deepening the division between rich and poor. Growing inequality via climate protection measures is occasionally part of the discourse. The reservations mostly come from our side. What is not talked about is the cognitive effects of pricing pollution. While many economists are sure Co<sub>2</sub> prices are efficient, the jury is actually still out for other disciplines (see Norton 2002). Sociology for instance shows that putting prices on things can depreciate their value for us humans. Sustainability in its strong version however needs societies to appreciate nature more, not less.

Given that cutting pollution is expensive, other means are being explored. There are two

# Interventions

significant problems with current practices. First, we need to cut pollution and resource exploitation drastically. Carbon taxes and offsetting however are modern day indulgences (see Connelly et al. 2012). In each case a price is paid as an indemnification. They are not real reparations in so far as they cannot nullify an action. Moreover offsetting projects typically take place in the Global South and regularly interfere with indigenous rights. Second, projects are diverse and vary between unsustainable, unjust and actually meaningful. Importantly, too often the Global South is again paying the price for everyone else's overconsumption.

## The Need for a Strong Left - Not Greenwashing

Unfortunately the Left has not succeeded yet in showing its centrality in the fight for our most important common good. Although the protection of the commons is as central to leftism as the colour red, we have not mastered the most important topic of our lifetime – yet. But we need to now. We need to find ways to transform not just national economies, but the whole globe in cooperation with those left voiceless by (environmental) neocolonialism and our imperialist lifestyle.

The media is dominated by easy economic fixes, namely carbon trading and pricing, because of the dominance of neoliberalism and because they appear as easy “solutions” to complex problems. Meanwhile the idea of market-driven climate politics does not seem weird to anybody. You can fight fire with fire, but I can't think of an instance where the central cause of destruction is also its solution. This is where we need to come in. Growth has been a sacred cow, but contrary to capitalism, socialism does not need it.

Without a strong united Left, we are doomed. Many ecosystems are near collapse and we are not sure, if tipping points have already surpassed. I would argue that in all human history the need for a leftist grand narrative

has never been as paramount as in the 20s of the 21st century. There is still a real chance for human extinction. Do not believe me, believe the Oxford scientists worrying that our current course of politics may risk even the survival of our species. “The Future of Humanity Institute conducted a poll of academic experts on global risks. They gave an estimate of 19 percent probability that the human species will go extinct before the end of this century” (Marshall 2014:Loc. 3494). We are not only the cause of the 6th mass extinction, we could also become its victims.

Many scholars differentiate between weak sustainability and strong sustainability with only the latter actually deserving the attribute “sustainable” (cp. Holland 2002). Criticism that COPs are typically more of a political show with large environmental footprints with thousands of people flying to climate conferences is justified. Again, nobody is actually on an 1.5 degree trajectory, meaning that humanity is collectively trashing the Paris Agreement as if it did not matter. I remember the celebration well. I was there. It left me immediately with a bitter taste as again and again political spectacle wins over substantive change (cp. Edelman 2005). Real sustainable politics need to resemble a watermelon – firmly green paring and dark red inside. Everything else is green washing. So let's fight!

Where many green parties focus on individual consumption and pretend that everything can almost go on as usual, it is our task to dismantle false beliefs in green capitalism. Focusing on the individual instead of the system is often rather a distraction than a means to protecting the planet for all. For 30 years, neoliberalism has been the hegemonic ideology – so long we do not even realize how even leftists internalized its logic.

Almost no where are the flaws of capitalism so overt and therefore more and more environmental groups start realizing the necessity of breaking with an economic system that is based on eternal growth and maximum exploitation of humans, nature and animals. We have to support those groups, engage in mutual learning, not co-optation, and stand united.

## Activists Groups – and Our Role?

In Germany, such group in particular is *Ende Gelände*, who has a strategy of direct action and whose rhetoric has a clear anticapitalist stance, who gets media attention, but also faces significant backlashes. We can learn a lot from such groups, since often they are more progressive and more importantly fierce than we are. *Ende Gelände*, for instance, blocks coal mining operations and hence is in direct conflict with the fossil fuel industry. They are not only facing a giant industry, but also politics and in some cases, the judiciary. Corruption and the entanglement of corporations and politics need to be overcome. Politics serving the interests of the fossil fuel industry is nothing new, but it is incredible how bold and blatant it is been done. For example, *Ende Gelände* activists have been occupying the Hambacher Forest in order to protect it from destruction. They have managed to win the favour of public opinion, however the state government has even sent police under false pretenses. Just this September a court declared that Armin Laschet, the conservatives candidate for chancellor, Germany's highest position, illegally ordered the police to clear a forest of activists in order for the industry giant RWE to destroy the forest for their coal mining operations.

Fridays For Future in Germany is a mixed bag. While many local groups recognized that there is no sustainable capitalism, key figures like Luisa Neubauer (Green party member) implicitly promote ecomodernism across all media. Ecomodernism encopes the popular tale that we can decouple economic growth and environmental pollution to have a sustainable capitalism, which has not been empirically proven, but obviously has a large lobby. Fridays For Future Germany was part of an successful effort to sue the government for unconstitutional climate policies, as the protection of nature can be found in the German constitution. It is clear that after a couple years of protests, there are many students who give more competent and sharp analyses of the current situation than most

politicians. The German Extinction Rebellion has even more diverse appearances and storylines with many members being leftists, but also economically liberal activists joining in for civil disobedience. The current state of the movements is hard to evaluate as the pandemic has made organizing more difficult.

Criticizing any activists for narrow-mindedness or similar is however arrogant and unjustified. The Left itself has yet to come forward with a narrative that explains the problems, attacks them by the routes without excuses, yes radically, and puts forward a sustainable vision of the future. As long as we fetishize the coal miner or declare that eating pork sausages is the pinnacle of freedom, we have neither understood the catastrophes (ahead), nor listened to science or movements. The urgency and scope of the problem demand honesty. As long as we focus on one or two sectors such as traffic and energy production, we remain narrow-minded ourselves and have not much to offer. *Ende Gelände* eats vegan, because the animal industry is the biggest polluter of global greenhouse gases and out of respect for animals and fellow activists.

## Beyond Catastrophe

What is clear is that many parts of the world need transformations, our global food system, our energy system etc. Global consumerism cannot continue as it is. Combatting climate change and mitigating its effect is the most important and probably difficult task humanity ever faced. Survival is at stake. The ecologist and Sea Watch captain Carola Rackete, a modern heroine, said at a panel that we need to mobilize and form strong networks across the globe. I agree. If the prominence of slavery, inhumane wage labour and global inequality has not been enough to unite us, this is our last chance.

Capitalism is waging a war on humans, animals and nature and we need to build up a united front. Show environmental groups that we are reliable partners, but even more build a leftist narrative against the hegemonic discourse. Our

# Interventions

narrative is one of redistribution, global justice and solidarity, the current cause of history is one of destruction. Giving up is not an option. We cannot be afraid of what needs to be done; we need to be afraid of what is to come, if we do not fight. Catastrophe is already happening.

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*Didem Aydurmuş is a member of Die Linke Executive Board and responsible for climate issues.*

# Do we have enough time and wisdom to avoid ecological catastrophe?

*Leonardo Boff*

On August 8, 2021 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Ipcc) published the report, made every two years, on the Earth's climate situation, the result of the research of more than one hundred experts from 52 countries. Never has the document been as clear as it is now, unlike previous reports. Before it was stated that there was 95% certainty that global warming was anthropogenic, that is, of human origin. Now it is sustained without restrictions that it is a consequence of human beings and their way of inhabiting the Earth, especially because of the use of fossil energy (oil, coal and gas) and other negative factors.

The scenario presents itself as dramatic. The Paris Agreement specifies that countries should "limit warming to well below 2°C, and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C". The current report insinuates that it will be difficult but that we have the scientific knowledge, technological and financial capacity to tackle climate change, provided everyone, countries, cities, companies and individuals already now make a serious commitment.

The current situation is worrying. In 2016 global greenhouse gas emissions amounted to about 52 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. If we do not change current course we will arrive in 2030 at between 52 and 58 gigatons. At this level there would be a fantastic decimation of biodiversity and a proliferation of bacteria and viruses such as never before.

To stabilize the climate at 1.5 degrees Celsius, the scientists say, emissions would need to fall by half (25-30 gigatonnes). Otherwise, with the Earth on fire, we would experience terrifying extreme events.

I am of the opinion that science and technology alone is not enough to reduce greenhouse gases. It is too much to believe in the omnipotence of science that even today does not know how to fully face Covid-19. Another paradigm of relationship with nature and with the Earth is urgently needed, one that is not destructive but friendly and in subtle synergy with the rhythms of nature.

This would require a radical transformation in the current capitalist mode of production, which still moves, for the most part, under the illusion that the Earth's resources are unlimited and therefore allow for an unlimited growth/development project. Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si: On the Care for our Common Home* (2020) denounces this premise as a "lie" (p.106). A limited planet, in an advanced degree of degradation and overpopulated, cannot tolerate an unlimited project.

Covid-19 in its deepest meaning requires us to put into action a paradigmatic conversion. In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (2021) Pope Francis seized this warning from the virus. He contrasts two projects: the current one, of modernity, whose paradigm consists in making the human being dominus (lord and master) of nature, and the new one he proposes, that of frater (brother and sister), including everyone, humans and other beings of nature.

This new paradigm of planetary frater would establish a fraternity without borders and a social love. If we don't make this crossing, "everyone is saved or no one is saved" (p.32).

Here is the big question: does the globalized capitalist mode of production show the political

# Interventions

will, has the capacity and the reasonability to allow itself this radical change? It has made itself the dominus (Descartes' maître et possesseur) of the earth and all its resources, its mantras being: the highest possible profit, achieved by fierce competition, accumulated individually or corporately, through a devastating exploitation of natural goods and services. From this mode of production originated the lack of climate control and, what is worse, a culture of capital, to which, in some way, we are all hostages. How can we get out of it to save ourselves?

We have to change, otherwise, according to Zygmunt Bauman, "we will swell the ranks of those who are heading for their own grave". Logically, this urgent conversion of paradigm demands time and implies a process of transformation, because the whole system is geared to produce and consume more. But the time for change is expiring.

Hence the feeling in the world of great names, whose unquestionable credibility is not of simple pessimism, but of a well-founded realism:

The first is Pope Francis' warning in Fratelli tutti: "we are in the same boat, either we all save ourselves or no one is saved" (n.32).

The second is the formulator of the theory of the Earth as a living super-organism, Gaia, James Lovelock, whose latest title says it all: "Gaia: final warning" (Intrínseca, Rio 2010).

The third is Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal of the United Kingdom, author of Our Final Hour: A Scientist's Warning (Basic Books 2004) which needs no comment.

The fourth is Eric Hobsbawm, one of the most renowned historians of the 20th century, who says at the end of his The Age of Extremes (Michael Joseph 1994): "We do not know where we are going. However, one thing is clear: if mankind wants to have a meaningful future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millennium on this basis, we will fail. And the price of failure, that is, the change of society, is darkness" (p.562). This warning goes for all those who think of the post-pandemic as a return to the old, perverse

normality.

The fifth is the well-known French geneticist Albert Jacquard with his "Has the countdown begun? (Le compte à retours a-t-il commence?, Stock, Paris 2009), in which he argues that "our time is numbered, and having worked against ourselves, we risk forging an Earth where none of us would like to live. The worst is not certain, but we must hurry" (fourth cover).

Finally, one of the last great naturalists, Théodore Monod with the book And if the human adventure should fail (Et si l'aventure humaine devait échouer, Grasset, Paris 2003) asserts: "The human being is perfectly capable of senseless and insane conduct; from now on we can fear everything, even the annihilation of the human species" (p.246).

The process of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis also provided for the emergence of faith and hope. They are part of the total reality. They do not invalidate the warnings cited, but open another window that assures us that "the Creator created everything out of love because he is the passionate lover of life" (Wisdom 11:26).

This faith and hope allow Pope Francis to speak "beyond the sun" with these words: "Let us walk in song, that our struggles and our concern for this planet do not rob us of the joy of hope" (Laudato Si, p.244).

The principle of hope surpasses all limits and always keeps the future open. If we cannot avoid climate decontrol, we can take precautions and minimize its most harmful effects. This is what we believe and hope.

*Leonardo Boff, among the founders of the Theology of Liberation, is a Brazilian philosopher and ecotheologist who wrote several books and essays. Among the latest books published we remember El doloroso parto de la Madre Tierra: una sociedad de fraternidad sin fronteras y de amistad social, Vozes 2020 (The painful birth of Mother Earth: a society of fraternity without borders and of social friendship, Vozes 2020); Abitare la Terra: quale via per la fraternità universale, Castelvechi, Roma 2021.*

# COP-26 in Glasgow. Getting out of capitalism to save the climate

*Hervé Bramy*

“The magnitude of recent changes in the climate system as a whole and the current state of many aspects of the climate system are unprecedented, over several thousand years” (Extract from the 6th Ipcc report, August 2021).

On 9 August, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Ipcc) issued an unprecedented warning when it published the first part of its 6th report. One thing is clear: nothing has really changed since the Paris Agreement. If nothing is done, right now, humanity is heading for disaster. Will the European Green Deal change this?

The first part of the sixth Ipcc report deals with the physical understanding of the climate system and climate change. The second part, due to be published soon, will deal with the impacts, adaptation and vulnerability of human societies and ecosystems to climate change, while the last part, due to be published in spring 2022, will address global solutions to mitigate climate change and its effects.

Let us take stock of the work done by thousands of scientists around the world. The report is a synthesis of 14,000 scientific papers. The 234 lead authors responded to 78,007 comments from governments and experts. The summary (for policy makers) was validated line by line by governments.

This means that the findings of this new report are indisputable because they are based on fully-fledged scientific data.

**Is it still necessary to remind people that global**

## warming is the result of the greenhouse effect?

In a few words, let's remember that the greenhouse effect is like the gardener's greenhouse: the earth's atmosphere lets sunlight through but traps heat.

There are two phenomena:

- The sun's ultraviolet rays hit the earth's surface and the earth reflects some of this energy back into the sky.

- However, a layer of water vapour and gases prevents some of this heat from escaping back into space, causing global warming. The gases involved include water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases (Ghgs) in the atmosphere.

However, a large part of the greenhouse effect is necessary to keep the earth at a livable temperature. If this greenhouse effect were not created, the average temperature of the globe would be  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$ , whereas it is currently  $15^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Let's look at the main findings of the latest Ipcc report in a nutshell:

- 100% of global warming is due to human activities. This is now an unequivocal fact.
- The magnitude of recent changes in the climate system as a whole is unprecedented for centuries. There is no doubt that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, the oceans and the land.
- For the past three millennia, sea levels have never risen as fast as they have since 1900.
- Since the publication of the 1st Ipcc report in

# Interventions

1990, 1000 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> have been produced. This is almost half of our emissions since the beginning of the entire industrial era.

- Human activity has warmed the climate at an unprecedented rate for at least 2000 years. Recent climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying. The last 10 years have been 1.1°C warmer than the period 1850-1900.
- Under scenarios of increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, oceanic and terrestrial carbon sinks will be less effective in slowing the accumulation of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.

The Ipcc describes future temperature trends under five different socio-economic trajectories. In all emission scenarios (except the lowest, SSP1-1.9), we will exceed the global warming threshold of +1.5°C in the near future (between 2021 and 2040) and remain above +1.5°C until the end of the century.

As warming continues, each region could experience more extreme weather events, sometimes in combination, with multiple consequences. We all remember the dramatic climatic events of this summer: forest fires (Usa, Greece, etc.), deadly floods (Belgium, Germany, etc.), heat domes in Canada, etc. Moreover, the glaciers in the mountains and at the poles are doomed to melt for decades or even centuries to come, whereas the release of carbon contained in the permafrost by thawing, considered over a period of more than 1000 years, is irreversible.

In order to limit global warming, strong, rapid and sustainable action is needed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions, as well as other greenhouse gases. This would not only reduce the consequences of climate change but also improve air quality.

- Limiting global warming to +1.5°C will no longer be possible without an immediate and large-scale reduction in Ghg emissions. However, it is still possible to act to limit the damage!
- If we achieve carbon neutrality (i.e. do not

emit more CO<sub>2</sub> than can be absorbed; by land, forests, oceans...), global warming should stop. This is a fact of the report expressed with more certainty than in the previous report.

- Many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries, even millennia, including changes in the oceans, ice caps and global sea levels. However, some changes can be slowed and some stopped by limiting global warming.

Given that humanity emits around 40 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, there are 22 years of emissions at this level to stay below 2°C, or 7.5 years to stay below 1.5°C. The experts note that the reduction in emissions in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic has not had a significant effect on the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Everything is still possible for the Ipcc, provided that action is taken as soon as possible and in a determined manner.

Many progressive actors agree that it is urgent to take the bull by the horns to decarbonise our societies and economies. But it is a question of doing it in a radical way, of moving from the capitalist system, from an ultraliberal management of Europe to societies with a new sustainable human development mode that combines respect for human beings and nature (no ecosystem is capable of adapting to such a change and the irreversible consequences will be felt for thousands of years to come. Global food security is at stake...) a new mode of production and consumption, of displacement, on the basis of a growth that gets out of the clutches of Gdp criteria to favour new Human Development Indices... We must now review the criteria for financing and the role of banks to redirect money towards all low-carbon investments: transport, energy, housing, agriculture, industrial processes. This strikes at the very heart of how capitalism works, which must be overcome.



## So how can we act? COP 26 in Glasgow 5 years after the Paris Agreement

In the 2016 Paris Agreement (COP 21), a review clause was included every five years, starting in 2025. It is therefore without waiting for this date that countries are invited to revisit their commitments, given the urgency reaffirmed by the Ipcc. The non-binding nature of the Paris Agreement, despite some improvements, has not prevented the increase in greenhouse gas emissions or global warming. We argued at the time that these non-commitments would lead us to the wall because the period 2015-2025 was crucial to recalibrate the current greenhouse gas emission trajectories.

The last four decades have been the warmest since 1850. Each one breaking the temperature record of the previous one.

There are at least five issues that should concern us at COP 26 in Glasgow from a stocktaking perspective:

- The assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from carbon energies (oil, gas, coal...) since COP 21, from a global perspective and in particular for Europe. The assistance of Ipcc scientists would be welcome. Several assessments point to the inadequacy of the commitments made by States in 2015, which put us on a trajectory of more than 3°C of global warming by 2100, compared with 2°C or even 1.5°C in the best case scenario. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (Unep), in 2019, “emissions reached a new record of over 59 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent. These emissions are expected to decrease by about 7% in 2020 (Covid 19). However, this only translates into a 0.01% reduction in global warming by 2050”. In 5 years, the Paris Agreement has had no visible effect on emissions. The level of ambition of States “must be roughly tripled to return to the 2°C trajectory and multiplied by 5, at least, to limit the rise to 1.5°C”, according to Unep.

- Where do we really stand on the mobilisation

by rich countries of 100 billion dollars per year between now and 2020 (decided in Copenhagen and confirmed in Paris) in solidarity with developing countries in order to help them take measures to mitigate and adapt to global warming? The Oecd, which is in charge of this dossier, has estimated the amount for 2018 at 79 billion dollars. At COP 26, developed countries must agree on a new pathway for public and private financing after 2020.

- The European carbon market (EU Ets). Will the reform launched in 2019 finally make the system effective? On the *European Energy Exchange* (Eex), the European carbon exchange, a tonne of CO2 is currently trading at around €40, compared with €17 a little over a year ago. In addition, the border adjustment mechanism (Bam) planned for 2023 aims to make importers (of steel and cement in the first instance) pay a price comparable to that paid by the Ets players.

- The issue of the effects of global warming on biodiversity, which is already in a very bad state both globally and in Europe.

- The issue of climate refugees. A recent note published by the World Bank estimates that 256 million people worldwide could be forced to migrate within their own country... (Groundswell report part 2) but how many will rightly seek to migrate to rich, industrialised countries.

## From the Green Deal to the “FIT-for-55” package of laws

Is this the path taken by the European Commission with its Green Deal? As a reminder, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, declared during the presentation of her European Green Deal to the European Parliament: “*this plan will make Europe the first climate-neutral continent... What is good for the climate is good for business*”. She reiterated the importance of the European Green Deal, to raise the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for

# Interventions

2030 to -55% compared to 1990 and to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050.

Studying the real intentions of the Green Deal is useful for all progressives as it constitutes the EU's liberal strategic line for the next 30 years. In a paper to be published for COP-26 the EL Environment Working Group has produced an important contribution to the public debate which deciphers the content of this important policy document which seeks to put Europe on a carbon neutral path in 2050.

On 14 July of the same year, the European Commission published a package of 12 measures grouped under the heading "Fit-for-55", which range from the revision of certain directives to the introduction of new tools. The Effort Sharing Regulation gives each Member State increased emission reduction targets for buildings, road and inland waterway transport, agriculture, waste and small industries. The regulation on land use, forests and agriculture will require states to preserve and develop their carbon sinks to achieve a carbon absorption target of 310 million tonnes of CO2 emissions by 2030.

Other measures include:

- The Renewable Energy Directive: increase from 32 to 40 by 2030 of the energy produced by renewable energies
- The Energy Efficiency Directive: doubling of the annual energy saving obligation
- The Energy Tax Directive: removal of exemptions and reduced rates that favour fossil fuels
- Beyond the carbon trading schemes (Seque or Ets and Macf - see above) the Commission is considering a new and separate emissions trading scheme for fuel distribution for road transport and buildings.
- The end of thermal-powered cars in 2035, increasing the share of sustainable aviation fuels...

We can therefore seriously fear the consequences of these measures on the purchasing power of

Europeans who are already heavily penalised by increases in energy costs. Despite the Commission's good intentions, these measures in no way seek to challenge the principles of the capitalist market, which are essentially geared towards satisfying the profits of shareholders.

As Bruno Le Maire, the French Minister for the Economy, points out: "European growth will either be green or it will not be. The race for growth just for growth is over. The time has come for sustainable growth, which must combine economic prosperity with respect for our environment". These are fine words, because the large companies in the CAC 40 have posted flamboyant results, with profits of 57 billion euros in the first six months of the year.

At the same time, 10 million people are living below the poverty line...some of whom will benefit from a €100 bonus to cope with rising energy prices.

There is no hope for the people with green capitalism!

Struggles must therefore continue with vigour in order to build a world of sustainable human development outside the market and the capitalist mode of production. Our proposals are useful to fight social and environmental inequalities. They require, first of all, a different sharing of wealth, in Europe and in the world, an end to the privileges of the 1% of the world's population who hold 50% of the wealth, and an end to tax havens. It is not up to the people to pay! On the other hand, nothing will advance to the level of the challenges if the States are left to decide alone. The intervention of the people will be decisive, and the contribution of the EL essential.

*Hervé Bramy, member of the French Communist Party, is the coordinator of the Environment Working Group of the Party of the European Left.*

## Our fight of the century

*Rena Dourou*

We live in an unprecedented era. The era of a climate crisis emergency. People all over the world are facing the consequences of the climate crisis provoked by a way of living, producing and consuming, without considering that we are part and not the sole dominant of a very delicate ecosystem.

In September extreme weather prompted the first ever flash flood emergency warning for New York City from National Weather Service. The flash flood provoked by the remnants of the hurricane Ida killed at least 47 people in New York and New Jersey and flooded subway lines and streets in Manhattan, Brooklyn and New Jersey. It has shown that the infrastructure of cities like NY, is not ready for the climate crisis. It is also the sign that the “climate crisis is an inequality crisis”, as explained by the Democrat US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

In early August, the Chinese government said that 302 people had died in Henan Province from flooding since mid-July, including 14 who died in a subway tunnel rapidly flooded in Zhengzhou. China is regularly suffering from the consequences of the climate change.

In Europe, Germany was hit by the “flood of the century”, by heavy, deadly rains, as were the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands and Belgium. Small rivers turned into torrential currents destroying entire villages, causing the death of many people, shutting down electricity networks and damaging important infrastructures. At the same time, this summer, the Mediterranean basin, the region where climate change is happening 20% faster than in the rest of the world, was hit by a series of extreme weather phenomenon, heat waves and devastating wildfires.

This summer, Russia has faced its worst fire

year with an increasing number of wildfires due to blistering summer temperatures and a historic drought. Siberia’s Yakutia region was the one most affected. According to the Director Climate Emergency Institute, Ipcc expert reviewer, Peter Carter, “wild fires in Siberia, are bigger than all the other world wildfires combined” (August, 11, 2021).

All this random information just a few months ahead of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference COP 26, which will take place from 31 October to 12 November 2021, shows the daunting challenges of climate crisis people and societies are facing all over the world.

We are running out of time when “green capitalism” is already trying to shape our future by creating solutions for the 1% of the mighty happy few, promoting their profits against our planet and our lives. Actually the European Parliament voted a climate law (an agreement reached between the three main EU institutions), establishing the guiding targets of the implementation of the Green Deal, which is not in line with the Paris Agreement. That is why the European Left and the Greens are strongly opposed it. “An ambitious Climate Law could have been at the heart of a real Green New Deal. But the final agreement on a 55% target reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 is unacceptable”, underlined the Left’s Co-President, Manon Aubry. The Left has called for a 70% emissions cutting by 2030 following science for a maximum of 1.5 °C warming, but they were ready to discuss a 60% cutting, which was the European Parliament proposal.

Nowadays we are at a crossroads: since the climate crisis is hitting countries and societies all over the world, there is no room for waste of time, in order to change everything. But

# Interventions

first of all we need to change ourselves. We need to become the Left our societies and our planet need. For doing so we need to re-invent ourselves by changing our way of thinking. We need to realize that a holistic social and economic transformation goes along with a green project. This means new ways of doing politics. It means renewal of the way our parties are working and a political agenda about sustainable growth, social and climate justice.

We must bear in mind that radical environmental change goes along with the social justice fight and the fight against market domination for a just transition toward greener economies.

In order to do so, we need to reach the young people, follow their way to organize the struggle, like the “Fridays strikes”, take inspiration from indigenous people’s movements and fights. We need to build bridges, shape alliances, take bold initiatives and transform them to actions. We need to mobilize, inform, raise awareness and act in order to gap inequalities, change the system and not the climate in order protect our lives, our planet.

It is time to shape the post-Covid change to the maximum benefit of all. It is not an easy task, but it is a one way direction. The pandemic underlined that climate change and our health are intertwined, emphasizing on the need for strong public policies and for a strong public health sector. We need to go through significant social and economic transformations for reaching the Paris Agreement targets, in order to guarantee that the next generation will still have the right to a sustainable future on a healthy planet. We already have made a start, and the current issue of Quistioni is contributing to it. But there is a lot to be done, at the European, national and local level.

In fact, participatory democracy and human rights are key issues. That is what makes the difference between Left and Right today. The Right values the market role and the profits of a few big companies for reaching the environmental targets. On the contrary, we, the Left, believe that more and better democracy is the *conditio sine qua non* for urgent action and sustainable solutions for a green and social

new deal, for working towards the elimination of poverty, addressing the major wealth, racial, gender and social inequalities.

In this new, post pandemic climate emergency era that we live in, many people value the irreplaceable role of the public sector. It is up to us, the European Left, to save our planet by repairing the important damages caused to vital public infrastructures by the neoliberal policies. We need to implement stronger public policies in order to invest in green infrastructures, providing access to basic human rights and protection of the most vulnerable, the ones suffering most from the consequences of the climate crisis, as the September New York flood has shown.

Syriza, the most important European left party, is working hard in order to promote a new green social contract. Recently we have presented a comprehensive project for a “Green Revolution” based “on justice and respect”. “Justice is about the inalienable right of every citizen to live in a clean and healthy environment. Respect is our minimum duty towards nature and towards the coming generations”, as Syriza President Alexis Tsipras said, presenting a program of 7 points, based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the science data and international best practices, for a new, long term, sustainable productive model.

A program targeting on a climate neutral Greece by 2045, a just transition that will take place through powerful transformational public policies, creating well-paying jobs, protecting biodiversity, promoting recycling and circular economy. A program in accordance with the understanding that the climate crisis issue “is more than a discussion about a 1.5 degrees Celsius”, but, as the indigenous rights activist from the Santee Dakota, Rose Whipple, has put it: “it is a spiritual crisis for our entire world”. This is the fight we owe our kids to win. The fight of our century. Our fight.

*Rena Dourou is member of Syriza Political Committee, Responsible for Climate Crisis, Environment and Energy.*

## Mobilising for Ecosocialism

*Felicity Dowling*

Lies

Telling lies to the young is wrong  
 Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.  
 Telling them that God's in his heaven  
 and all's well with the world is wrong.  
 The young people know what you mean.  
 The young are people.  
 Tell them the difficulties can't be counted,  
 and let them see not only what will be  
 but see with clarity these present times.  
 Say obstacles exist they must encounter  
 sorrow happens, hardship happens.  
 The hell with it. Who never knew?  
 the price of happiness will not be happy.  
 Forgive no error you recognize,  
 it will repeat itself, increase,  
 and afterward our pupils  
 will not forgive in us what we forgave.

(Copyright © 2008 by Yevgeny Yevtushenko)

### Ecosocialism

To be Ecosocialists and internationalists in 2021 and beyond, in the parties of the European Left, we have to understand the world, to organise to protect and preserve both the physical world and that share of wealth that goes to workers (and working-class communities), and to protect our liberties.

In Left Unity UK we use the title Ecosocialist to acknowledge the crucial importance of the challenge presented by the climate and ecological crises facing the planet, and to reassert the role that our class, the working class,

and crucially, the organised working class, has to play in this monumental challenge. Only the working class has the power to fundamentally change society. The struggle for the climate and our ecological system must be part and parcel of our challenges to poverty, challenges to the failure to provide adequate food, education, housing, life enhancing employment, time for the family, decent conditions for our elders. We will not accept increased poverty as a price for saving the climate. Change we acknowledge as necessary, but not increased poverty. Our response to the climate catastrophe is part of our challenge to authoritarianism.

The environmental harms of capitalism do not simply result from greed and lack of effective environmental regulation, or indifference on the part of capital, though these undoubtedly exacerbate them. Environmental degradation and destruction through carbon emissions, pollution, the disruption and destruction of ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity are not incidental to the running of a globalised capitalist economy, but go to the nature and functioning of the capitalist system itself. Asking capitalism to reinvent itself as a more environmentally friendly, less polluting, more resource "frugal" system is to ask individual capitalists/corporations to make themselves less profitable, less "efficient", to effectively put a gun to their collective corporate head, and of the whole system.

The Keynesianism of the second half of the 20th century failed and has been reversed. Keynesianism had no answer to the inbuilt structural defects of capitalism, its self-destructive and nature destructive tendencies, and was never intended to do so. The "green washed" forms of Keynesianism proposed from

# Interventions

the more liberal wing of capital, liberal greens, left reformist trends in environmentalism, and those sections of the labour movement influenced by them would recreate this, failing almost completely to identify the underlying problems even in the face of the blindingly obvious.

It is no longer the case that the bourgeoisie, their politicians and corporations are denying that the world is heating up, this is now largely just the province of the fossil fuel lobby. Whole sections of the bourgeoisie, from finance, to manufacturing, to construction have recognised that

1. there are substantial economic impacts to be felt from climate change if measures aren't taken to address it,
2. there is substantial money to be made from renewable energy technologies, 'green' infrastructure, the transition from oil powered to various forms of electric transport, low carbon construction and retrofitting existing buildings for energy efficiency and so on.

Capital is embracing the idea of the Green New Deal as a potential next straw to cling to, to stave of the crisis that is looming. However, so long as there is profit to be made from fossil fuels etc., then the market compels the capitalist to make that profit, when it perceives there is a profit to be made from a Green New Deal, they'll take that too.

According to *The Guardian* in the UK, an unpublished UN report in 2010 estimated \$2.2 Trillion of environmental damage is done annually by the 3,000 or so largest corporations. More than the national economies of all but the 7 richest nations on earth – 6-7% of combined turnover and equivalent to 33% of their annual combined profits.

The global market for waste is worth a staggering \$410 billion, much of it illegal – up to 90% of electronic waste is illegally traded or dumped each year. The top 10 emitting countries emit 45 per cent of global Ghg emissions; the bottom 50 per cent emit only 13 per cent. This cannot be changed surreptitiously but by bold campaigns that challenge the rights of capital.

War and weapons production provide significant climate and environmental damage. Ridding our selves of nuclear weapons and the huge armaments industry would significantly improve our climate and our environment

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/social/environment> wrote

“The US Department of Defense is the world's single largest consumer of oil – and as a result, one of the world's top greenhouse gas emitters. Destruction of military base garbage in burn pits and other military operations have exposed soldiers and civilians to dangerous levels of pollutants.

Deforestation in Afghanistan as a result of illegal logging, particularly by warlords, has destroyed wildlife habitat.

In Iraq, increases in cancer, birth defects, and other conditions have been associated with war-related environmental damage and toxins”.

Our struggles for peace, against weapons of mass destruction, and to protect the climate link in multiple ways. Failure in either field would be grim indeed.

In the 21st century, class struggle and environmental struggle have become inseparable, and we lose sight of that at our peril.

A better world is possible. There is money and resources aplenty to provide all the essentials of life for all the peoples of the world. As socialists we take up the slogan developed in struggle in Latin America “We demand a better world and proclaim that a better world is possible”. We are denied these necessities, denied access to these resources by the private, and now oligarchic, ownership of the means of production. Globally Oxfam's report said that the world's richest 22 men have more wealth than all the women of Africa. The wage share from production has fallen especially in the less dominant and more exploited economies.

“Imperialism is alive and well and inequality between the imperialist economies and the rest is just as wide as it was 100 years go. Value produced in the dominated countries gets appropriated and transferred to the imperialist

economies in ever-increasing amounts”.

Whilst most of this article is about the UK and Europe, we are constantly aware of struggles in other continents, which interconnect on a daily level. We take both inspiration and warning from struggles and tasks faced by socialists and those in struggle globally.

The oligarchs think they can escape the Earth's crisis by holing up in New Zealand or by going into space. But our class must solve the problem for everyone, for us there is no benefit in rescuing just a few rich individuals.

## Cop 26

The UK will host the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November 2021, with the mendacious Boris Johnson presiding over it. Clearly this will not solve the Climate Catastrophe, nor the environmental challenges facing humans and other species. It will though focus attention again on the scale of the task in defending our climate.

Trade Unionists, socialists, climate and environmental activists, women's rights campaigners, anti-racists, anti-fascists, Lgbt rights campaigners and those new into struggle, are all finding these to be tough times.

## Huge opportunities

But the defeats and setbacks cannot disguise the huge social movements that are developing. These social changes will not all be positive, but one thing is for sure these are times of change, upheaval and opportunity, as well as being times of great danger.

We live in a time of huge protest. There will be an audience for our ideas. We live in a time of resistance probably in greater numbers than 1848, or 1917-18, more than 1968. Demonstrations such as those we saw in Belarus were not only large but persistent, repeated time and again. The huge strikes in India were

probably the largest in world history. The youth have mobilised in huge numbers for the Climate campaign.

## Organising for our planet, for the climate, for the environment

We must develop our day-to-day struggles against poverty, poor conditions at work, oppression and war, and join this with the demands to avert the climate catastrophe. All these struggles are integral to our work. Whilst we will look for allies with all who campaign for climate justice we cannot avoid the responsibility held by our organisations, and our politics. Capitalism might tweak things here or there and we will hail each mini victory as steps along the way, but only the organised might of the workers movement can challenge the bourgeois system and change the world. It is back to Marx, back to Engels, back to class, if we are serious about Climate Change.

## Problems of today and tomorrow

Our need to address the issues of climate change are not a problem of tomorrow but that of today. Fire and Flood, extreme weather incidents are here and now. We must prepare our communities to respond to such crises. We need responses such as Cuba puts in place where each area has an emergency organising committee who have details of everyone and everything in their area to organise mutual support. Provision is made to protect white goods from each household from hurricane and flood. Local doctors know their area too. People are prepared and organised to respond to crisis.

Oxfam reported that “Cuba's achievements in risk reduction come from an impressive multi-dimensional process”.

# Interventions

Its foundation is a socio-economic model that reduces vulnerability and invests in social capital through universal access to government services and promotion of social equity. The resulting high levels of literacy, developed infrastructure in rural areas and access to reliable health care and other created capital function as “multiplier effects” for national efforts in disaster mitigation, preparation and response.

At the national level, Cuba’s disaster legislation, public education on disasters, meteorological research, early warning system, effective communication system for emergencies, comprehensive emergency plan, and Civil Defence structure are important resources in avoiding disaster. The Civil Defence structure depends on community mobilization at the grassroots level under the leadership of local authorities, widespread participation of the population in disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, and accumulated social capital.

## Preparation for future crises

The Covid crisis is unlikely to be the only pandemic this century and we need to prepare for this. The utter corruption of the UK government meant that people died, the majority suffered financial losses and the richest became still more rich whilst the health service suffered real hardship from stupid financial and bureaucratic constraints, designed in true Disaster Capitalism style to lose no opportunity for profit. The work in contrast of scientists in developing the vaccine shows how science untrammelled by profit can produce solutions.

The world is in constant change and challenge to capitalism. There are endemic challenges to the existing order, and though few have yet won but the ideas grow stronger, fed in part by the instant communication across the planet.

We have worked with other Ecosocialist to produce the statement below. The statement has been agreed by a number of left organisations,

and individuals as a basis for our work around COP26 and beyond. We reproduce it here.

## Ecosocialism not extinction!

COP 26 unfolds against a backdrop of growing climate chaos and ecological degradation, after an unprecedented summer of heatwaves, wildfires, and flooding events. Climate change is upon us, and we face multiple interlinked and inseparable crises- of climate, environment, extinction, economy and zoonotic diseases.

As Ecosocialists we say another world is possible, but a massive social and political transformation is needed, requiring the mobilisation of the mass of working people across the globe. Only the end of capitalism’s relentless pursuit of private profit, endless waste, and rapacious drive for growth, can provide the solution not only to climate change, environmental degradation, and mass extinction, but to global poverty, hunger, and hyper exploitation.

The big issues of climate change will be debated in Glasgow but whatever is agreed, capitalism can at best mitigate climate change, not stop it. Genuine climate solutions cannot be based on the very market system that created the problem. Only the organised working class, and the rural oppressed and First Nations of the Global South - women and men - have the power to end capitalism, because their labour produces all wealth and they have no great fortune to lose if the system changes, no vested interests in inequality, exploitation, and private profit.

Action now to halt climate change! We demand:

- All fossil fuels must stay in the ground – no new gas, coal, or oil!
- A rapid move to renewable energy for transport, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and homes
- A massive global programme of public works investing in green jobs, and replacing employment in unsustainable industries.



- A globally funded just transition for the global south to develop the necessary sustainable technologies and infrastructure.
- A major cut in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 70% by 2030, from a 1990 baseline. This must be comprehensive - including all military, aviation, and shipping emissions - and include mechanisms for transparent accounting, measurement, and popular oversight.
- The end of emissions trading schemes.
- An immediate end to the encroachment on and destruction of the territories of indigenous peoples through extractivism, deforestation and appropriation of land.

## Sustainability and global justice

The long-term global crisis and the immediate effects of catastrophic events impact more severely on women, children, elders, Lgbtq+ and disabled people and the people of First Nations. An ecosocialist strategy puts social justice and liberation struggles of the oppressed at its core.

Migration is, and will increasingly be, driven by climate change and conflicts and resource wars resulting from it. Accommodating and supporting free movement of people must be a core policy and necessary part of planning for the future.

We call for:

- Immediate cancellation of the international debt of the Global South.
- A rapid shift from massive “factory” farms and large-scale monoculture agribusiness towards eco-friendly farming methods and investment in green agricultural technology to reduce synthetic fertiliser and pesticide use in agriculture and replace these with organic methods and support for small farmers.
- A major reduction in meat and dairy production and consumption through education and provision and promotion of high- quality, affordable plant-based alternatives.

- The promotion of agricultural systems based on the right to food and food sovereignty, human rights, and with local control over natural resources, seeds, land, water, forests, knowledge, and technology to end food and nutrition insecurity in the Global South.
- The end of deforestation in the tropical and boreal forests by reduction of demand for imported food, timber, and biofuels.
- An end to ecologically and socially destructive extractivism, especially in the territories of indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- Respect for the economic, cultural, political and land rights of indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- A massive increase in protected areas for biodiversity conservation.
- End fuel poverty through retrofitting energy existing homes and buildings with energy efficient sustainable technologies.

We demand a just transition:

- Re-skilling of workers in environmentally damaging industries with well-paid alternative jobs in the new economy.
- Full and democratic involvement of workers to harness the energy and creativity of the working people to design and implement new sustainable technologies and decommission old unsustainable ones.
- Resources for popular education and involvement in implementing and enhancing a just transition, with environmental education embedded at all levels within the curriculum.
- Urgent development of sustainable, affordable, and high-quality public transport with a comprehensive integrated plan which meets people’s needs and reduces the requirement for private car use.
- A planned ecosocialist economy which eliminates waste, duplication and environmentally harmful practices, reduction in the working week and a corresponding increase in leisure time.
- Work practices reorganised with the emphasis on fair flexibility and working closer to home,

# Interventions

utilising a free and fast broadband infrastructure.

As ecosocialists we put forward a vision of a just and sustainable world and fight with every ounce of our energy for every change, however small, which makes such a world possible. We will organise and assist wherever worker's and community organisations internationally, raising demands on governments and challenging corporations.

We invite parties and individuals who support these ideas to contact us and sign the declaration. We invite those who disagree to discuss with us. That way we both sides learn more and share experiences.

“The old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born. This is the time of monsters” and this time our monsters are not just oppressive rulers but fire, water, despoliation and shortages.

Socialists across the world face the old duties to agitate to educate and to organise. We have a huge history but many of the organisations built by past struggles have been broken, been

hamstrung or corrupted. They have to be built anew.

“All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.” (Karl Marx in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848).

## Note

The article was written with the help from Jim Hollinshead, Left Unity Climate caucus and Ucu activist, David Landau on Migration, Roger Silverman on the levels of protest worldwide.

*Felicity Dowling is National Secretary of Left Unity UK. Interested in Women's rights, in housing issues, the health service, children's rights and working class action for a better world, she is a member of the National education Union and Unite the union and she served on Liverpool City Council during a legendary battle with Margaret Thatcher and has been an activist ever since.*

# The answer to the climate crisis lies in collective responsibility

*Gauche Républicaine et Socialiste*

The 2021 report of the Ipcc (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) published on 9 August 2021 confirms that a large part of climate change is now irreversible, that its signs are already visible. The supporters of neo-liberal capitalism and Emmanuel Macron will again try to insist on the responsibility of individual behaviour; however, it is our economic model that must radically change, even though no contemporary economic theory integrates energy (and therefore CO2 production in its models), which leaves us relatively powerless. A few weeks after the fiasco of the “climate resilience” law and the set-up of the constitutional referendum, Emmanuel Macron continues to fail to understand that we need actions and not a communication plan for the presidential election. We will have to invent and move fast.

In its latest report, the Ipcc confirms the importance and the human origin of global warming. Compared to the second half of the 19th century, the average temperature for the decade 2010-2020 has risen by almost 1.1°C. This unprecedented warming is directly caused by the increase in the concentration in the atmosphere of greenhouse gases (CO2 but also methane) produced by human activity. Regardless of future measures implemented, this warming will continue for a long time. After an observation, the Ipcc report shows in a prospective section the impact of different carbon emission scenarios (from neutrality to acceleration to control) on climate change and the extent of warming in the coming decades. Even under the most optimistic assumptions,

the changes will be major.

Global average warming is accompanied by a rise in the level of ocean waters, which will impact all coastal areas. It also leads to an increase in the frequency of extreme events: heat waves, droughts, floods, torrential rains, cyclones, etc. The most pessimistic scenarios no longer rule out the occurrence of major phenomena, such as changes in ocean currents that could violently alter the climate of Western Europe.

This poses a major challenge to mankind, and will put our living conditions under severe strain in the decades to come. It is as important to work on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit the extent of global warming as it is to organise and prepare our societies to live as well as possible in this new environment. However, since the creation of the Ipcc in 1988, the delivery of its first report raising the climate alarm in 1990 and the first summit of the planet in Rio in 1992, nothing has really changed: year after year, global CO2 emissions have continued to increase and average temperatures have continued to rise. Even the joint awarding of a Nobel Peace Prize to the Ipcc and Al Gore, who had gone to great lengths to communicate the climate emergency, did nothing.

The problem is certainly global and requires concerted policies on a global scale. The example of the ozone hole over the poles, caused by chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) gases, shows that such international action is possible. The global ban on CFC gases has addressed this issue and restored the ozone layer in about 15 years.

The climate issue is incomparably more difficult

# Interventions

to resolve because it strikes at the heart of the organisation of our societies. CO2 emissions are almost perfectly correlated with Gdp. They are a direct reflection of the energy we consume to move, heat, manufacture, build and transform our environment. Drastically reducing CO2 emissions directly challenges our economic model.

At the international level, the historical responsibility of the most developed countries, which have been responsible for the majority of cumulative emissions since the beginning of the industrial era, is coupled with the growing responsibility of emerging countries (India and China in the first place), which are taking on an ever greater share, soon to become the majority, of annual emissions. The climate issue will naturally lead to geopolitical tensions between the richest countries and the still developing countries.

But above all, drastically reducing CO2 emissions requires us to change our social and economic models. Let us remember that none of the contemporary economic theories include energy in their models, even though it is the control of our energy expenditure that will determine our future in the decades to come.

Neo-liberal capitalism, based on the unlimited exploitation and competition of human and environmental resources, is profoundly ill-equipped to deal with the challenge of climate change. The short-term dictatorship of cost optimisation and maximisation of returns is largely responsible for social and environmental imbalances, it cannot be the solution. Of course, at the national level, as with the Covid 19 pandemic, it is to be expected that, faced with such a global problem, Emmanuel Macron and his government will seek to avoid the structural causes and insist on individual responsibility. Incentive policies are to be expected. And since these will be ineffective, we can expect more authoritarianism and coercion.

Like the pandemic, but on a larger scale and for a longer period, global warming is expected to bring about disorders and inequalities that will

profoundly affect our living conditions. As with the pandemic, the populations most affected will be the most socially and economically fragile.

Responding to the issues of global warming requires us to stop relying on the all too traditional individual incentive mechanisms that are based on the logic of markets. To stop relying on markets, we need to put in place long-term public policies, in a word: planning. These policies can only be implemented effectively if they are based on solidarity and do not leave anyone behind. To do this, it is important to rediscover a taste for public debate and collective action. It is by deepening democracy rather than by the dictatorship of urgency that we will be able to develop collective solutions. The climate issue will undoubtedly be the challenge of the coming decades.

To be up to this challenge implies in particular to start by getting out of the unproductive confrontation between xenophobes and demophobes which monopolises the media and to put the climate issue and its consequences at the centre of political debates. The Gauche Républicaine et Socialiste party will play its full part in this political struggle.

## Note

You can find all GRS articles on <https://g-r-s.fr/> and GRS articles on ecology at <https://g-r-s.fr/tag/ecologie/>

*The Gauche Républicaine et Socialiste (Grs) is a French political party, founded on 3 February 2019 by the merger of the Alternative pour un programme républicain, écologiste et socialiste (Après) and the Mouvement républicain et citoyen (Mrc) of Jean-Luc Laurent and Jean-Pierre Chevènement. Après, close to La France Insoumise, was founded in October 2018 by Emmanuel Maurel and Marie-Noëlle Lienemann after they left the Socialist Party.*

# From the awareness of the ecological crisis, proceed to transformative solutions!

*Alain Pagano*

The accumulation of profits, the mainstay of the capitalist system, results in the overexploitation of both humans and natural resources. The resulting ecological crisis is one more facet of the economic, social, health and other crises caused or aggravated by this system. Today, the ecological crisis, and more specifically the climate emergency, is leading to a number of alarms from scientists and massive mobilisations of young people. However, it is clear that we are more concerned with denouncing the alarming consequences of climate change than with finding solutions that can profoundly transform a system that is adrift!

Given the growing concern of public opinion for ecological issues, the ideological confrontation is sharpening over the solutions to be provided. There are several types of solutions. Those that do not question the current system, revolve around handling the consequences without tackling the causes, or worse, are greenwashing without tackling the problem at all. When those who want to maintain the system deal with the consequences, they promote a green capitalism in which pollution treatment activities, material recycling, and the development of new production methods are developed... as additional ways of making money, but in which the will to tackle the root causes of the problem is not envisaged.

In the environmentalist movement, three currents of ideas are circulating:

1. Those who shout disaster and say it is too late to act. This is not only wrong, but also undermines the need for mobilization to impose solutions.
2. Those who advocate individual, citizen-based solutions (reducing waste, reducing one's personal carbon footprint, changing one's mode of mobility, etc.). While these are to be encouraged as a new form of activism, they are not enough. All these small individual gestures must be passed on to a collective dimension, which is the only way to impose transformative changes. And finally,
3. Those who advocate radical solutions to transform the system. They are allies in the battles that lie ahead.

The progressive current that we embody carries the idea of a necessary exit from capitalism as a condition for solving the ecological crisis. And for this, profound changes are needed. The objective of a change of system may seem out of reach for many of our fellow citizens. We cannot be satisfied with a global discourse. There is a need for immediate change to respond to the climate emergency, and for more systemic changes that may take time to implement. We need to respond to both.

On the immediate actions, I advocate for a European campaign of the EL, open to other political forces, Ngos etc. It would be possible to launch a petition to move towards free public transport and a sharp reduction in the

# Interventions

price of tickets for rail transport in order to encourage these forms of mobility, which are less CO2 intensive than car transport. This type of campaign would have the advantage of proposing a concrete, credible, immediate and positive solution and of initiating the debate on more transformative proposals.

Indeed, this type of measure calls for others:

- Development plan for rail transport (freight and passenger), river transport, development of a clean maritime transport sector, relocation of industrial production to reduce the carbon footprint linked to imports of goods from outside the EU,
- Establishment of a public energy service, independent of the lobbies, which would allow the financing of the development of low-carbon energies and get out of coal, gas and oil as soon as possible.
- Decarbonise industry and companies through a system of incentives and constraints on corporate tax or a bonus/malus tax based on

environmental and social criteria

- Create public banks with financing criteria that redirect money to all low-carbon investments. This is one of the tools to regain control of finance, which is not responding, or responding too slowly and timidly, to the urgent need to redirect credits towards sustainable development
- Make effective the green fund of 100 billion euros per year in order to help the poorest people promised in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Here are some of the ways that could form the basis for solutions to emerge from the Cop26 in Glasgow and in the years to come. In order to change the world without changing the climate!

*Alain Pagano is a member of the National Executive Committee of the French Communist Party.*

# I Awakened Here When the Earth Was New

*Vijay Prashad*

In late March 2021, 120 traditional owners from 40 different First People's groups spent five days at the National First People's Gathering on Climate Change in Cairns (Australia). Speaking on the impact of the climate crisis on First People, Gavin Singleton from the Yirrganydji traditional owners explained that "From changing weather patterns to shifts in natural ecosystems, climate change is a clear and present threat to our people and our culture".

Bianca McNeair of the Malgana traditional owners from Gatharagudu (Australia) said that those who attended the gathering "are talking about how the birds movements across the country have changed, so that's changing songlines that they've been singing for thousands and thousands of years, and how that's impacting them as a community and culture. ... We are very resilient people", McNeair said, "so it's a challenge we were ready to take on. But now we're facing a situation that's not predictable, it's not part of our natural environmental pattern".

The Yirrganydji traditional owners live on Australia's coastline, which faces the Great Barrier Coral Reef. That majestic reef faces extinction from climate change: a period of consecutive years of coral bleaching from 2014 to 2017 threatened to kill off the precious coral, during which fluctuating temperatures caused coral to expel symbiotic algae that are crucial to the nutritional health of the coral. Scientists assembled by the United Nations found that 70% of the earth's coral reefs are threatened, with 20% already destroyed "with no hope for recovery". Of the reefs that are threatened, a quarter are under "imminent risk of collapse" and another quarter are at risk "due to long-term threats". In November 2020, a UN report

titled Projections on Future Coral Bleaching suggested that unless carbon emissions are controlled, the reefs will die and the species they support will die out too. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority notes that "climate change is the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef and coral reefs worldwide". That is why the Yirrganydji traditional owners created the Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to care for the reef against all odds.

"Most of our traditions, our customs, our language are from the sea", says Singleton, "so losing the reef would impact our identity. We were here prior to the formation of the reef, and we still hold stories that have been passed down through generations – of how the sea rose and flooded the area, *the great flood*". The Yirrganydji Rangers, Singleton points out, "have their hearts and souls" in the reef. But they are struggling against all odds.

Not long after the National First People's Gathering disbanded, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Ipcc) released its sixth report. Based on the consensus of 234 scientists from over 60 countries, the report notes that "multiple lines of evidence indicate the recent large-scale climatic changes are unprecedented in a multi-millennial context, and that they represent a millennial-scale commitment for the slow-responding elements of the climate system, resulting in worldwide loss of ice, increase in ocean heat content, sea level rise, and deep ocean acidification". If warming continues to reach 3 °C (by 2060) and 5.7 °C (by 2100), human extinction is certain. The report comes after a string of extreme weather events: floods in China and Germany, fires across the Mediterranean, and extreme temperatures across the world. A study in the

# Interventions

July issue of *Nature Climate Change* found that “record-shattering extremes” would be “nearly impossible in the absence of warming”.

Importantly, the 6th *Ipcc* report shows that “historical cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions determine to a large degree warming to date”, which means that the Global North countries have already taken the planet to the threshold of annihilation before countries of the Global South have been able to attain basic needs such as universal electrification. For instance, 54 countries on the African continent account for merely 2-3% of global carbon emissions; half of Africa’s 1.2 billion people have no access to electricity, while many extreme climate events (droughts and cyclones in southern Africa, floods in the Horn of Africa, desertification in the Sahel) are now taking place across the continent. Released on World Environment Day (5 June) and produced with the International Week of Anti-Imperialist Struggle, our Red Alert no. 11 further explains the scientific and political dynamics of the climate crisis, the “common but differentiated responsibilities”, and what can be done to turn the tides.

Governments will gather in October for the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Kunming (China) to discuss progress on the Convention on Biological Diversity (ratified in 1993) and in November for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow (UK) to discuss climate change. Attention is on COP26, where the powerful Global North will once more push for “net zero” carbon dioxide emissions and thereby reject deep cuts to their own emissions while insisting that the Global South forgo social development.

Meanwhile, there will be less attention paid to COP15, where the agenda will include cutting pesticide use by two-thirds, halving food waste, and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste. In 2019, an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report showed that pollution and resource extraction had threatened one million animal and plant species with extinction.

The link between the assault on biological

diversity and climate change is clear: the opening of wetlands alone has released historic stores of carbon to the atmosphere. Deep emission cuts and better stewardship of resources are necessary.

Strikingly, just as the *Ipcc* released its report, US President Joe Biden’s administration asked the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to boost output of oil production. This makes a mockery of the Biden pledge to cut 50% of US greenhouse emissions by 2030.

A recent paper in *Nature* shows that the passage of the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer banned the use of chlorofluorocarbons (Cfcs), whose gradual elimination from aerosol sprays, refrigerants, and Styrofoam packaging prevented ozone depletion. The Montreal Protocol is significant because – despite industry lobbying – it was universally ratified. That treaty provides hope that sufficient pressure from key countries, pushed by social and political movements, could result in stringent regulations against pollution and carbon abuse as well as meaningful cultural change.

Places associated with global negotiations to save the planet include cities such as Kyoto (1997), Copenhagen (2009), and Paris (2015). First amongst these should be Cochabamba (Bolivia), where the government of Evo Morales Ayma held the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in April 2010. Over 30,000 people from more than 100 countries came to this landmark conference, which adopted the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth. Several points were discussed, including the demand for:

- The states of the Global North to cut emissions by at least 50%;
- Developing countries to be given substantial assistance to adapt to the effects of climate change and to transition away from fossil fuels;
- Indigenous rights to be protected;
- International borders to be opened to climate refugees;



- An international court to be set up to prosecute climate crimes;
- People's rights to water to be recognised, and that people have the right not to be exposed to excessive pollution.

“We are confronted with two paths”, former President Morales said, “the path of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) or the path of the multinationals. If we don't take the former, the masters of death will win. If we don't fight, we will be guilty of destroying the planet”. Gavin Singleton and Bianca McNeair would certainly agree.

So would the Yorta Yorta poet and educator Hyllus Noel Maris (1933-1986), whose *Spiritual Song of the Aborigine* (1978) awakens hope and lays the soundtrack for those who march to save the planet:

I am a child of the Dreamtime People  
Part of this land, like the gnarled gumtree  
I am the river, softly singing

Chanting our songs on my way to the sea  
My spirit is the dust-devils  
Mirages, that dance on the plain  
I'm the snow, the wind, and the falling rain  
I'm part of the rocks and the red desert earth  
Red as the blood that flows in my veins  
I am eagle, crow and snake that glides  
Through the rainforest that clings  
to the mountainside  
I awakened here when the earth was new.

*Vijay Prashad is the Director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, India, the Chief Correspondent for Globetrotter, and the Chief Editor of LeftWord Books. He is the author of several books, articles and essays. Among the books, we cite only The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World, The New Press (2008) and The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South, Verso Books (2014).*

# The young men and women of Fridays For Future Italy speak out on the climate crisis

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*Filippo Savio*

The climate crisis is increasingly in front of our eyes. Its consequences have affected our lives in recent weeks. The extreme heat and fires in Sardinia, Sicily, Algeria, Iran, Canada, the drought, the floods in Germany and Northern Italy, in Japan, Turkey, etc. The list is so long. All these catastrophes are becoming part of our lives, and the media often make them out to be just another news story. As if the loss of houses, crops, and lives were normal. As if the extinction of species at 100 to 1000 times the average rate is normal. As if this is something we will have to get used to.

We are noticing the crisis now because it is affecting us directly. But in other places, especially in the Global South, people have been affected for years. And for years they have been ignored, unheard, and even silenced. So many people are already suffering, and dying, because of this crisis. And now that the consequences are affecting our western states, there is a risk that the voices of the most affected people in the most affected areas will be ignored again. Because now we are the ones at risk, and we certainly cannot think about other countries, or other people.

This is a dangerous risk that we cannot take. And it shows once again how the climate crisis is a matter of injustice. Because the people most affected by this crisis are also those who have contributed least to causing it.

We need to listen to the people most affected, to give space to their voices that are being raised all over the world.

Scientists have been telling us for years that we are heading for a catastrophe, but their warnings

have been ignored, and continue to fall on deaf ears. In 1979 in Geneva, representatives of 50 nations united in the first world climate conference. More than 30 years later, in 2015, the states of the world agreed to keep the temperature rise below the safe limit of 1.5°C. And now, despite the promises, the distant targets, 2021 is expected to be the year with the highest emissions ever.

Politicians of all sides have failed in their main purpose - to protect citizens and ensure a liveable future. They have not and are not following the warnings of the scientific community, pursuing only short-term profit.

When millions of people marched in the streets in 2019 the policy makers seemed overjoyed and willing to listen. They told us that we had to keep going and that our determination was important, but then acted the opposite way when it came to having to make decisions. Now emissions are still rising and governments are doing nothing.

In the complete indifference of everyone, habitats are being destroyed, entire forests are being cleared, and our future is increasingly uncertain.

These facts add up to a picture of interlinked crises: all the crises we have at the moment are a symptom that the current system is toxic. It is harmful for us, for the society and for our planet. Understanding this is fundamental, especially now. It is necessary for the organisations fighting for justice to unite.

We decided to strike because we could no longer stand by and watch while people suffer and our future is at risk. We are striking because it is the

only thing we can do.

We are girls and boys, working men and women who are not sitting at the tables where decisions that will decide the fate of our future and our present are taken.

We are demonstrating because we want the people in power to take responsibility and act now. And because if we all join together we can build another world.

Some people tell us that in addition to protesting we must also propose. So we did. We have written long documents with proposals, such as the one called “Back to the Future”, a plan to restart Italy. Although we are not technicians, scientists, and we have not studied these things, we decided to do our part and propose an alternative. That’s why we contacted experts to try to get the concrete proposals that were asked for so much. But the campaign was never taken seriously. These proposals were ignored, and the responses were empty.

That is why we continue to use our voices and strike to make ourselves heard, to put pressure on the politicians. But we know that change will not come from the cold and distant halls of parliament. Change will come from the streets. And from the people.

In November there will be a UN climate conference in Glasgow. World leaders will meet to decide on global action to limit the rise in the average global temperature to below 1.5°C, to set out their commitments to reduce emissions, and to determine how they will contribute to the ecological transition in developing countries. It is a crucial meeting because the decisions taken will have an impact on all the people of the world and on the future. Moreover, scientists warn us that this is one of the last opportunities if we are to avert the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

That is why we will be in Milan, where the preparatory conference is being held, on 1 and 2

October. We will let the decision-makers know that we are watching them closely.

That is why I personally have so much anxiety about the future. Those who make the decisions for our future will not live it. And how can we trust the politicians who have so far betrayed us? If it were not for their wrong decisions we would not be in such a desperate situation.

Another fact that makes me anxious at times is seeing the inertia and indifference of my peers. Before I became aware of this problem, I too lived quietly, thinking that it was not so serious and that someone would take care of it.

Many of us became aware of the situation we are in by chance, and this was also the case for me. I went to the first event without knowing much about the subject, following my friends and to skip a day of school. There I started listening to a few speeches and took home a leaflet with a two-line explanation. All the awareness I gained later. After the events the climate crisis stays in your head, you can’t help it. Because we are talking about current and future living conditions!

Now I organise the demonstrations, together with a wonderful group of activist friends, and it’s great to do something concrete to fight this crisis. Seeing all the people waking up and opening their eyes to the problem gives us the hope we need to fight this crisis. Together with so many other young friends, I want the people to understand that they are crucial in solving this crisis. We don’t just need your support or your admiration. You don’t have to be prepared, experienced or able to do a thousand things to help in this crisis. Everyone is fundamental.

*Filippo Savio, aged 17, is a Fridays For Future Italy’s activist in Chieri, Turin.*

## Who's afraid of degrowth?

*Eva García Sempere*

Capitalism carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction

Karl Marx

When a river overflows its banks, we all want it to diminish so that the waters will return to their course

Serge Latouche

In recent years, and perhaps even more so in the wake of the pandemic, the question of degrowth has come back into the debate. But what are we talking about when we talk about Degrowth?

The concept is not new. Depending on the authors, degrowth is a current of political, economic and social thought, a theory, an ideology or a perspective, in any case they agree that it aims to reduce economic production, with the objective of establishing a new relationship of balance between human beings and nature, but also between human beings themselves.

They also share the conviction that without reducing economic production, which is responsible for the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of the environment, it is impossible to preserve the environment. In this sense, they question not only the capitalist economic model for being, in essence, the embodiment of the desire for unlimited growth on a planet with limited resources, but also the consumerist lifestyle, effective or aspirational, in which we are or want to be immersed (logically, those countries and social classes that can afford it).

Therefore, those who are committed to degrowth propose a decrease in consumption

and controlled and rational production, whose transition would be carried out through the application of principles more appropriate to a situation of limited resources; some of these principles are: reduced scale, relocation, efficiency, cooperation, self-production (and exchange), democratisation and horizontality, durability and sobriety. However, not all authors agree on all the principles and the importance given to each of them.

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, in the theory enunciated on the bioeconomy in his work *The Entropy law and the Economic Process* (1971) forms part of the foundations of degrowth, as do other authors: Ivan Illich, Hannah Arendt. Particularly interesting are the degrowth currents that emerged in France with Serge Latouche, the Latin American *Buen Vivir* and the reflections and analyses of the Club of Rome, mainly through the 1972 Meadows Report, whose well-known title is *The Limits to Growth*. On the other hand, we also find André Gorz, who understands this “utopian” concept as the most advanced and not the most frustrated form of what socialism should be.

Serge Latouche sets out eight pillars of degrowth, which I find interesting in terms of reviewing the priority issues to be addressed in the necessary eco-social transition: Revaluing (replacing individualistic and consumerist values with values of cooperation); Reconceptualising (seeking a new vision of the good life based on quality of life and not on accumulating possessions); Restructuring (moving towards other models of production and social relations); Relocalising (avoiding, among other issues, intensity in transport); Redistributing (the distribution of wealth, so

necessary in any horizon, but especially in one of diminishing resources); Reducing; Reusing and Recycling.

On the other hand, for Carlos Taibo, degrowth is part of a broader anti-capitalist movement that advocates the defence of collective and self-managed property, while at the same time accompanying measures that cancel the illusion of indiscriminate growth. He warns of the existence of eventual modulations of degrowth that are not manifestly anti-capitalist and declares his distance from these aspects. For Taibo, any anti-capitalist movement in the North must, by necessity, be de-growthist, self-managing, anti-patriarchal and internationalist. Taibo expresses his thinking as follows: “I prefer to speak of the perspective of degrowth, and not of the theory of degrowth, and even less of the latter conceived as an ideology (...) in my opinion, degrowth is an aggregate that should be added to other theoretical or ideological formulations, in the certainty, however, that it is an important aggregate”.

For the author, and I suppose you share with me the wisdom of his reflection, capitalism and an eventual de-growth reform would clash head-on: capitalism is based on infinite growth, regardless of the finiteness of the resources necessary to continue to fatten its profits. Therefore, in his own words, “by itself, the degrowth project is anti-capitalist. Capitalism cannot resist an economic logic that demands reductions in production and consumption”.

Finally, the ecofeminist view of degrowth is essential, represented in our country, for example, by Yayo Herrero, anthropologist and ecofeminist, who assures us that the degrowth “of the material sphere of the economy” is not an option, but an “obligation”.

For the author, and with her and many other ecofeminists, the heart of the ecosocial transition necessarily involves recomposing or reformulating the economic metabolism from top to bottom. Putting everyone’s life at the centre necessarily implies a radical redistribution of wealth and care obligations. Because, as it brilliantly summarises, we are

radically ecodependent and interdependent beings and, therefore, we need the environment in which we develop and we need each other because there is no stage of life in which we do not require, in one way or another, care.

This ecofeminist perspective that allows us to analyse and recognise situations of class, racial, environmental and gender oppression... is what leads us to (self-)warn against degrowth discourses that, like *greenwashing*, are not a solution and can hide important class prejudices. In the words of Y. Herrero “Social differences must always be taken into account. If the class situation doesn’t allow you to heat your water or if you can’t cook at home because the electricity has been cut off. I argue a lot with some colleagues when they talk about voluntary self-simplicity. We cannot confuse it with forced dispossession. It is not the same to apply this transformation to people with an environmental conscience, with well insulated houses and with food, as it is to people living in poorly insulated houses and with bad food. The social justice dimension is key.” (*Crític*, 2019)

This is probably one of the most accurate views. Because, undoubtedly, degrowth causes mixed feelings: there is misunderstanding about the concept, what it means and how it can be applied. And on the left, with a traditionally developmentalist base and concerned with guaranteeing access to the goods and services necessary to achieve a dignified life, it does not meet with majority approval, as does the fight against climate change or the necessary environmental protection to prevent ecological catastrophes or the loss of biodiversity.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not possible to fight the collapse to which we are heading due to the climate and environmental crisis, that it is not possible to do so without leaving anyone behind, and that the desired eco-social transition will certainly not be possible without a drastic reduction in the use of resources (energy and otherwise).

It is also evident that we have before us, as a civilisation, one of the greatest challenges in our history: to face the metabolic fracture resulting

# Interventions

from the imbalance between the use of resources and their capacity to recover while, in parallel, we face the social fracture which, being also consubstantial to capitalism, has been growing unstoppably and which, in some way “thanks” to the Covid crisis, has been revealed in all its splendour.

Therefore, and in the light of the evidence left by the neoliberal depredation of the planet, translimitation (the surpassing of the planet’s biocapacity) and the so-called “*peak all*” are already a reality. And with them an inevitable degrowth. We may not see it, we may not want to see it and, most probably, they do not even want us to see it. But reality is stubborn: the availability of oil will decrease in the next decade by 30% and, as the Energy Agency warns, by 2025 it will be impossible to meet current oil demand, peak gas production will be reached in two decades and coal in three. The availability of minerals or rare earths, so necessary for today’s technology, including that needed for renewable energies, is also compromised, and the mad rush of companies and countries to open new mines without looking at where or the impacts is a rather remarkable indicator.

And knowing this, how do we conjugate a system that encourages us to change electronic devices every year, that reminds us that our quality of life depends on our level of consumption and our annual trips to some faraway destination? When it is not materially possible to keep up the pace of energy consumption, not even through the plundering of foreign resources to which capitalism has sadly accustomed us, or when the minerals necessary for the development of renewables also compete with technological development, what and how will we prioritise? What transport will be the most essential and what will we set aside?

But we are also faced with decreases in the availability of water, so necessary for life, for agriculture and even for a key sector of our country such as tourism. What will happen when there is not enough to satisfy demand? Which productive sector will we let fall? Or, even more worryingly, who will be left behind?

We know that the bubble of cheap meat (and, on too many occasions, also of low quality) is unsustainable: environmentally, because of the tremendous impact that intensive production systems have on the land, resources, water... both in terms of consumption and the generation of waste that is unbearable for the system; socially, because they have been dismantling, and continue to do so, the local and sustainable productive fabric that, in addition, allows the population to settle in the territory, as well as expelling those who carry out other activities that are incompatible with a constant source of waste. And nutritionally, because the dietary model that advertising has been imposing on us campaign after campaign, reducing costs at the expense of our health, has considerably impoverished and distanced our daily diet from the recognised Mediterranean diet. When this bubble bursts, when our productive fabric has disappeared, who will feed us?

And we still have doubts... it is impossible not to have them. But not only that, it is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY that, as the left, as communists, we address the great debate before us and ask ourselves questions.

It has to be said: we are afraid.

Afraid that degrowth means losing what little those who barely make ends meet will have. Or that it means losing more jobs and that there is no longer a family cushion to support us. Fear of not having access to the necessary services: health, transport, that leisure is forbidden to us. Fear.

However, as we said before, the stubborn reality is imposing itself. We are already in a context of reduced resources. And those who do not want us to address this debate are well aware of this: when food is on future markets, when water is listed on the stock exchange, every time they try to open a new mine to try to locate rare minerals... they tell us that translimitation and *peak oil* are a reality that, inevitably, are accompanied by some kind of decline.

Therefore. The key question is not degrowth yes or degrowth no, but what kind of degrowth, who is going to degrow and, above all, how

we are going to do it. The capitalist proposal is well known: a degrowth at the service of new transfers of income from labour to capital, allowing a greater concentration of wealth, governed by a handful of corporations without any hint of popular sovereignty and whose main negative effects are paid for by the usual, the impoverished, the dispossessed.

71% of global CO2 emissions come from *100 large corporations alone*. All of them campaign on the importance of *individual action* to combat climate change. None of them have stopped producing and generating economic benefits that have remained in very few hands, nor have they stopped generating environmental externalities that we are paying for among the majority. They, and the governments that support them, make us believe that a green transition is possible, in which we will continue to consume as we do now, but everything will be eco and renewable. This is what we know as *greenwashing*.

But they know perfectly well, and we have to start internalising it, that this is not an answer to translimitation, climate change, the biodiversity crisis or the energy crisis we face. It is a manoeuvre to consolidate control of resources and power in this inevitable transition, in this process of degrowth that we are in.

This degrowth in the capitalist framework is not a possible option, at least not for our class, for the social majority of our country, and much less for those who live in countries that have traditionally been plundered and dispossessed of their resources.

So, in order to maintain a scenario (sorry to be so apocalyptic) of exponential exclusions, of unprecedented inequalities, in which only a few will be able to access the necessary resources to have a dignified life, and the rest of us will be condemned to mere survival, in a sort of violent transition to a dystopian world (in which many women workers in impoverished countries already live), many more fences will have to be erected, opting for containment measures, for violent repression and for going much deeper into the farce of neoliberal democracy

that increasingly distances the sovereignty of popular power and the institutions from the real needs of the majority of people.

Sound familiar? We find it, for example, in the foundations of current European migration policy and it is the eco-fascist way out proposed by forces such as Marine Le Pen, who already speak openly that resources are running out and that there is not enough for everyone. And that, therefore, we must armour ourselves against the others, the outsiders, the victims of years of plundering.

Can you imagine when entire areas of a country are flooded and cities, arable land and the possibility of work disappear? What will we do? And when areas are turned into deserts? When pandemics, the consequence of the devastation of ecosystems to maintain an unsustainable agribusiness, are the daily bread? How can we stop a humanitarian catastrophe at this level?

Well, this scenario is not to be imagined, it is already being suffered by millions of workers in many countries... and the answer is, as we said, the same as the one being given to climate refugees and economic migrants: necropolitics, violence, repression, militarisation...

And in this scenario, unfortunately, the highest aspiration for the vast majority of our class is reduced to mere physical survival; to having to choose between heating the house or eating...

We have the data and the analysis, but we have to face the problem calmly and without pause. Understanding that there is an alternative, that degrowth is the only way out, but that we can elaborate a transition that not only guarantees access to what is necessary for everyone, including those who have not had it until now. But in order to do so, the first thing we have to do is to fight the fears that it generates and those who want to incorporate us:

- That we must globally reduce our consumption of natural resources and energy is an unavoidable reality. To pretend that this should be done equally between those who have brought us to this situation, enriching themselves along the way, and those of us who are paying the consequences of a system that devours

# Interventions

resources and people, is *incredibly perverse*. That is why our proposal of ecosocialist degrowth inexorably carries as a principle the radical redistribution of wealth.

- It is obvious that we have to decrease our economy and industry in material terms. All of them equally? Of course not, we must prioritise, decide what is and what is not indispensable for life. We must know the biophysical limits of the planet and decide what grows and what shrinks. To give an extreme example (or perhaps not so extreme), would we have doubts between using oil and its derivatives for surgical material or using it to buy any little gadget that we don't need and that breaks in three days? That is why our proposal of ecosocialist degrowth entails a radical democratisation of the economy.

We have been advancing in technology for years, with levels of macro-economic growth unknown at other times in history, with growing profits for large corporations and, nevertheless, with decreasing labour and social protection. Jobs are increasingly precarious, with worse conditions and poorly paid. States continue to fail to respond to the need for social coverage to guarantee the breaking of the gender gap and the care fracture.

Our model of degrowth must also face the change in the model of labour and care relations. Recovering the old slogan, more valid than ever, of working less to work all.

Will there be job losses? In some sectors, no doubt.

Will there be job gains? In some sectors, certainly.

Working less and maintaining wages? The possible and necessary horizon.

The *reduction of working hours*, besides being a basic principle for the emancipation of the working class, would reduce the production of goods and the saturation of markets. What is the sense, in social and environmental terms, of overproduction? The only sense is purely the pursuit of economic profit for a few who care nothing about what happens to the rest of society or to future generations.

Adjusting production to social needs, within

the strict framework of the planet's biophysical limits and in the context of adapting to already irreversible environmental changes, is an unpostponable and urgent necessity that cannot be postponed.

And is this compatible in a capitalist system where the core is the free market, a system based precisely on infinite growth? Clearly not. Social environmentalism has clearly and forcefully assumed *that this system is not compatible with life*. Now it is up to the left to assume that either there is a change of system from the perspective of degrowth, planning from the public and the commons, with the redistribution of wealth, radical democratisation and guaranteeing the protection of the social majority and especially the most vulnerable, or it will be capital that will design this degrowth, on the shoulders of neoliberal, xenophobic and racist ideologies, *guaranteeing the status quo of those who already own practically everything* and leaving the rest in the gutter.

Or, to put it another way, either we decline together or we will decline separately.

What do we need to address the economic, social and environmental paradigm shift that we urgently need to address?

To do so, we need policies that are different from those that have been offered by the more or less green policies of capitalism with a friendly face, but which *is nothing more than green makeup of the usual policies of competition and growth*. We need courageous public and common policies that lead us to redistribute wealth through environmental taxes, to plan the necessary industrial reconversion. We also need radically different policies on transport, public services, production-distribution-consumption... radically different. The key is to produce what we need as a society, with the social majority prioritising what we need, abandoning once and for all the market dogma of inventing new needs in order to produce more.

This is fundamental, and we must do it with a very clear democratic vocation: this planning must be done not only for, but also by society



itself. And here, the role and responsibility of the people is indisputable: *who, how, when and how much we decrease will have to be meticulously planned* by policies made by the class that will first and foremost suffer the consequences of climate change and the reduction of resources. Assuming furthermore that the changes will have to be rooted.

A society based on a different model of economic and labour relations. Adjusting uses to the carrying capacity of the system, while meeting the needs of our society: here and now, there and tomorrow.

When Karl Marx wrote the famous phrase “capitalism carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction”, he was not thinking of the situation of ecological and social collapse we are facing right now. Although we have to

recognise that few phrases say so much in so little. This system, based on the exploitation of the working class, on the appropriation of women’s bodies and time and on the absolute depredation of natural resources, based also on infinite growth in a finite world, carries, in itself, the germ of destruction.

The urgent thing now is to design a socialism that carries, within itself, the germ of a future without an expiry date.

*Eva García Sempere is responsible for environmentalism in Izquierda Unida (Spain).*

# **Materials**

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## A “Red-Green Manifesto” for Hungary

In Hungary, left-wing organisations critical of the system have responded to the deepening social and political crisis by formulating common goals that could form the basis of a coalition against the current system.

The possibility of a left-green coalition is particularly important at a time when the parliamentary opposition, dominated by neo-liberal policies, has entered into an electoral alliance with a powerful far-right party.

The future lies in building a unity against exclusion, exploitation and hatred that can tackle the ecological and social crisis at the same time.

The manifesto is open. We are looking for applications from organisations as well as from individuals.

The document in Hungarian is here: <http://www.amiidonk.hu/elemzes/voros-zold-kialtvany/> (Attila Vajnai)

### Red-Green Manifesto

In order to change the political regime established after the restoration of capitalism and especially that of Orbán, a strong coalition of the left and the greens must be created in Hungary.

A large part of Hungarian society is bankrupt and has no perspective in front of it. The Coronavirus epidemic has brought to the surface long-standing tragedies for which all post-regime change governments are jointly responsible. Millions of workers and all those trying to provide for their children face insecurity, health and social insecurity, and are completely unprepared for the effects of the coming climate and ecological disaster. Our society has already been shattered by regime change, and the slavish capitalism of the semi-peripheral countries leaves the population

totally at the mercy of both the tyrannical state and inhuman market forces. It is precisely in the wake of the suffering of the population that the Orbán regime was able to emerge. All the parliamentary opposition parties that are preparing to replace Orbán’s extreme right-wing regime are seeking to curry favour - not with the working people - but with the middle classes, the relatively affluent “middle” and, of course, with the politically connected entrepreneurs.

Their political objective is practically limited to a change of roles. However, this will not be enough to overturn the system.

We believe that only a left critical of the system can change this situation. The losers of the capitalist regime must also be contacted and mobilised in the electoral struggle! But the real left, which should be able to do this, is paralysed on all sides. The main reason for this aggression is that their anti-capitalist and capital-critical approach - without which the politics of the 21st century is unthinkable - is not tolerated by either the liberals or the conservatives.

We commit ourselves to represent the concept of the left in the future coalition. The organisations listed below have drawn up this red-green manifesto because they know how necessary critical left-wing thinking is to be able to overthrow the current regime. We need to put an end to both the Orbán regime and the neoliberal Hungary of 1990-2010!

Some important aspects of our main demands:

- Housing and social security must be a fundamental and enforceable constitutional right! For a decent life, water, heating and electricity must be guaranteed!
- A programme must be developed that commits to saving people from the ecological and climate crisis, with special attention to the poorest.
- Extreme poverty must be ended.

# Materials

- A basic minimum income must be introduced, based on the Spanish model.
- End energy poverty.
- Create sustainable local communities. Promote the creation of agricultural cooperatives while maintaining small family farms.

Our long-term objectives are as follows:

- A decisive transformation of the ownership system, favouring collective ownership. Public services must not be privatised under any circumstances!
- The state must represent the interests of workers in relation to capital, not the other way round! People first, not profits!
- We must put an end to large-scale land ownership.

We want to create a left movement that solves both social and environmental problems! A movement that coherently represents the interests of workers, precarious people, the unemployed, slum dwellers, pensioners. A system that overthrows the corrupt and oligarchic system of Orbán!  
We call on left-wing organisations, groups and

individuals to join us!

Contact:

Zalka Vera E-mail: zalkavera@gmail.com Tel: (1) 3778182 Mobile: (70) 5854246

Signatory organisations:

Attac Magyarország Egyesület

Magyarországi Munkáspárt 2006 - Európai Baloldal

Magyar Ellenállók és Antifasiszták Szövetsége (MEASZ)

Marx Károly Társaság

Baloldali Jövő Fórum

Nepi Front

Baloldali Közösség (marxista platform)

Eszmélet folyóirat szerkesztősége

Szervezők a Baloldalért (Szab)

Magyar Szociális Fórum (Mszf)

Latin-Amerika Társaság

*Budapest, 16 November 2020*

# Capitalism's Deadly Threat

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