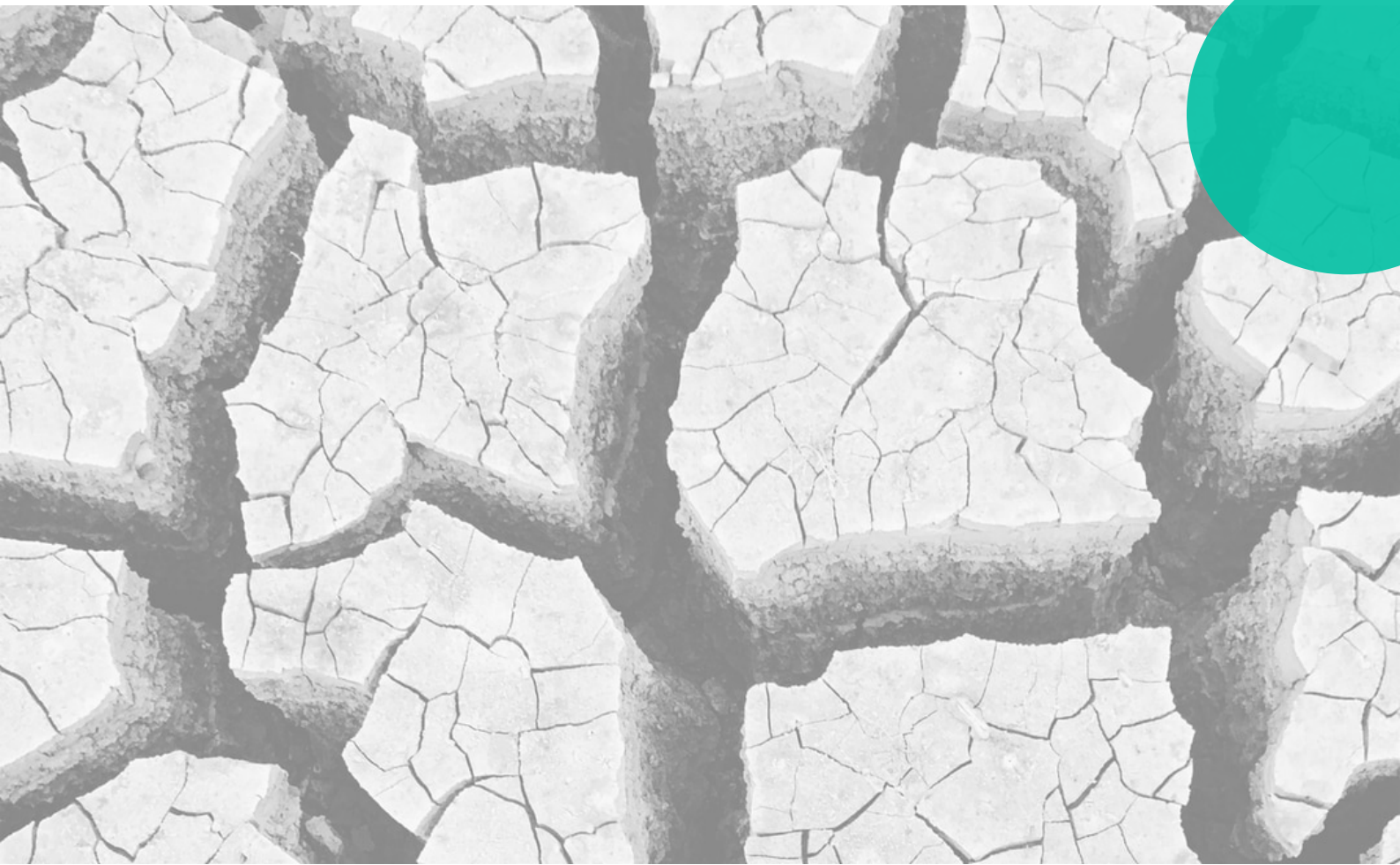



‘Deal or no deal?’

Exploring the limits and potential of Green New Deals



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Executive summary

Climate breakdown continues at pace despite unprecedented levels of popular support for measures to address it. Fossil fuel pollution is responsible for more than 8 million¹ premature deaths annually, while warming has heightened² the likelihood of major hurricane, as the world grapples with extraordinary heat waves, devastating droughts and deadly wildfires. Inherently linked to the inequality crisis, the causes and distributional impacts of the climate crisis are unevenly felt.

These harms are not inevitable, however. They are determined by the distribution of power and ownership across societies. In other words, the harms of climate breakdown are to a large extent the consequence of how powerful actors have worked to organise our societies.

Popular understandings of climate breakdown unfortunately often portray it as an issue separate from the wider social and political context. This means that climate breakdown is seen as distinct from the related issues of migration-related harm, poverty, and inequality. In this way, capitalists have been able to present 'solutions' that do not require any fundamental shifts in forms of social organisation.

In the global North, 'Green New Deals' (GNDs) have emerged as one of the most prominent policy frames for addressing climate breakdown. These have seen support from a range of unlikely political bedfellows, such as the US Democrats and the UK Conservatives. While environmentalists might take heart from this apparent support, the breadth of support suggests a need for greater scrutiny of the proposals flying under the GND banner. GNDs that fail to address the fundamental questions of power, ownership and control will also fail to adequately ameliorate the injustices of climate breakdown. This is because a preference for highly technical, emissions-focussed policies does nothing to address the forms of social organisation that have emerged from historical racialised patterns of ownership that cast a long shadow. These patterns have contributed to causing the crises we now face. Forms of social organisation will therefore need to be radically remade if we are to properly address climate breakdown as just one among several unfolding crises.

Redistribution and repair are not just material or financial, but also about the transfer of power and the democratisation of ownership and control. The concept of racial capitalism helps us to better appreciate the connections between the neglect of lives of people of colour globally and the social relations of climate breakdown. Only by acknowledging these connections do we stand any chance of building the foundations for genuinely transformative Green New Deals.

For these reasons, the report recommends that GNDs must include: provisions for reparative justice to build efforts towards the global redistribution of power, wealth, and resources; target racial capitalism as the structuring logic of contemporary crises; policies and practices that move beyond imperial and colonial underpinnings, including provisions for reparative justice; and they must be globally and democratically oriented, harnessing grassroots power and scaling power building.

Introduction

Green New Deals have seen a rise in their political popularity of late. They are in favour – at least notionally – across an array of otherwise unlikely actors. The less reactionary of the two parties of US capital, Joe Biden's Democrats³ have suggested they may advance a version of one. Other improbable advocates include the World Bank⁴ and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁵ Here in the UK, the party of fossil capital,⁶ the Conservatives have been rehashing former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's phraseology of a 'green industrial revolution'.⁷

That these disparate figures have adopted some of the rhetorical and, at times, policy, flourishes of the GND, is instructive. Firstly, it tells us that the framing, as so many of us have argued for years, is one of the few green-red presentations that have the potential to capture mass appeal. Secondly, it serves as a warning that GND rhetoric can be neatly paired with reactionary policies in service to a proposed 'greening' of capitalism from the right. Such a pairing would do nothing to address the intersecting injustices and power imbalances that create crises for so many in the world. To take this warning seriously, then, entails recognising several important factors, three of which form the basis of this speculative report.

Firstly, to acknowledge the entanglement of justice-concerns requires acknowledging that 'no country is an island' - least of all those island nations most exposed to climate breakdown. This means that it is impossible to address the underlying harms of climate breakdown without also addressing, for instance, migrant rights, access to healthcare, historical harms requiring repair and the necessity of abolishing detention. Any GND that tolerates or, worse, reproduces the imperial and colonial underpinnings of contemporary social relations will fail to fully grasp the structural root causes of climate breakdown.⁸ These root causes cannot be separated from the wider interconnected nature of contemporary forms of social organisation, such as the models of ownership and the distribution of power resulting from historically oppressive social relations.

Consider the example of an agricultural labourer living in a formerly colonised country. Imagine their crops have failed due to one of any number of recent record-breaking droughts attributed to climate breakdown induced by fossil fuel-driven and capitalist modes of social organisation. Their country's welfare services were decimated by IMF-mandated cuts, already underfunded because the wealth needed to support them was instead used to fuel fossil-based industrial expansion in an imperial centre. The domestic economy is floundering due to asymmetrical trade relationships, which see rare earth minerals used in the 'green' industrial revolution sold at rock bottom prices, with profits syphoned off by local elites, but costs borne by the dispossessed. They face conflict emerging from a squeeze on food prices and are left with little choice but to uproot and attempt to travel to fortress Europe. Having survived the crossing in the Mediterranean where many of their companions drowned, they are arrested and thrown in indefinite detention without trial merely for the 'crime' of having sought a more secure livelihood. Despite a Covid-19 outbreak tearing through the prison, they are denied access to the healthcare that would offer them not a substantially better quality of life, but a chance of survival.⁹

At a recent talk, I flippantly remarked that one positive outcome of the reductionist focusses on climate breakdown, largely in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, might be that at least migrant detention centres could be powered by green energy. I did not consider that the energy infrastructure itself might actually become entwined in the physical processes of incarceration, and yet we have reports in the UK of the Home Office exploring decommissioned oil rigs as places to process migrants.¹⁰

It seems harder, considering this example, *not* to see how deeply entangled the ways in which our societies are with questions of justice. To begin to have a hope of success (understood as globally minimising the harms of climate impacts and arresting the advance of climate and environmental breakdown) GNDs must thus be global in their scope, including policies and practices that fundamentally shift the ways in which our societies are organised. When naming the characteristic forms of social organisation dominant in the contemporary moment, we could do worse than utilise the explanatory power of concepts of ‘racial capitalism.’ While it is beyond the scope of this short piece to offer a comprehensive accounting of these discussions, it is worth noting how the work of Cedrick Robinson, Black Marxists¹¹ and feminist scholars of social reproduction¹² has signalled the explanatory power of the concept of racial capitalism. Crucially, racial capitalism involves an acknowledgement that “the development of race is not parallel, or extraneous to, but in fact somehow internal to the development of capitalism, and in ways that cannot simply be reduced to class”.¹³ Indeed, “capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of “racial capitalism” dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.”¹⁴ Neglecting these integral characteristics of capitalism in our analysis of responses to climate breakdown leaves our responses severely hamstrung.

Secondly, calls for one or another GND have gained considerable prominence in global Northern activist and policymaking contexts in the face of rapidly unfolding climate chaos. There are significant differences across versions of GNDs being proposed, however. Some versions merely seek to secure present forms of social organisation, and their toxic distributions of ownership, into the future.¹⁵ Others are much more attentive to the central fact that climate breakdown needs to be properly understood as a consequence of global systems of exploitation and exchange with their origins in the violent and extractive colonial processes that made the modern world.¹⁶ Any global GND will only address the root causes of the problems it seeks to address if and when it includes measures to address racial capitalism as the structuring logic of contemporary societies. Evidence of this is available if we examine, for example, the global character of energy production, consumption, and distribution systems. These must be remade in a reparatory way to undo historical harms. Connections must therefore be drawn between the neglect of the lives of people of colour globally and the social relations of climate breakdown. The point of drawing these connections is to better account for the entanglement of racial capitalist logics with the causes of climate breakdown.

Finally, attempts by the right to co-opt the GND or similar frames indicate the potential popularity of GNDs in comparatively wealthy countries. To garner backing for what a GND must be – that is, one that addresses the injustices at the heart of climate breakdown – however, we need to resist co-option by building grassroots power around and support for: political education; movement building; and grassroots resourcing. It is only by building community power that a more radical remaking of the world can be achieved. This is a particularly important point to note in the field of climate breakdown, in which there has too often been a tendency to

seek 'the best' analysis of the crisis in the hope of winning over policymakers, other analysts, or an imagined public. Such attempts too frequently fail to recognise that it is not for want of comprehension that the climate crisis is increasingly locked in; it is because of material interests of the wealthy and asymmetries of power. Hence, by building community power, we are better able to directly demonstrate both the benefits and feasibility of sustainable alternatives.

1 GND, Ownership and Social Organisation

Structures of ownership in the contemporary world are profoundly and irreconcilably shaped by historically oppressive social relations. These relations stretch zombie-like from the past, contaminating current configurations with their decay and desolation. This is the world within which GNDs are being proposed, in predominantly financially secure countries, and in predominantly nationalist terms.

Several movement-oriented thinkers, actors and scholars have identified the myopia of such approaches; as Asad Rehman, Director of War on Want, put it: "A 'green new deal' in the mould of current thinking will lead to a new form of green colonialism that will continue to sacrifice the people of the global south to maintain our broken economic model."¹⁷ Others have correctly warned of the GND increasingly representing all things to all people, and when parties across the political spectrum back it - in the frame if not always in policy - it becomes increasingly important to interrogate its content.¹⁸

The fact that Caribbean and Central American countries such as Jamaica,¹⁹ Guatemala, and Honduras were hit so badly by Storms Zeta, Eta and Iota²⁰ is only partially a consequence of location. More salient, yet frequently ignored in the global Northern foci of GNDs, are the patterns of ownership that have left those countries most exposed and with an inadequate share of those resources required to better weather the storm.

These socially patterned vulnerabilities are apparent to many internationalist global Northern climate justice organisers. Those working in the Climate Justice Coalition, Wretched of the Earthclimate strikers, War on Want and Leap, for example, have all centred this in their calls for climate solutions.²¹ Likewise, the centrality of a global, or at least international, perspective is increasingly acknowledged in accounts of GNDs emerging in this milieu.²²

Given the oversized historical responsibility of countries such as the UK and others with high carbon emissions and colonial debts, addressing domestic emissions is of

paramount importance. The need to reduce emissions must not come at the expense of a more fundamental overhaul of social organisation, however. All GNDs must include broad, internationally redistributive efforts.²³ Without these, the injustices inherent to current structures of ownership, as well as the capacities to respond to - and culpability for causing - climate breakdown, will be further ossified by the very responses claiming to deal with it.²⁴

is not by necessity or inevitability, but by design. The configuration of the global economic and political power structures is such that they systematically produce and reproduce vulnerabilities as a condition of their functioning. The reasons why this is the case hav²⁵

Beyond the ethical s the more pragmatic concern over how effective GNDs will be if they do not attend to the uneven ownership and consequent inequalities in power, emissions and resource use strangling our world. Until and unless there are global responses to what is a profoundly global set of crises, any efforts will at best merely delay or displace harms. Naïve attempts to fortify domestic borders and placate domestic populations will be undermined endlessly rebounding boomerangs as those condemned to apocalypse outside of the fortress will do all they must in pursuit of survival.

Questions remain over the validity of making climate policy from the Global North. Indeed, what is fundamentally required is policy and practice developed from the bottom-up, prioritising the knowledge and power of those it will affect most immediately, be they workers in fossil fuel industries or working-class people on the sharp edges of climate failure across both the Global North and South. There is an inherent limitation in writing this report that its very framing rests upon a worldview and scholarly approach at odds with the ways of being and knowing extant in those parts of the world on the frontlines of climate violence. As such, this report can only contribute partially to the process of challenging the approaches emerging in the locations in which I am based. I can only hope that in recognising this contradiction, I will be better able to leverage the resources, material and otherwise, of my particular location in the service of dismantling those harmful structures themselves.

To be faithful to this claim, policies and practices that move beyond the imperial and colonial are considered here by addressing the interconnected nature of contemporary forms of social organisation. Such an approach must also attend to the models of ownership and power distribution that result from historically oppressive social relations. In the next section, these will be explored further with reference to the explanatory power of the notion of racial capitalism.

2 GNDs against racial capitalism

Racial capitalism as a concept has rightly experienced a surge of attention over recent years. As noted above, it is beyond the scope of this short piece to offer a comprehensive account of these discussions. Briefly considering the concept as part of the discussion of GNDs

proves fruitful, however. This is because too many GNDs shy away from reckoning with the dynamics of either race or capitalism. The key argument advanced here is that it is impossible to fully comprehend the root causes of the climate – and related - crises without acknowledging racial capitalism as the structuring logic underpinning contemporary ownership structures.

To take one example of its application, Gargi Bhattacharyya identifies how under colonial expansion: “(some) human populations were made irrelevant to the processes of economic development, displaced physically and symbolically, allowed only a sub-human existence at the edge of worlds built on expropriated land.”²⁶ In this way, Bhattacharyya helps us to acknowledge and understand the ways in which people can be rendered disposable, surplus to the requirements of capital - a process all too apparent in the era of deadly storms and calls for Black Lives (to) Matter. Reading the climate crisis through racial capitalism also helps clarify how myopic efforts to undo emissions will still leave vast swathes of the world’s population expendable, their environments already having been ravaged and sacrificed, expelled from any vision of a future that is liveable.

An understanding of racial capitalism also helps to clarify why a myopic focus on absolute emissions misdirects our attention from questions of social organisation, such as the role of the distribution of wealth and power, in causing the crisis. The focus on emissions, and the technologies and techniques of their production, while necessary, is far from *sufficient*. Its amnesia about social relations borne of racial capitalism risks depoliticising climate breakdown, treating it as ahistorical.²⁷ The ongoing failure of climate politics in the face of overwhelming scientific consensus tells us that something more is at play than simply a lack of the application of expertise. Paying closer attention to the influence of racial capitalism in structuring the contemporary social order sheds light on this situation.

Further evidence of the dangers of focusing on questions of technique rather than ownership is apparent in the robust critiques of ‘green’ energy supply chains.²⁸ The latter has been shown at times to further the marginalisation of indigenous communities, further extending the twisted logics of imperialism but under the guise of GNDs.²⁹ These models of ‘green’ growth depend upon processes of extraction and racial stratification that are central to the enrichment of the global North under a form of capitalism reliant on colonial and imperialist relationships.³⁰ See, for instance, Elon Musk’s recent crowing over the benefits due to Tesla following the coup in Bolivia.³¹ Tesla’s electric vehicles depend on lithium, of which Bolivia is a leading exporter. Such practices mirror the colonialist capture of the raw materials of the colonial period, such as cotton from India, rubber from Congo, and sugar from the Caribbean. Recognising this allows us to interrogate the efforts of any GND in terms of whether it aims to transform the forms of social organisation underpinning these processes of enrichment.

In doing so, we become better able to recognise the continuities that exist between the genocides of the colonial era and those unfolding as part of climate breakdown. The perverse paradox which must be identified here is that the same systems that created this crisis, those of a racial capitalist global order, will render the same countries whose elites created it, and whose broader populations have indirectly benefitted from it,³² better able to weather its storms. It is for this reason that GNDs must encompass globally redistributive and reparative efforts.³³ Redistribution and repair are not just material or financial but also about the transfer of power and the democratisation of ownership and control. Otherwise, the same, or equivalent, imbalances are liable to emerge in the wake of the current ones.

The notion of racial capitalism thus helps us to understand the connections that must be drawn between the neglect of the lives of people of colour globally, and the social relations of climate breakdown. This understanding can then be put into the service of properly addressing the crises' root causes. If we understand mass incarceration and deaths in the Mediterranean as a consequence of racial capitalism, then we can understand the need for carbon abolitionism.³⁴

3 Past the poverty of timid approaches: building power for the GNDs we need

3.1 The self-defeating limitations of existing approaches

Many of us would welcome the silver bullet of a climate solution that allowed us to quickly deal with breakdown and move on, without changing relations of power and ownership in any way. This is especially likely to be true for those of us better insulated from the already unfolding impacts of climate and environmental crises. It is also likely to be true for those who stand to lose out during any dismantling of the harmful ownership structures precipitating the climate crisis. The allure of such wishful sentiments helps to explain the widespread support for relatively reformist, and thus ineffectual, GNDs in the global North.³⁵ Aside from the privilege of such hopes for continuity convey they fail to recognise the need for changes as outlined above.

An expansive if US-centric approach can be seen in the American Left publication Jacobin's by-line for its GND series, which frames the GND as an agenda beyond legislation: 'The Green New Deal can't just be a bill or two. It needs to be the framework for politics for the next few decades.'³⁶ To go beyond legislation, we need first to articulate better understandings of climate breakdown. These must acknowledge the wider factors that condition how societies are organised - what sociologists refer to as structure, such as the patterns of ownership outlined above. By challenging inhumane or otherwise harmful social relations, such as those of unequal ownership, we can be much more confident of building popular support for the collective responses required to address the root causes of the crisis.

Building power fit for the scale of change we require is hampered by the assertion that - in the face of climate apocalypse - all and any compromises must be made. This excessive

commitment to compromise inevitably leads to the type of inherently self-defeating frame as Extinction Rebellion's (XR) infamous call for climate action to exist 'Beyond Politics', whatever that means.³⁷ We are told not to be 'unrealistic' in our ambitions for radical change to address the unfolding crises, and that calls to overturn capitalism are unrealistic and therefore a distraction. In many ways, this appears as an entirely compelling command, for who could possibly argue *against* any measures – such as carbon markets - that might in some way ameliorate this all-encompassing crisis? However, such an approach catastrophically misunderstands the character of the crises, their long histories, and their future trajectories.

This is not to say that we should inherently oppose compromise, rather that compromise should not entail accepting plans or frameworks that do not directly address the root causes of climate breakdown. This means challenging the ownership and power structures inherited from colonial-legacy fossil capitalism. As such, we must recognise that our efforts necessarily involve explicit political conflict and contrasting class interests. Indeed, others have noted the failure of efforts to garner support via a foregrounding of the 'facts' of climate breakdown, suggesting a need to move away from claims that the 'science is enough'.³⁸

Perhaps the reluctance to fully acknowledge the need for wholesale social change stems from warnings that 'negative framings' will 'turn off' potential actors, plunging us all into a pit of despair.³⁹ Warnings such as this risk treating climate breakdown as if it were disconnected from other forms of suffering; suffering which in reality, shares a common cause. They make it harder to see the parallels between the disproportionate exposure to harm of black African people drowning in the Mediterranean,¹ mudslides in Rwanda, flooding in New Orleans, toxic pollution along the Mississippi's 'Cancer Alley'⁴⁰, or oil spills in Canadian indigenous territories and cyclones in Mozambique.⁴¹ Warnings about 'negative framings' operate according to a logic of 'methodological whiteness'⁴² whereby being white is taken for granted and projected onto others for whom nothing less than radical change is required. Attempts to avoid 'alarmist' or 'crisis' narratives risk failing to see the global connections essential to any response to the systems causing climate breakdown.⁴³ Try telling those experiencing the present apocalypse at the hands of carbon capitalism, or those who survived past apocalypses under imperial expansion, that to warn of crises to come is 'demobilising' and 'scaremongering.'

Calls for compromise to combat climate catastrophe are compelling to some. Yet they not only fail to address past and present harms but also risk opening the door to even more exploitative social formations in the future. Back in 2008, as part of a UK Government 'future-mapping' exercise, the late sociologist John Urry and his peers noted the possibility of a 'digital panopticon' as being a plausible response to depoliticised (my phrasing, not his) calls for carbon reduction.⁴⁴ This future would see citizens monitored by carbon-surveillance systems that curtailed consumption. Ideas of personal carbon budgets, married with the kinds of mass surveillance pioneered by tech-giants, and China's 'social credit system', hint at the realisation of such systems.⁴⁵ Yet, as the less sanguine among us have noted regarding the expanded police and state powers ushered in by coronavirus lockdowns, the risks of extended state power – however justified they may temporarily appear - are heavy to bear, and invariably fall on certain communities disproportionately.⁴⁶

Whether or not we permit states further authoritarian powers to curtail and police the transition to a decarbonised economy, the measures required to arrest - let alone offer redress for - unfolding climate and environmental crises are unavoidably drastic and wide-ranging. By

many measures, the UK is one of the top-10 historical emitters of toxic greenhouse gasses.⁴⁷ To meet its 'fair share' of emissions reductions, then, the UK must go far beyond 'net zero' emissions by 2030 domestically. The Climate FairShares initiative has calculated that the UK needs to cut greenhouse gas emissions by a total of 200 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, through reparative efforts, such as The scale of the change required, is therefore – exempting a currently non-existent technofix – impossible and vastly greater than compromisers⁴⁸

3.2 If not that, what? Building grassroots power for the GNDs we need

The most compelling alternative approach is to consider how best to build power from the bottom up. Reheated centrism seems unlikely to garner the support of those who it has consistently failed to empower.⁴⁹ We will be much better aided in the process of securing popular power if we envisage within our GNDs a deeper and more profound – and hopeful – set of shifts such as those identified above. We must leave aside the idea that it is simply with sleek policy design that governments and policymakers will be won over to the cause. And we must start not with the question of what is *possible*, though of course, we cannot afford to abandon that vision, but of what is *necessary*.

Indeed, economist Mariana Mazzucato speaks of coming tipping points under which 'protecting the future of civilization will require dramatic interventions' akin to the Covid-19 lockdowns we have encountered this year.⁵⁰ The social theorist Andreas Malm makes a similar claim about the extent of state action required to implement restrictions to arrest the pandemic.⁵¹ In Malm's account, the scale of mobilisation required to curtail a vast array of material production and consumption, particularly in fossil fuel use, is almost unfathomable. Such austere accounts cut against the techno-utopianism underpinning much GND rhetoric.²

These accounts force us to consider the thorny question of exactly *how* it is that working classes can build counter power to implement such a regime.⁵² At the same time, the current global trajectory is nothing short of catastrophic.⁵³ Without a drastic change of course profound suffering is certain. Considering this, an honest approach to reorganising social life in the face of increasing climate-related catastrophes is that of 'survival communism.' This concept is akin to the Out of the Woods Collective's notion of 'disaster communism', which 'emphasises the revolutionary process of developing our collective capacity to endure and flourish..' 'Survival communism', contends that it is only by holding in common the material and cultural resources required to respond to the unfolding catastrophe that we stand any chance of remaking the decaying world in a more hospitable image.⁵⁴ While 'communism' as a frame tends to elicit strong reactions in mainstream media and policy, such an approach is not, in fact, particularly far-fetched if considered alongside the barbaric history of racial capitalist colonial expansion and genocide. As noted above, those wretched of the earth who have faced the sharp edges of these processes have often had their efforts at building meaningful lives limited to questions of survival.

While rejecting the resignation that too often accompanies apocalyptic thinking, we need to take seriously the claim that so many are already living through intolerable crises only likely to worsen in the immediate future.⁵⁵ In doing this, we must also acknowledge the continuities between these climate catastrophes and those that have unfolded because of the harmful ownership structures inherited from colonial-capitalism. These extractive, rather than collective, models of ownership undermine our capacities to survive - in any meaningful sense of the word - the unfolding apocalypses. We have seen all too starkly during this pandemic the consequences and costs of highly atomised, unequal societies. Part of why the pandemic has had such a deadly toll in nations like the UK is precisely because the collective institutions and shared forms of ownership accompanying them have been systematically undermined through an attack on public and common assets. As Rebecca Solnit demonstrates, the privatisation of common goods, services and spaces inherently undermines the capacity for a society to survive catastrophes.⁵⁶ There is no point in the journey of climate breakdown at which it is 'too late' for us to insist upon, and build, these collective survival strategies. If anything, the increased prevalence of disasters only strengthens the need for social reorganisation.⁵⁷

In the words of Cooperation Jackson co-founder, Kali Akuno, "It's Eco-Socialism [/ survival communism] or Death."⁵⁸ Though I would add that the route to death could be paved with eco-fascist tiles.⁵⁹ Moreover, we could just as well see both survival communism and unconscionable levels of suffering and loss of life. It is crucial not to pull any punches with respect to the future that awaits us; doing otherwise is not only dishonest but also undermines our capacities to organise at the scales required and with the measures required. There is a need to grieve for the coming heartache, but it becomes, if not easier, then more familiar, to do so when we have also grieved for the losses that have been and are ongoing. How, then, are we to garner the support and, crucially, power, necessary to secure the radical social changes demanded in the face of this crisis?

It is difficult to discuss these themes without resorting to platitudes and generalities. Nonetheless, one thing is certain: the main work to be done in fighting for the future is the unglamorous slog of collective organising at the grassroots level. Perhaps conveniently for this author, it is beyond the scope of this piece to outline the specifics of what movement building could and should look like. There are many others who have considered this extensively.⁶⁰ Craig Gent, for instance, rightly identifies community organising as offering one of few compelling blueprints for building solidarity and material power for the working classes in the face of attacks on our survival.⁶¹

In relation to GNDs and climate breakdown here in the UK, we have seen the efforts of Labour for a GND, XR, and youth climate strikers. All three cases demonstrate that is no easy path to popular support. LGND maintain transformative visions of GNDs in spite of the apparent loss of support that comes because of change at the highest levels of the parliamentary Labour Party.⁶² XR has been widely criticised for their forms and methods of organising, both in good,⁶³ and less good⁶⁴ faith. Climate strikers, meanwhile, face the ire of right-wing culture warriors for merely voicing the modest demand of a liveable planet.⁶⁵ Indeed, as Jeremy Gilbert warns,⁶⁶ the 'bozo-right' will endeavour to undermine the real meaning of the GND among the potential base who stand to gain the most from it, and whose support is necessary for any success – that is, the global working, and excluded-from-working classes⁶⁷ organic leaders in the hearts of communities everywhere to engage in mutual political education. Building (local) grassroots power must be accompanied by nurturing better, more critical, and more global understandings

of climate breakdown. Doing this will help to garner the necessary support for how expansive meaningful GNDs must be. Optimism should come from the fact that global, or people's GNDs⁶⁸ would benefit more people than those whose power they would undermine.

Specifically, an appropriately expansive analysis of the forms of social organisation that are causing climate breakdown is needed to properly ground calls for collective action in response. This means a clear articulation of the causes of climate breakdown as continuous with the causes of political powerlessness and the uneven ownership of wealth and resources. In doing so, we will be better able to craft a response to climate breakdown that is not distinct from other existential issues in people's lives, making it much easier to build an effective collective response by rightly advocating not just actions to reduce carbon, but a remaking of whole systems and structures of ownership within society that shape people's lives.

The nature of these changes would allow for more meaningful and fulfilling lives for the vast majority of the world's population in the face of climate breakdown, and as such, are likely to be attractive to those communities whose power we must realise. Moreover, the work of migrant rights campaigning, union and worker organising, and battles against gender-based or ableist oppression can, within this framework, be recognised as all targeting the same fundamental questions of social and economic organisation albeit in nuanced and not identical ways. As Brand puts it, "a crucial requirement for the left is to create a third movement of global solidarity that copes with multiple crises by overcoming the imperial mode of living".⁶⁹

3

Dealing with the myriad oppressions and harms meted out in society requires predominantly *social* – not technological or individualist – solutions. The most significant barrier to a democratic and inclusive social reorganisation of all kinds is capitalist social relations and the power structures, culture, ideology and material distribution cemented therein.

11

4 Paving a Path for Reparative Green New Deals

The aim here has been to consider the ways in which GNDs would need to be formulated if they were to seriously engage with the root causes of the harms associated with climate breakdown. While the ideas advanced here should not be read as any kind of final position, the hope is that by being more honest about the scale of change required, and by thinking through how widespread, popular support – and power - might be built, the analysis will contribute to the efforts of those struggling against fossil capitalism and its origins in racial-capitalist systems

of oppression.

Activism can be exhilarating, just as easily demoralising, and conducive to the cynicism that readily undermines one's motivation to engage in the mundane work of having face-to-face conversations with people with whom we may disagree. We urgently need to win over the cynics in our own heads, while simultaneously winning over those around us. The scale of change required perhaps makes it hard for many people to believe that what is necessary is possible, but we have reached a point whereby there is no alternative but the radical alternative. We must at once do everything we can, while steadfastly acknowledging that without drastic change, we will be unlikely to, even moderately, forestall the unfolding catastrophes.

In an era where publics are increasingly frustrated by the staid status quo, it is even less prudent to pretend that anything other than radical social reorganisation is necessary. There is a lot to lose with promises of steadying the ship on course, but clearly, plenty to gain by coming clean about the opportunities and necessities of wholesale reorganisation. Support for popular solidarity with the wretched of the earth demands grassroots popular education on an unprecedented scale and in a way that meets the public where they are, while not losing sight of the vital need for social reorganisation and a recognition of the climate crisis's basis in racial capitalism.

GNDs must thus be developed in such a way as to include measures to address the fundamental root causes of climate breakdown. They must go beyond a necessary focus on greenhouse gasses, towards the essential work of targeting the forms of social organisation responsible for climate crisis. To properly recognise the global causes of climate breakdown, then, GNDs developed in the global North must include provisions for reparative justice and efforts towards the global redistribution of power, wealth, and resources. There is a range of ways in which this redistribution can be achieved, but this must go beyond merely transferring technology and finance toward efforts to undo the corrosive effects of unevenly distributed power and ownership as reinforced through both financial markets and bodies of 'global governance' such as the UN.

Secondly, Green New Deals must target racial capitalism. Global Green New Deals will only address root causes if they include reference to, and measures to address, racial capitalism as the structuring logic of contemporary crises. Only by doing so can the policies and practices of Green New Deals move beyond the imperial and colonial underpinnings by addressing the interconnected nature of contemporary forms of social organisation.

Lastly, GNDs require grassroots movement- and power-building. To have any hope of being successful we need to build grassroots power and support for the above understandings of what a Green New Deal must be via political education; movement building; and grassroots resourcing, as opposed to seeking to have the 'best analyses to win over policymakers/other analysts. There is no shortcut for building the movements required to secure our survival – it requires grassroots community organising with realistically expansive definitions of the crises we face. In building grassroots power, climate activism needs to recognise its shared goals with organisations like Black Lives Matter (BLM) and support those actions as part of a climate justice agenda.

The need for GNDs is not merely a need for different forms of energy production, distribution and consumption, or some other technocratic targeting of greenhouse gasses. Rather, GNDs will only represent meaningful opportunities in so long as they acknowledge the

need to remake social relations and ownership models in line with the ecologies of reparatory justice to begin the work of redressing deeply embedded systems of harm. This remaking is required to address and overturn the historical processes that have structured the harmful and ecologically moribund making of the contemporary world. Holistic versions of the GND in these global terms will allow for the unpicking of harmful social relations that have given rise to the oppressions challenged by BLM and others.

There remains a need to consider why any GND must encompass these reparatory and abolitionist impulses. It is only by doing this, at both a local and global scale, that any GND stands a chance of, firstly, generating the levels of support required for their implementation, and, secondly, addressing the root causes of climate breakdown through understanding them as embedded in global systems mediated through local processes, which are themselves the legacy of centuries of harmful world-making.

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