

DEALING

with

DISTRACTIONS

Confronting
Green Capitalism
& in Copenhagen
& beyond





“It is a testament to the horror, the boundless horror of capitalism, that after decades of its triumph, of changelessness, of the end of history, of a famine of other possible futures even in the minds of children, that those of us alive today who will see this world change forever cannot count ourselves lucky. We stand at the brink, and all the petty squabbles, all political programs and narrow affinities fall into insignificance.”

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Dealing with Distractions

The apocalypse looms like a dark tempest on the horizon. Things are serious now. If we are to get through this Crisis we have to forget all old grudges and past wrongs, leave behind all dissent and rebellious activity, and gather in support of our leaders. "Come," they smile at us in the green-shimmering full-page advertisements from a future where new technology and new markets have saved the planet, "only together can we solve this".

But wait a minute... Their proposal for how we are to be saved from ruin seems sickeningly familiar. Haven't we heard all this before? What is it they are hiding? What is it they are trying to distract us from?

As the faith in the proposed future crumbles, an increasingly clear line is becoming visible between those that believe that a solution is possible within the capitalist system, and those that don't. While the world is shaken by crises, a growing number of people on the earth can be found on the side of those doubting the current structures of power and capital. When this zine goes to press, preparations are in full swing on both sides for the next big event in this drama: The 15th Conference Of the Parties of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change, better known as the COP15.

The crowd preparing to oppose the summit is a diverse bunch. The Climate Crisis seems to have opened the possibility of uniting a broad range of struggles against capitalism: from indigenous peoples to workers unions, from the landless to the european autonomous, from climate campers to youth from the suburbs of the metropolis, from anti-industrialists to anarcho-syndicalists. Just as big is the scope of the strategies, tactics and dreams.

The radical class struggle movements have just recently started to join in. In spite of the division between them and the environmental oriented movements, it's getting more and more clear that whoever wants to have any influence on the upcoming development of the future needs to start addressing the topic.

By putting together this zine, we wanted to look for the connections: What common interests can we find faced with the "Climate Crisis"? How can it be understood in the context of the Capitalist system? How will the changes to the climate and the proposals at the COP15 influence our fighting and living conditions in the future? And the inevitable question: How can the devastation be stopped?

Some of these articles were written specifically for this zine, while others have been printed elsewhere. Some authors are well known, others wish to remain nameless. We hope that you find the following texts thought-provoking and inspiring.

See you in the streets!

*Love, The COP 15 zine crew. October, 2009
Cop15zine@riseup.net*



Illustration: Sara Hansson

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BEFORE THE BIG CHANGE

PETER GELDERLOOS

It is a testament to the horror, the boundless horror of capitalism, that after decades of its triumph, of changelessness, of the end of history, of a famine of other possible futures even in the minds of children, that those of us alive today who will see this world change forever cannot count ourselves lucky. We stand at the brink, and all the petty squabbles, all political programs and narrow affinities fall into insignificance. The estimates vary as to exactly when we reach the point of no return, it could be 2015, it could be 2020, but climate scientists have reached a consensus that since the Industrial Revolution humans (I would be more direct and say capitalists) have caused global surface temperatures to raise 0.7 degrees Celsius, and that at a certain point not so far off, additional global warming will trigger a number of feedback loops that will cause the global temperatures to rise even more.

Tested climate models¹ suggest that within ten years, we will have released enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to cause 20°C of warming. At that point, the melting of the polar ice caps (which currently reflect large amounts of solar radiation), the release of methane currently stored beneath the Siberian permafrost (methane is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂), the increase in atmospheric water vapor (which also acts to trap heat from the sun), and the additional release of CO₂ currently stored in the oceans as their absorption rate decreases with warming, will have a cumulative effect to raise global temperatures by five to six degrees by the end of the century. Few species alive today have survived such a hot world in the past, and we will all have to adapt or go extinct, as the oceans acidify, desert regions expand, and coastal areas flood.

There are a number of possibilities: the very best is that within the next ten years, waves of revolt overthrow the State, which is the chief defender and administrator of

the structures of fossil fuel-based capitalism; all coal power plants are shut down; all cars are taken off the road excepting perhaps a small number that can run on vegetable oil; airline travel is abolished; electricity is abandoned or produced locally with small scale renewables; agriculture transitions from the current industrial petroleum-driven variety to traditional methods or permaculture, meaning a huge portion of the human population will have to concern themselves once again with growing their community's food; and a massive amount of carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere through the reforestation of abandoned highways, commercial areas, golf courses, and other spaces, and through the rewilding of the planet's extensive commercial tree plantations (the greatest amount of carbon stored by a forest is in the layer of leaves and other organic debris on the ground, which is part and parcel with a biodiversity that does not exist in tree plantations). This is also what needs to happen if we pass the point of no return, but in that case it will be much less pleasant for all of us.

We are not faced with a collapse, but with a deepening of the misery beyond what any of us can imagine. The climate crisis will not destroy capitalism. As blind and insanely idiotic as the powerful are, they are also looking towards the future. At the recent NATO summit in Strasbourg, the world government discussed its solution to the impending disaster: militarized borders and stricter internal security measures like biometric IDs and surveillance. I don't see these as naively unrealistic non sequiters so much as codewords for the full realization of the New World Order. The powerful are well informed that a sharp decrease in agricultural productivity caused by global warming will coincide with a projected peaking of the human population at nine billion, result-

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ing in mass starvation that is predicted to claim between three and six billion lives. Already 300,000 people die every year, nearly all of them in the Global South, due to the results of climate change: desertification, droughts, more violent storms, greater spread of tropical diseases, and crop failure. Human populations are already beginning to migrate on an enormous scale in search of survival.

The NATO solution is to close the border, to seal the door of the gas chamber that now encompasses the greater part of three continents. This is the new jewel in their crown - they are planning the greatest mass murder in human history. There are already confirmed reports of killings in the desert between the US and Mexico and eerie rumours of naval boats sinking rafts full of Africans in the Mediterranean when the press isn't there to take some humanitarian photos of dramatic rescues at sea - in fact, just the reported deaths on the borders of Fortress Europe between 1988 and 2006 total 14,000. This will become policy. This will become open war. Of course, the border will not be hermetically sealed. NATO will probably maintain military colonies in key fuel- and food-producing regions, especially in areas of low population density like Saudi Arabia where control will be easier.

Domestically too their answer is already becoming visible: totalitarianism. Unintegrated immigrant populations and youth who have not yet consented to the murder of our futures present a constant internal threat to this order that has manifested in numerous revolts and insurrections, as well as countless quieter negotiations

and the creation and diffusion of new social models - I mean our protests, our social centers, our permaculture farms, hacklabs, counterinformation groups, DIY health collectives, bicycle workshops, and other self-organized projects. When coupled with a will to destroy the existing system and an attempt to overcome the separations imposed by government and media to create real solidarity, these movements evidence a superhuman optimism that may be the only hope for the future.

And it is apparent that the State feels threatened. Under the rubric of anti-terrorism, the constellation of leading governments have begun instituting systems of total control. Infiltration and provocation in anarchist groups and Muslim communities throughout the US, as well as the curtailing of gun rights and the imprisonment for up to 22 years of activists trying conscientiously to save the planet; biometric IDs across Europe; in France mandatory DNA sampling as a consequence for over a hundred criminal offenses including graffiti and illegal protest, and psychological tracking and databasing of delinquent, potentially criminal characteristics of all children from as young as three; in the UK, thousands of surveillance cameras with facial recognition and automatic license plate-scanning technology deployed across the whole of public space as well as most bars; in Germany, the criminalization of self-defense from surveillance by wearing masks in demonstrations, and the government prerogative to declare any radical political group a criminal organization and imprison anyone said to be associated with it; in Spain, the extension of the torture and high security isolation prisons long used against the Basques to anarchists and squatters; in the

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Netherlands, the installation of a new system requiring one to use a personal ID/bank card to get on or off the bus, rendering one's movements through the city trackable; and everywhere, the use of cellphones to listen to people's conversations and log people's movements.

The world governments may also try to mitigate the disaster by proliferating nuclear power plants and deploying particles in the atmosphere or orbital shields to reflect some of the sun's energy, with unknown consequences for the future, as usual.

Capital and the white supremacist states are preparing to manage the apocalypse they have brought down on all of us. We need to develop our ability to survive, undermine, and destroy them. We cannot do this alone; in fact, we must overcome the isolation they impose on those who resist. Non-integrated immigrant communities and anti-authoritarians who have been privileged with citizenship must increase communication and build networks of solidarity that overcome racism, national boundaries, and otherification, and all active people must engage in a Herculean campaign of communication with everyone outside the movement to challenge the legitimacy of the State. There is a need to remind people that the politicians and capitalists created this problem. For years, they worked hard to silence it, and they have been repressing those of us trying to do something about it. The problems of the future will be much easier if everyone feels as we do - that as the lifeboat starts to sink, those responsible should be the first to go overboard. A vital task is to intervene publicly in the discourse on terrorism, to show that we are

the people being persecuted as terrorists and the war on terror is actually a war of social control, and that the state is crying wolf and none of its security measures make us feel safe. People need to be comfortable with resistance, not with surveillance. If we can achieve this, we will have deprived the State of a tool it desperately needs to survive the coming storm.

The end result of this communication must be a consciousness that the State and capitalism are suicidally insane and a complementary desire to organize our own lives free of their management; an acknowledgement of the central role racism and colonialism and their attendant genocides have long played in this insanity; and an understanding that the earth is not a mechanical, dead agglomeration of materials and processes that exist for us to exploit but rather a living, sacred thing that gives us life and meaning, of which we are a small and dependent part. No future with the mentality of control and exploitation is possible: this mentality is responsible for enslavement, genocide, and the destruction of the planet. No peace with the State and capitalism is desirable: we are reclaiming our power to create the world we want to live in.

This is the change we face: total revolution or a new totalitarianism installed to preside over mass extinction, the murder of billions of people, and the deepening enslavement of those who by citizenship or skin color are marked for survival.

1. [HTTP://WWW.REALCLIMATE.ORG/INDEX.PHP/ARCHIVES/2006/07/RUNAWAY-TIPPING-POINTS-OF-NO-RETURN/](http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2006/07/runaway-tipping-points-of-no-return/)

MIGRATION, BORDERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A 'NO BORDERS' PERSPECTIVE

Every year we are seeing thousands of people fleeing their countries of origin in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, hoping for a better life. Whilst the majority will move to nearby countries, a few will attempt the long and dangerous journey to Europe. It is impossible to determine exactly how many people are forced to migrate directly by climate change. However, what is clear is that the position of wealth and privilege in the global north is, to a large extent, the result of the exploitation of land, people and resources of two-thirds of the world, the very same processes that have driven industrial capitalism and caused climate change.

The world's poor did not cause climate change, but they are more vulnerable to its effects because of both where and how they live. Whether it's in agricultural areas or city slums in the global south, they have fewer options available to them for adapting when things go wrong. Africa and South East Asia, for example, are some of the most geographically vulnerable places on the planet in terms of droughts, rising sea levels and extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods. But this is not exclusive to the global south: when Hurricane Katrina hit New Or-

leans it was the poor, black neighbourhoods that were hit hardest and have been excluded from where they used to live ever since.

Political systems, willing to place one group of people above another, are already responding to the potential impact of climate change. With the "war on terror," security politics and nationalism flourished globally; climate change is being used to give further legitimacy to the concepts of "national preservation" and "homeland security." So the Indian state is currently building a perimeter fence around its entire border with Bangladesh, a country more at risk than almost any other from the devastating consequences of rising sea levels. The fence has been explicitly talked about as a barrier to migration. If sea levels rise and Bangladeshi people are driven from their homes, they will now find themselves trapped inside this ring.

The extreme-right British National Party in the UK gives very serious attention to questions of environmental damage, peak oil, famine and food supply. For fascists like them, climate change provides the perfect opportunity to try and argue their view of the world that humanity consists of races and nations in constant conflict and competition.

What these people might advocate in the face of the effects of climate change does not bear thinking about.

This year, in April 2009, the NATO war alliance celebrated their 60th anniversary with a summit to discuss NATO's new strategic direction. A strategy paper published in April 2007 stressed the need for a more "proactive approach," in which the pre-emption and prevention of threats are central. To the NATO strategists an array of threats exist in today's uncertain world, from terrorism and transnational crime to unrest following food crises, extensive migration to the countries of the NATO alliance and social conflicts as a result of climate change. The paper maintains that proper "defense" requires the concept of "homeland security", which entails a "comprehensive approach" of the military, police, politicians, researchers, academics and civil society and the continued blurring of internal and external security to build up a "global security architecture." We can already speak of a global market boom in databases, biometric readers, data mining programs and other new technologies of control, with multinational corporations poised to make huge profits.

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In Autumn 2009, under the Swedish presidency, interior ministers met in Stockholm to decide the next five year framework on internal security in the EU. “The Stockholm Program” will foster more surveillance of the internet, common access to European police databases and more cross-border police collaboration to fight “illegal migration”. It will force countries outside the EU to take back their citizens who enter the EU without a visa and it will push the use of biometrics and radio-frequency identification (Rfid) and enlargement of the police agency Europol and the EU border watchdog Frontex.

Freedom of movement is a contested common right. Understood as a form of grassroots globalization, migration is contained, managed and restricted by a top-down process of transnationalization. And with an increase in mobility and migration, irregular migration is being perceived as a threat to the world-order and to the integrity of the nation state. “Project Nation State” is challenged by an unregulated globalism. Borders are an attempt to limit and privatise freedom of movement as a common right. Wherever physical migration occurs, new borders are

erected where one is “processed,” “profiled,” “sorted,” “filtered,” “contained,” or “rejected”. The border is a site of unequal power relations where a selection is made between the useful and unwanted in relation to market demands. The border is a site of conflict that is costing yearly the lives of many who are trying to cross borders in spite of the latest technological advances in security, surveillance and control. These people are suffocating in containers, drowning in rivers and seas, exploding on mine fields, or being shot by border guards.

‘No Borders’ is a clear antiauthoritarian position that fights for the freedom of movement for all and the abolition of borders, while recognizing the massive injustice which exploits people and resources around the world for the benefit of few. The immigration system of Fortress Europe is designed to preserve this division. And while the EU is working towards One Europe, “Project Nation State” continues far outside the EU borders. New borders are created and existing borders are transformed to also exclude from Europe the growing group of climate refugees.

A crucial part of the No Border fight is supporting and building a radical climate change movement which challenges the idea of using threats of climate chaos as an excuse for even more draconian migration controls. The radical climate action movement critiques responses to climate chaos offered by governments and corporations, such as carbon rationing that would de-facto lead us blindfold into a police state, agrofuels that would take land and food from the global South to feed cars and airplanes in the North, and carbon trading which applies market logic to solve a market problem. No Borders has at its core this same resistance to intrusion on our liberties and sees that government systems of control which are often tested on migrants will affect us all. Those who have promoted and profited from our carbon dioxide intensive lifestyles are not only responsible for the current concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but they are also the ones who are aiming to maintain their positions of wealth and privilege by getting ahead in the new ecotechnologies and green capitalism, whilst always fortifying the walls around them.

“The slogan ‘Revolution or Death!’ is no longer the lyrical expression of consciousness in revolt: rather, it is the last word of the scientific thought of our century. It applies to the perils facing the species as to the inability of individuals to belong in a society where it is well-known that the suicide rate is on the increase. The experts had to admit, reluctantly, that during May 1968 in France it fell to almost nil. That spring also vouchsafed us a clear sky, and it did so effortlessly, because a few cars were burnt and the shortage of petrol prevented others from polluting the air. When it rains, where there are clouds of smog over Paris, let us never forget that it is the government’s fault. Alienated production makes the smog. Revolution makes the sunshine.”

GUY DEBORD, A SICK PLANET (1971)



INTRODUCTION TO THE APOCALYPSE

Excerpt 1: The Apocalypse is upon us

ALL OF US SECRETLY DESIRE FOR THIS WORLD TO END. THE GRAND ILLUSION OF WESTERN CIVILISATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MYTH OF PROGRESS, NAMELY THAT THE FLOW OF HISTORY WOULD BENEFICENTLY AND INFINITELY EXTEND INTO THE FUTURE.

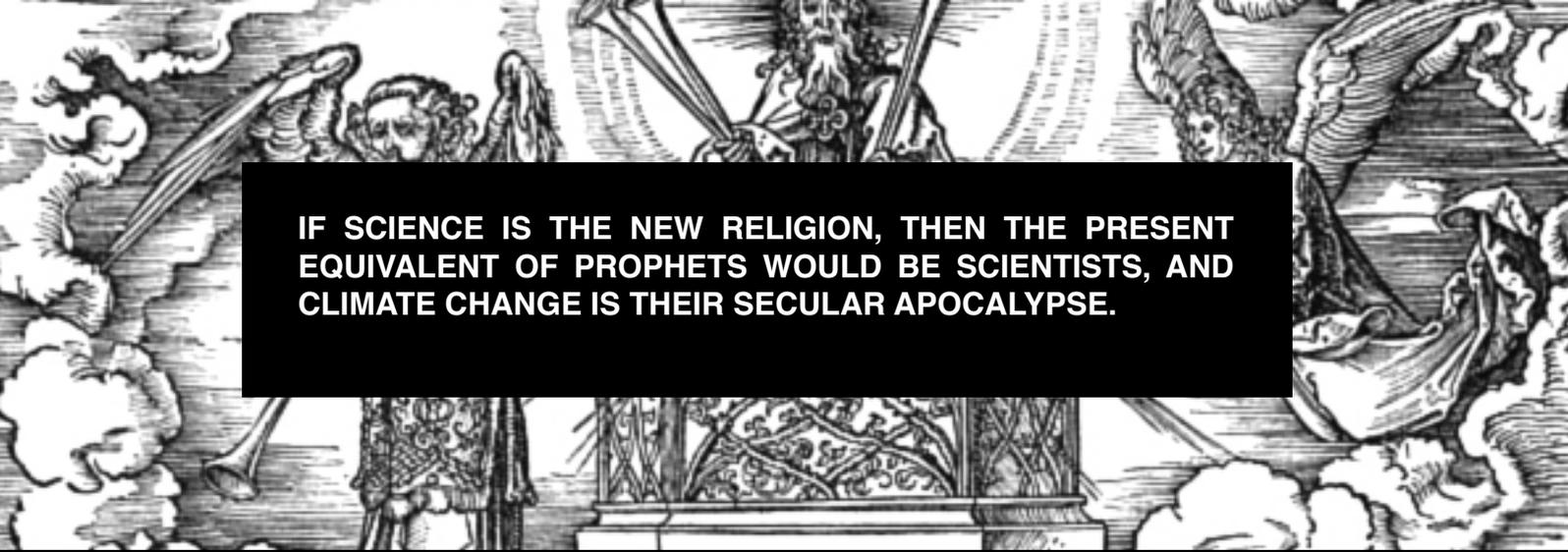
To our parents, civilisation offered houses in the suburbs, computers, and automobiles. And civilisation delivered. To the children of these workers, civilisation offered life on the moon, artificial intelligence, endless peace. All of which have failed to emerge. While our parents desperately still believe that someday the mortgage will be repaid and that they can retire in happiness, their lost children know this is a lie. The world offers nothing to us: no jobs, no rest, no future - only fear. Over and over again, we find ourselves conditioned like rats by the images of not just our own death, but of total destruction. From the collapse of the World Trade Centre to the alien invasion, from the specter of nuclear war to holes in the ozone layer - and now the melting glaciers - these images are ingrain themselves in our very being. And these images are nothing more than modern projections of the deep-set fantasy of all religions: the apocalypse.

The apocalypse is above all a relationship that we have to our time. The apocalypse is always a singular event in the future, so that while there is a sense of impending doom, there is a strange relief that things can go on exactly as they are now, perhaps indefinitely. Two minor variations exist: Either that this world will be replaced with a new world, shiny and perfect, or that it will just simply end, with nothing at all following. Regardless, all apocalyptic thinking holds that this present world will at some point be utterly destroyed. So, there is no reason to care for this world, to preserve it, to sustain it.

In fact, one can rape this planet without even a sense of guilt. This vision of the apocalypse justifies the actions of the oil barons and coal lords to emit ever-more carbon in order to maintain the present form of life, and make a quick buck of profit. It is precisely this madness that throws the Christian apocalyptic cults into bed with these fossil-fuel magnates. The second option is that the state is the only possible saviour that can prevent the apocalypse, if not indefinitely, at least for a few more years. Apocalyptic time then places any possibility of change far into the distant future, taking all agency from our lives and giving it to some supernatural or scientific event, so negating the possibility of an all-too-human revolution in the present.

THERE IS ONE FATAL FLAW IN APOCALYPTIC TIME: WHAT IF THE APOCALYPSE WAS NOT THE END OF TIME, BUT THE TIME OF THE END? WHAT IF THE TIME OF THE END IS HERE-AND-NOW? THE APOCALYPSE IS NOT IN THE FUTURE, THE APOCALYPSE IS HAPPENING AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT.

The sudden reality of the apocalypse is not to be doubted by anyone who has any protracted connection to the planet, like those who garden. Only in the cocoon-like and concrete metropolis, where any connection to the vast array of non-human life has been sundered long ago, one can fail to notice the non-human world is in a state of advanced destruction. Never before in recorded history has the question of the survival of the planet been so starkly posed, and never before has such news been greeted with such indifference. And as long as the apocalypse is not happening right now, we smile and shrug, and continue our daily lives. Our society claimed to be possessed of miraculous powers. These miracles have become perverse. The fish have left the seas: soon there will be no more cod in the North Sea, as the warming oceans devastate the plankton that the cod eat. Fertile land become desert: the emptying of the vast Ogallala aquifer, the tremendous heat waves in France, the fires in Greece.



IF SCIENCE IS THE NEW RELIGION, THEN THE PRESENT EQUIVALENT OF PROPHETS WOULD BE SCIENTISTS, AND CLIMATE CHANGE IS THEIR SECULAR APOCALYPSE.

To dream of milk and honey in this age is absurd: The honey bees have disappeared, leaving their hives empty and threatening the future of even the flowers. And our milk is tainted with growth hormones, causing our children to hit puberty earlier and earlier. There's nothing pure in this world, and we cannot even drink the waters from the streams.

OUR ANCESTORS WOULD BE SHOCKED BEYOND BELIEF THAT IT TOOK SO LITTLE TIME TO MAKE THE WORLD UNLIVABLE FOR HUMANITY. AND THIS IS ONLY WHAT IS SELF-EVIDENT.

The apocalypse may be all too real. If science is the new religion, then the present equivalent of prophets would be scientists, and climate change is their secular apocalypse. It's tempting then to dismiss climate change as mere rhetoric, some sort of collective delusion perhaps propagated for nefarious purposes. Yet science supposedly has one crucial advantage over religion: science consists of hypotheses that may be tested, proved true or false, so that science consists of an always limited and yet always growing approximation of reality. Even today when mysticism far more than science rules the world - merely compare the number of books on physics sold as compared to those on astrology in a bookstore - there is a lurking suspicion that science actually does matter. Its hypotheses have led to everything from the cure to malaria to unmanned drones in Afghanistan. So there is a cause for concern when scientists themselves begin to speak of the apocalypse like mad prophets. The new hobby of science is predicting like bean-counters how many years we have left: Fifty, twenty, ten, five.

For those who can remember that our planet lives not only in political history but in geological time, a wave of massive extinction has commenced, an event aptly

named the "anthropocene" extinction event. Nearly half of all species may be gone within the coming decades. Perhaps therein lies the source of a vague feeling of guilt and an inability to even appreciate other species except as cartoons or in cages? The only comparable extinction event in the fossil records is the Permian-Triassic extinction event of nearly two-hundred and fifty million years ago, in which nearly all sea life and three-quarters of animals on land died. The reason for the earlier "Great Dying" of the Permian Triassic extinction event is almost certainly global warming of 5-6 degrees. Great volcanic eruptions began in Siberia released huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse into the air, leading to global warming, which led to the even more dangerous methane trapped in ice being released - a gas twenty times more potent than carbon. There is perpetual fear that we will soon encounter positive feedback cycles, events like the destruction of the rainforest that will cause an inexorable skyrocketing of carbon emissions, making catastrophic climate change inevitable. Due to climate change, already we are seeing evidence that the permafrost in Siberia is melting in an area the size of France and Germany combined, and billions of tons of methane may soon be released: a "tipping point" straight into the biocrisis. The apocalypse is at this historical moment is a very real extinction event conjoined with what can only be termed a religious understanding of time.

TO SEPARATE THESE TWO DISTINCT PHENOMENA, WE CAN CALL THE REAL WAVE OF EXTINCTIONS CAUSED BY EXTREME ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION THE "BIOCISIS", WHILE WE SHOULD RESERVE THE "APOCALYPSE" FOR THE IMAGINED POSSIBILITY OF THE END OF THE WORLD. THE BIOCISIS IS THE TRUE IN THE MOMENT OF THE APOCALYPTIC FALSE.



There is without a doubt something religious to these convictions, with reports on melting glaciers being the equivalent to fiery sermons and carbon offsetting being nothing more than indulgences.

THERE IS A DANGER TO THIS SECULAR HYSTERIA OVER CLIMATE CHANGE: THE “WORLD LEADERS” KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT THE APOCALYPSE IS THE MOST POWERFUL OF DISCOURSES, CAPABLE OF JUSTIFYING ANY ATROCITY.

While climate change is transforming into a real extinction event, it is at this historical moment conjoined with what can only be termed a new religious discourse, an apocalyptic vision that was long held in check by the Enlightenment. Yet with science itself turned from the secular savior to the creator of the Atom Bomb, the hope for a bright tomorrow is objectively insane. All we can hope for is some definite “end” to the situation.

THE APOCALYPSE IS NOT HAPPENING IN THE FUTURE, IT IS HAPPENING HERE-AND-NOW. IT IS NOT THE RESULT OF OUR PERSONAL SINS AND IT IS NOT THE “COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF HUMANITY”.

Climate change (or God, or whatever) will bring about the apocalypse. The apocalypse, the anthropocene extinction event, the real biocrisis of all life, began with the advent of our current form of life: capitalism.

Everyone knows that task of our generation is the overthrow of the existing order, yet like the early Christians describing the end of feudalism in religious rather than political language, our generation is unable to express the obvious necessity of revolution in any more than the scientific language of catastrophic cli-

mate change. The closest parallel to our era is then the Peasant Wars of the late middle ages, where the peasant insurrectionists phrased what was fundamentally the desire for a social revolution in religious terms. It took generations for a language of human rights to come out of the utterances of beggar-kings and heretic priests that God was present in even the lowliest of peasants. Perhaps then it is not without a sense of irony that a “climate camp” to reduce carbon emissions seized Blackheath, where centuries earlier Wat Tyler and an insurrectionary army of peasants nearly overthrew the English monarchy: the first of modern failed revolutions. As Engels noticed, it would take centuries for an economic language to be created that could phrase the struggle of Thomas Muntzer for “omnia est communia”, for everything to be held in common, in a way that could be understood without God. The first step in overthrowing the present order is no different: to formulate a new language of insurrection from the language of catastrophic climate change.

THERE IS A SECRET MEANING TO THE APOCALYPSE. IT IS NOT THE END OF TIME, BUT THE END OF THIS TIME. NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, BUT THE END OF THIS CAPITALIST WORLD.

Capitalism is nothing more than the historically contingent relationship of ourselves to our time. The apocalypse is a myth that allows the present disaster of capitalism to continue unabated. By projecting the end of time into the future, all human agency in the here-and-now is lost. If the apocalypse eternally is in the future, our present becomes frozen eternally. All agency can only be given to some *deus ex machina*, be it God or the State, which will both simultaneously bring the apocalypse or prevent it forever. The little shift is to dispel the apocalypse and realise the immensity of the biocrisis in the present, and act to



INTRODUCTION TO THE APOCALYPSE, EXCERPT 2:

THE SPECTACLE OF GREEN CAPITALISM

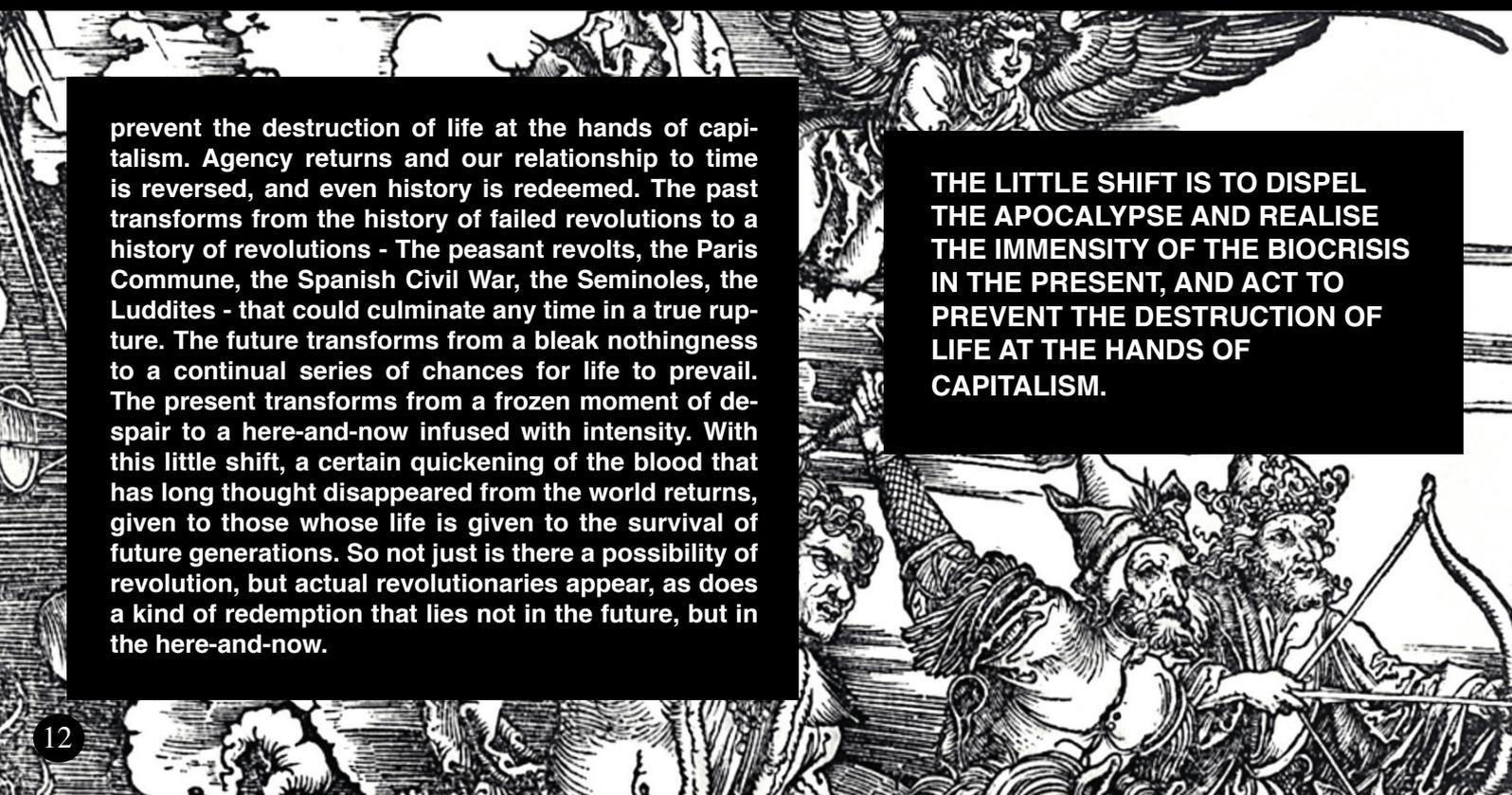
ILLUSTRATION RITA TUTA

OF MARKETS AND CARBON MARKETS

IT IS EASY TO ASSUME THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO OUR FORM OF LIFE, THAT THE WAY WE LIVE IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT IS SIMPLY A REFLECTION OF THE WAY THINGS ARE.

Implicit in this common-sense is the not-so-hidden assumption that the present will extended indefinitely into the future, which both provides a measure of comfort as well as the feeling of imprisonment. The future lasts forever. Or at least, it used to. In times of crisis, a

space of freedom returns, and the possibility of a rupture with the present opens. History, long banished to dreary scholastic books, returns to us fresh and alive. To push away that which is closest to us, our very form of life, and see it objectively - this might seem impossible. Yet it is not: the first step is to give our form of life a name, to identify it as something finite in time and space, so capable of ending. And this perpetual present, that has its only favor being only the certainty of its own destruction has a name: capitalism.



prevent the destruction of life at the hands of capitalism. Agency returns and our relationship to time is reversed, and even history is redeemed. The past transforms from the history of failed revolutions to a history of revolutions - The peasant revolts, the Paris Commune, the Spanish Civil War, the Seminoles, the Luddites - that could culminate any time in a true rupture. The future transforms from a bleak nothingness to a continual series of chances for life to prevail. The present transforms from a frozen moment of despair to a here-and-now infused with intensity. With this little shift, a certain quickening of the blood that has long thought disappeared from the world returns, given to those whose life is given to the survival of future generations. So not just is there a possibility of revolution, but actual revolutionaries appear, as does a kind of redemption that lies not in the future, but in the here-and-now.

THE LITTLE SHIFT IS TO DISPEL THE APOCALYPSE AND REALISE THE IMMENSITY OF THE BIOCRISIS IN THE PRESENT, AND ACT TO PREVENT THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE AT THE HANDS OF CAPITALISM.

"Green is
the color of,
money."



Shaun Mays,
The investment
manager and adviser.

Climate Change
Capital

Capitalism is based on an equation so simple a child could understand it: technology plus human labour plus natural resources creates commodities. These commodities can be either more technology for production - otherwise known as capital - or commodities for consumption. The iron law of value states that everything may become a commodity to be exchanged for some value, and value is incarnated as monetary price. Commodities are exchanged not to fulfil human needs, but to accumulate more value for capitalism. The flow of commodities produces flows of carbon as a trivial side-effect of industrial production, and hence the destruction of our entire ecosystem is built into the little equation of capitalism. The constantly decreasing term in our equation is the finite "natural" resources of our earth, which taken to their wild asymptotic end spells the real possible extinction of the vast majority of currently-existing life on this planet.

THE INESCAPABLE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM IS THEN TO COLONIZE EVERY SPHERE OF LIFE, ASSIGNING THAT WHICH WAS HELD IN COMMON BOTH A PRIVATE OWNER AND A VALUE.

This double operation must take place so that this newly valued commodity can be exchanged on the market in order to produce more profit, and hence, expand value and capitalism. Climate change is just symptomatic of capitalism reaching the limits of its expansion in the world of natural resources that evolved before capitalism. It is then fitting that a totalising crisis like climate change accompanies a totalising system of production like capitalism. Carbon emissions are the by-product of capitalism just as defecation is the by-product of humans eating, as fossil-fuel intensive energies are the primary source of cheap energy that capitalism harnesses for production. Yet even stopping carbon emissions would not halt the totalising biocrisis brought on by capitalism.

Carbon emissions and climate change are a mere symptom of the ecological degradation caused by capitalism. Taken as an isolated issue in-of-itself, climate change is ludicrous. Even if burning fossil fuels didn't cause climate change, it would still be cancerous to humans, pollute the ocean and atmosphere, fuelling death-dealing automobiles and missiles, and create the raw materials of everything from disposable plastic bags to useless toys. Although cutting down the forest reduces the planet's ability to store carbon, it destroys uncountable species, ripping asunder indigenous forms of life and evicting them from their homes and destroying even the possibility of the joy many humans get from being outside.

WHILE A "GREEN" ZERO-CARBON CAPITALISM MAY BE POSSIBLE, IF IMPLAUSIBLE, EVEN A ZERO-CARBON CAPITALISM INEXORABLY TRANSFORMS LIVING NATURAL RESOURCES INTO DEAD CAPITAL.

If it's not carbon, it will be the destruction of water, of the atmosphere, of life itself, all sacrificed to the ravenous appetite of capital for the reproduction

commodities, even if it means the end of the reproduction of life. Capitalism is the origin of the biocrisis, the last and final crisis of capitalism.

The logic of crisis is the logic of capitalism, and capitalism has been in a state of crisis for decades although it has only become self-evident in the financial crisis of 2008. By far the most productive social systems the world has ever seen, capitalism over-produces, leading to an over-accumulation of capital. In any social system shaped around the survival of humanity and the world, this would be viewed as a miracle: the hungry could be fed, the homeless housed, and the creativity of humanity unfettered from mere material concerns. Yet by the perverse logic of capital, this over-productivity is a crisis: it is increasingly harder to make a profit when more and more commodities are made cheaper and cheaper, and workers are paid less and less. The only way out of crisis is to through either waging a war that destroys capital - the World Wars being the obvious solution to the Great Depression - or via some act of sorcery invent new commodities.

ONLY AN EVENT OF NEARLY DIVINE PROPORTIONS CAN RESURRECT THE BELIEF IN CAPITAL AND THE STATE, AND LUCKILY THERE IS A MIRACLE: THE ADVENT OF CATASTROPHIC CLIMATE CHANGE.

From Greenpeace to Obama, the solution everyone touts to climate change is, not surprisingly, the expansion of capitalism into the very atmosphere via carbon trading. By magically assigning carbon a value and exchanging it, carbon emissions are supposed to decrease. However, this contradicts all past experience and the axioms of capitalism itself. The creation of yet another market will undoubtedly lead to more capitalist production, and so accelerate ecological degradation. While capitalism has figured out how to assign values to simple material necessities like shoes and coal, the price of carbon will simply be made out of thin air. The resemblances of the pricing of "risk" on the financial markets to the price of carbon on carbon markets are almost all-too-clear. Such inability to assign adequate value is simply a recipe for a boom of rampant fraud and speculation, followed by a resounding crash. A carbon market is just like the financial market, as the failure of the European Union's Emission Trading System, later a part of the Kyoto Protocol, has already demonstrated this in spades. Carbon markets require more production, and so more carbon, which in turn signs the collective death sentence of the biocrisis. How does one assign a price for carbon? How can one give

the continued existence of human life as we know it a price? The market demands such questions be answered. To burn a car dealership to the ground is more ecologically sustainable than carbon trading; it is precisely the creation and flow of commodities that threatens the future of life on this planet.

THE SPECTACLE OF GREEN CAPITALISM

IT MUST BE AN ALMOST RELIGIOUS FORCE THEN THAT KEEPS PEOPLE ENTHRALLED TO CAPITALISM.

This force is called by Debord the "spectacle" - the advertisements, television, blogs, web-sites, video-games - that is nothing more than the collection of images that serve as the revealed religion of capital. Sarte remarked that he had never seen perfection until he had seen a movie. The world of advertisements is as central to us as the world of Christ and his angels was to our medieval ancestors. The spectacle is when the relationships between humans become mediated through not just commodities, but images produced by capital. As capital over-accumulates to ever more absurd heights, in the search for ever more markets, capital colonises the very social life of humans. Capitalism is able to colonize the totality of our social life precisely to the extent it is able to capitalize any other form of life. One step of this colonisation was depriving the multitude of their traditional forms of life in order to put them to work in factories. Yet somehow, after work, workers rejoiced and, shedding their work-day clothes, became human again: playing music in the bar, dreaming in the park, laying in each other's arms. In order to extract perpetually more profit, there became ever more longer hours and ever-more-perfect assembly lines. However, eventually a limit is reached in classical capitalism. To continue the production of endless commodities, capitalism must colonise all of human time, all of human culture. A new and terrible prison of the imagination is imposed upon people via the perfect image of the commodity, transmitted electrically around the world via the mass media. These images of commodities now direct our collective human activity. This global collection of disjointed images of commodities and super-stars then becomes the abstract unity that binds the fragmented humanity together, masking the very real divisions of power and wealth.

"I don't want my
children and
grandchildren
to live in a
devastated
world

Lars G. Josefsson
Valtenfall

but nor do I want them
to live in a world
without good access
to energy.

For me the
important
thing
is that we come up
with a feasible
balance."



For decades, capitalism produced only the spectacle of its own perfectibility in the form of sexy young people consuming shiny new things eternally, but always leaving out the images of its own waste.

All the obvious causes and results of capitalism were artfully hidden, from the millions of pounds of plastic in the oceans to the endless acres of forests reduced to stumps. As the process of natural resource extraction can not continue infinitely on a finite planet without some physical side-effects that will eventually wake even the most hypnotized of workers from their spectacular slumber, the spectacle can no longer present itself as images of heaven on earth. The hap-

piness promised by commodities is transformed into terror. The dream of capital becomes its nightmare: the image of the apocalypse.

In the era of the apocalypse, the spectacle must invert itself. While in the analysis of Debord, the spectacle as a collection of images was the summit of industrial capitalism, the symbol of its total power. As a new and very material reconfiguration of capitalism is now in motion, the first step is the transformation of the images of the spectacle. Images of the apocalypse are endlessly repeated in movies starring Al Gore, in the pleas of scientists, and the last of polar bears hanging desperately onto the last glacier. These images are not innocent reflections of reality, but instead signal a

“WITHOUT A DOUBT, THOSE WHO FIGHT TODAY WILL BE THE CHILDREN OF THE LAST GENERATION TO TRULY BELIEVE IN CAPITALISM. FOR THE YOUTH TODAY HAVE NO HOPE. IF A FEW DYING OLD MEN WANT TO BRING APOCALYPSE, THEIR CHILDREN MUST BRING ON THE INSURRECTION.”

conscious manipulation of our inner lives in order to make us willing slaves to the transformation of late capitalism into green capitalism. Green capitalism is merely a spectacular form of capitalism that denies its own role in the consumption of natural resources. The image of green capitalism as a latter-day technological messiah that must rescue a powerless humanity from the apocalypse produces again only an unreal unity that merely masks the real divisions between those who benefit and the vast majority of the world that suffers from ecological degradation.

A GREENPEACE AD IN THE NEW YORK TIMES SAID, “IT WASN’T THE EXXON VALDEZ CAPTAIN’S DRIVING THAT CAUSED THE ALASKAN OIL SPILL. IT WAS YOURS.”

Any desire for a genuinely social revolution is transferred to the ascetic self-management of the individual, the care of the self. Remember that self-management is still nothing more than management, with a tinge of self-righteous puritanism. Only the righteous will be saved, and your individual carbon emissions are a perfect way of measuring your sins. Google has even commenced the production of devices to allow other self-management our personal electricity consumption and, no doubt soon, carbon emissions. True salvation is now being “carbon neutral” or more “realistically” a 50% carbon reduction, a 65% reduction, an 85% reduction. These goals employ all the fanaticism of fad diets and flagellation. Of course, this perfectly alienated solution to climate change ignores the obvious contradiction that a single individual reducing their personal carbon emissions has little to no effect. For example, unplugging a phone charger only reduces energy consumption by one-hundredth of one percent at most. A more sinister agenda is at work. As the world’s population is so vast, so huge, that it is even inconceivable to imagine policing this multitude, to coerce them into green capitalism. The new slaves must enter

into green capitalism willingly, and must self-manage themselves, cleansing themselves of all impure thoughts of communism and violence; these thoughts are taken to be the result of some neurochemical disorder, or childhood trauma.

Green capitalism must refuse to admit, under all circumstances, that our mode of production is responsible for carbon emissions, since from that terrible hypothesis would come the obvious conclusion that such an edifice must be overthrown, and that those who benefit from it, the planetary bourgeoisie, are those who have truly caused the catastrophic climate change. They try to escape by placing the blame for the coming apocalypse on a ‘collective’ humanity who have harnessed industrial production for their ‘common’ needs at the expense of the environment, ignoring the historical reality that climate change is being precipitated not by humanity as a whole, the vast majority of which was dragged kicking and screaming into the factories and sweat-shops, but by capitalism, married as it is to industrial production. Indeed, carbon emissions and climate change more than clearly reveal what can only be called a class divide: the carbon emissions of a jet-setting businessmen from either Britain or Qatar outstrip the thousands of unemployed in places, ranging from the United States to Guatemala, that have been excluded from the planetary bourgeoisie, or those workers enslaved by the self-same planetary bourgeoisie in the vast factories in China and Brazil.

Never is capitalist production itself to be questioned. Far from it, a whole new market of green commodities is produced for a profit: everything from electrical cars to “fair trade and carbon-neutral” lattes, whose production only worsens the real crisis of natural resources while stroking the egos of a new green bourgeoisie who can afford such precious green products as the rest of the world descends into food riots. Green restaurants, green airports, green banks; soon enough, there will be green prisons and green torture chambers.

Those who would call upon the state to find a solution, solutions which would include further taxation on the working class and poor in the form of carbon credits and other measures of green austerity, will only lead to increased state control over our everyday lives. These calls to the state will only be used to consolidate state power and profitability for capital whether the technologies it employs are 'green.' It is ridiculous to beg for the 'capitalist management' of the crisis that it itself created. As Debord said, if you don't want to assist in the spectacle of the end of the world, you must work towards ending the world of the spectacle. It will take more than changing our holiday habits to sustain the world to come.

THIS NEW ERA OF CAPITALISM WILL NOT BE HERALDED BY A MILITARY WAR, BUT BY A GENERALISED LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT THAT ENCOMPASSES THE TOTALITY OF LIFE: THE SOCIAL WAR.

Increasing police violence, surveillance, and biometric identity cards are just tactics in this social war against "the enemy within" like anarchists, unemployed youth, and immigrants. Carbon emissions limits and trading will just be excuses for new austerity measures to inflict upon the poor of the world. It will take widespread deployment of solar energy and the return of nuclear power to maintain the bourgeoisie form of life even inside the most privileged of countries, while the rest of the world must be left to starve to death. Indeed, what green capitalism presents today is a new morality that will tomorrow be austerity measures for the world's poor. In every country, the metropolis will be divided into "Green Zones" for the planetary bourgeoisie and vast swathes of exclusion.

THE SPREAD OF SABOTAGE AS AN OFFENSIVE IN THE GENERALISED SOCIAL WAR IS THE MOST PROMISING TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM.

Without a doubt, those who fight today will be the children of the last generation to truly believe in capitalism. For the youth today have no hope. If a few dying old men want to bring apocalypse, their children must bring on the insurrection. Perhaps their children will meet at night covered in black masks. Or perhaps these new-born saboteurs will operate in broad daylight, dressed as flight attendants and construction workers, students and baristas, junior accountants and even...the police. The question is how to blockade the flows of carbon and commodities as to halt ecological degradation. To stop the flows - not just for a moment - forever. No compromise in defence of the Earth.



ECOLOGICAL FASCISM

ILLUSTRATION: IVAR INTERNATIONAL

"We have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves to exist in this new environment."

Norbert Wiener (1894-1964)

OTHER WORLDS ARE POSSIBLE, IT'S JUST THAT SOME ARE WORSE.

Fascism is the logical escape route of capitalism to a crisis. The cycle of crisis leading to fascism is as follows: the internal dynamics of capitalism based on selfish interest and profit cannot lead to an overcoming of the crisis of over-accumulation; only a massive revolution in the mode of production and social relationships points a way out. The very same conditions that could breed a revolution against capitalism also breed its transmutation into fascism. Fascism is the modernising project of capitalism when it enters into crisis; let us not forget that it was Hitler, who after centuries of the late-forming German nation-state was lagging behind the rest of Europe in terms of modernisation, built the highways, the factories, even modernised the alphabet. National socialism did what the bourgeoisie, left to their own devices, were incapable of doing; namely, dominate the most resistant forms of society and organise them into a new unity. Like politicians today, fascists cynically promised everything to everyone, even if it entailed contradictions: and so fascism

actually resonates with people, but directs them in the long-term interests of capitalism. In response to climate change, a new kind of eco-fascism is almost surely to arise, either as capitalism fails to reform itself into green capitalism -or, in the more likely case, where the distinction between fascism and capitalism merge. The right-wing zealots have a moment of truth when they declare that they don't like the new "green" government that will prevent them from burning fires in their own backyard. Given that carbon markets are only going to increase carbon emissions, the purported solution to climate change in the form of strict carbon emission reductions would require nothing less than an authoritarian state with control over every facet of life. In the name of "saving the planet," we will submit ourselves to join the new collectivity of the state in the form of eco-fascism.

Eco-fascism is a warning, and as it is only a movement to come, we can only offer a sketch of its seeds in the present rather than a perfect description.

The signs are telling. George Monbiot, an influential British journalist, told his devoted fans that to stop global warming, we must riot for austerity. Never has the new form of eco-fascism been more clear. Fascism is the copying of revolutionary organisation to the counter-revolution and eco-fascism will be no exception. In the 1930s, the national socialists adopted the techniques of revolutionary communism such as the mass meetings, the street fighting, and a desire for collectivity. The methodology of communism was perverted away from its goals of a new Internationale into the service of the "people" - the Volk - and the Land. There is no reason to believe that eco-fascism will be any different, although the sources of its new form of organisation will be anarchism, not communism. For a superficial example, notice that in Germany and Bulgaria, the fascists have adopted the dress and even the tactics of the anarchist Black Bloc. However, a



less superficial example is more important: anarchist sub-cultures have been the vanguard of taking full responsibility of personal consumption, of "punishing" themselves for drinking Cola, eating meat, using the "wrong" words. It is then no wonder that some of the anarchist sub-cultures were the first to fall victim to the spectacle of self-management in the name of "saving the environment." The individualist moralism of anarchism can easily be transformed to eco-fascism, while the essential ethical questions remain ignored. So these methods of self-control, now strictly enforced as austerity measures, will become the first phase of eco-fascism, and this moralism will justify any repression against social revolution. The marking of those who consume too much, those who don't truly believe, those who overspend carbon credits, those who defy forced austerity measures, combined with spying on neighbours, militarised borders, camps for climate refugees...this is the nightmare of the beginnings of eco-fascism. Monbiot and the rest of the planetary bourgeoisie in their pleasant eco-villages should give each other a toast - over organic locally-grown wine grown in Cornwall - as none of this will disturb their ever-so-perfect green zone. Their recuperation of anarchism is almost too perfect.

Capitalism fragments our lives into a million little pieces, and fascism offers to re-assemble our lives into a new kind of collectivity.

Fascism offers to let us abolish ourselves as individuals in order for the supposed greater good of the species, the group, the nation...yet in reality, it only enslaves us to the domination of a small clique, a leader, a prophet. In the widespread fear that any crisis causes, fascism takes advantage of people's desire to survive by offering to dominate them to assure their survival. How is that we desire our own domination? Fear, and in crisis, the attraction to power. There is something strangely comforting, and even erotic, in the submission of one's self to a collectivity. Unlike anarchism, instead of creating collectivities based on the association and mutual aid of free individuals, fascism creates this new collective form of life based on the abstract domination of a single individual: thus the propensity towards fascism for figures like Hitler



and Mussolini; and the same dynamics apply to Stalin and Pol Pot. Unwilling to change the fundamental social relationships of domination, fascism blames concrete groups of individuals. So the eco-fascists personify capitalism in particular individuals or ethnic groups: the conspiracy theorists's visions of the Jewish bankers being the ideal template. Unfortunately, with the total collapse of our social life at the hands of the spectacle, this "picture-thinking" is all-too-easy to understand. In the absence of real social relationships, loyalty is projected to the image of the Nation, the Race, the Good, the Pure. In this new era of dwindling natural resources, immigrants will likely be the first ethnic group to suffer. Who but the Chinese should tell them how to mine their land! Buy American! The tragedy is that the calls resonate more with each passing day, as the relative factions of global capital use this fictionalisation to manipulate their own internal populations as they themselves both co-ordinate and fight over the future control of the planet. After the death of God, fascism is merely the opium as the masses, at least in the West.

The beating heart of fascism has always been ecology.

The dream of a green and fecund agrarian world, a dream foolishly thrown out by communism and only only kept alive until recent decades by anarchism, is given as the connection between blood and

soil. It fulfils the need for a historical and transcendental essence for eco-fascism to build its abstract unity upon: the relationship between people and the land. Ecology was defined by its founder, the biologist Ernst Haeckel, as "the total science of the connections of the organism to the surrounding external world." In a misinterpretation of Darwin, Haeckel believed that since the same "laws" of Social Darwinism prevailed throughout both the natural world and social life, only the strongest - be they individuals or nations - would survive, and so he became a proponent of racial purity, joining the Thule Society, one of the secret societies that was the fore-runners of fascist ideology. Hitler founded in the doctrines of the Thule Society the foundation of an ideology for national socialism, so that Nazism was to be a "politically applied biology" to return humanity into harmony with the environment. By opposing a pure ecological ideal to the metropolitan anomie of capital, classically, fascists were the first who effectively merged ecology and politics. The relationship between the People and the Land must be cleansed and renewed, and in this context cleansing means the murder of those outside the fascist collectivity. This would fit all-too-easily into the border regimes being put in place across the world. Yet even more disturbing future scenarios are being dreamt today by those like Kaarlo Linkola - who, speak-

ing against free-market capitalism and unlimited growth, in his award-winning book "*Can Life Prevail?*" believes that to survive the biocrisis, humanity must be forced from the city and into agricultural production, trees must be planted, all airplanes grounded, construction stopped. While these may not seem to be such terrible things, and in fact even necessary steps to a world without capital ... without a pause to breathe, Linkola adds that children who are deemed unfit should be killed.

Fascism is the technophilic ideology of the apocalypse.

The visions of a green and harmonious future that serve as the kernel of fascism are to be realised in the distant and never-quite-arriving future, but all the power of the technology developed under capitalism should be harnessed now, at whatever the cost in death. Eco-fascism is apocalyptic insofar as it must destroy the current world in the here-and-now precisely in order to restore it to its perfect condition in some infinitely deferred future. This explains the seeming schizophrenia of fascism, the contrast between the smokestacks of the concentration camps and dictates of Nazi Germany to commence nation-wide organic farming. Indeed, an underlying logic connects the perfectionist ecology of the National Socialists with their attempt to eliminate, like any productive farmer, what they considered to be waste. As the



apocalypse is in the future, all manners of techniques can be deployed today to bring about the thousand-year reign of the new heaven on the new earth. Unlike those purists for whom the ends and means must be compatible, eco-fascists are more than happy to employ a mass-based movement and high technology to realise their state of primordial virtue. In the era of global climate change, this combination will be even more tempting, as eco-fascists will also play to the technophilia of capitalism, since eco-fascism will be more than willing to use whatever technology can be used to preserve survival of the land and people. More than traditional capitalism, eco-fascists will be able to put forward an alternative to capitalism that connects personal survival to the promise a restored ecosystem due to technology. Of course, the actual restoration will always be infinitely deferred, and any atrocity will be justified by the coming apocalypse. And since it is committed to keeping the machinations of natural resource exploitation and capitalism going without profit, there is no doubt that eco-fascism will result in the degradation of the planet as quick, if not quicker, than green capitalism left to its own devices.

Despite all the forgotten historical roots of ecology in fascism, eco-fascism will not be the fascism that we recognise, the antiquarian fascism of swastikas that reeks of the smoke of Auschwitz, but a fascism that is far more sinister and subtle.

For the coming fascism will not even use the term “fascism,” and will not even necessarily be nationalist, although it could be. There is a common mis-understanding of fascism, namely that somehow fascism is only about the separation and purification of races and nations. The murder of the “foreign element” of the unintegrated Roma fits the mold of classical racism all too well, but something more happened with the destruction even of the completely integrated six million European Jews in the Holocaust. Fascism as an extreme case of racism or nationalism is a myth, and the reality is much more complicated. The selection of Jews and Roma for extermination was only the beginning. When we include the selection of communists, anarchists, queers, the disabled, prisoners of war, the victims of

the Holocaust more than doubles. The true nature of fascism is then revealed by the final law - the *Gemeinschaftsfremdengesetz* - that Hitler passed on the first of January of 1945 but never implemented. In this law, the selection begun by the Holocaust was never to end. Next the weak, the morally dissolute, those insufficiently part of the fascist society ... all were to be killed. This selection would include anyone whose behaviour was less than perfectly aligned with the envisioned perfect fascist society, and this selection was to take place infinitely and ever more stringently into the future. Those “foreign to the community” were those who “have been unable to show personality and lifestyle, especially because of an exceptional defect of reason or character, that meet with the minimum requirements of the national community”, including those who “from idleness or debauchery leads a worthless, uneconomical, or disorderly life, and thus another of the public burden or risk...or have an inclination to beg, to loafing, thefts, frauds or other non-serious offenses” and especially those who “from intolerance or belligerence persistently disturbs the peace of the public.” Just like the giant databases of today, the Nazi dictatorship was started under the “stocktaking of individuals” through the construction of giant files. Everyone was expected to self-manage, to completely either become a pure and model citizen, or die trying. It is not without a sense of disturbance that one hears the green capitalists talking about increasingly “punishing” those who emit more carbon than is allowed. The logic of fascism is the logic of the “perfection” of the human in a “harmonious and ecological” community. That the state should soon be able to measure the ecological virtue of its citizens may only be the first step. The coming eco-fascism will represent the possibility to complete the project that the fascists failed to complete with the *Gemeinschaftsfremdengesetz*: the complete rebuilding of the human in the interests of capital by the unholy marriage of ecology and cybernetics.

CLASS, LABOUR AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

Climate change is not a question of carbon emissions. The depletion of water, soil and mineral resources and the decimation of biodiversity and ecosystems now being experienced across the planet - primarily in marginalised and poorer areas - are the result of an utter bankruptcy in the relationship between human economic activity and the rest of life on earth. It is now clear that if this relationship is not drastically altered in the coming years the consequences will be disastrous.

What is this borne of? The very language we use and metaphors we draw upon to describe the ecological crisis - that of exhaustion, degradation and exploitation, are all familiar to us as trade unionists and working class activists. The world over, workers are subject to over-work and exploitation to the point of physical and mental collapse. The reality we face now is that exploitation has increased in so many different ways that the planet itself faces such a collapse. The force that drives the stripping of rainforests and the poisoning of the atmosphere is the same force that drives the exploitation of one human being by another: the logic that profit should be the basic imperative of human activity, the logic of capitalism. We should draw no distinctions between its willingness to wreck human life or its willingness to wreck the lives of any other living thing.

We are creative and dynamic enough to be able to build societies that do not put themselves in a state of perpetual warfare with the other beings and living things that we share a planet with. We can see evidence of this in local and indigenous communities across the world which do not respond to the logic of profit. But right now we are not the ones in control of our own creativity or dynamism; our capacity to produce. The basic question of who decides what people's work and efforts are applied towards is the key to understanding environmental damage. Wresting back the control of our own work from the class of bosses who have squandered and wasted generation upon generation of both people and resources must be fought for with a fire and passion that reflects the knowledge of the fact that in this struggle, everything is at stake. Revolutionary change and the adoption of a new set of imperatives for our labours is needed to create any sort of genuine sustainability.

The movement against environmental racism, which started with people of colour in the U.S. struggling against environmental injustices, confronted the racial discrimination in environmental decision-making. Later on, it started to be identified as not only a race struggle

but also as a class struggle, since regulations and laws (international treaties in this case) were being enforced with a deliberate impact on marginalized communities in terms of toxic waste disposal, implementation of heavily polluting industries, or mega projects that produce 'clean' energy for someone else.

So what? It is easy enough to say that you won't ever get a sustainable capitalist society. We cannot be part of a movement that is happy to say 'we'll sort out the environment after the revolution,' nor 'forget the revolution; we need to save the planet.' Any analysis of both the already happening and likely future impacts of climate change makes it clear that more and more, it will start to have massive implications for the daily lives of huge sections of the world's population—and of course, the first and worst hit will be the poorest sections of every society.

Examples of how this might begin to play out are everywhere. Last year there were riots in Mexico, Morocco and the Philippines over a jump in food prices caused almost entirely by increased global use of biofuels. The great hidden factor behind recent conflicts in Somalia and Darfur has been the vast reduction in the areas of arable land as a result of water shortage and desertification. When we think of both the forces that have generated this disaster (and more to the point) the people who will pay the consequences of it, the class divisions are openly exposed. It will not be those with the money and technology to move from the worst affected areas or pay for measures to adapt. The worst affected will be those who now bear the least responsibility: those without economic or social power.

It is clear that ecological destruction and the results of it are and will increasingly become a central point of real class struggle. There is no better example of the complete bankruptcy of capitalism as a way of organising our society for its long term survival and benefit than the fact that it now threatens the very ability of the planet's ecosystems to support complex life such as ourselves.

The basic principle of Workers Climate Action is that in all instances you make solidarity with the oppressed; in the case of an environmentally damaging industry there is therefore a contradiction to be grappled with. While the short term economic need of the workers is for the expansion and continuation of that industry, the wider interest of the working class and of the world is that their skills are applied to another role. The only principle that can break through this problem is that of solidarity: solidarity with people and planet regardless of any distinction.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! SAVE IT!

“OVERPOPULATION”: LETTING CAPITALISM OFF THE HOOK

The text below was written collectively by Manchester No Borders for *Shift Magazine*. It is a result of discussions in the group, and of the debates at the 2008 Camp for Climate Action, where we hosted a workshop on the topic. We have received lots of support/interest when we started engaging with the ‘overpopulation’ argument and would welcome further discussion of it within the No Borders network and beyond.

From when we started being active as a No Borders group in Manchester, we have been frustrated with a lack of radical analyses and critiques (anti-state, anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, anti-discrimination etc.) of climate change, particularly as we became aware of a ‘greening of immigration controls’. There appears to be an increasing tendency for green politics to lean towards repressive measures as solutions to the environmental crisis.

More specifically, in discussions with other (environmental) activists, we have recently found ourselves in disagreement over the issue of ‘overpopulation’. A common green orthodoxy today is that there are too many people on this planet, and that we need to do something about it. (Although as we gave a well-attended workshop at the Climate Camp on this topic, we were positively surprised how many of the participants were critical of this stance.)

In this article, we want to spell out the dangers of the ‘the planet is full’ argument and argue that ‘overpopulation’ is not the root cause of climate change. People are not the problem, but society. Human beings per se are not the problem, but the way our social life is organized: capitalism.

There are two levels to our criticism of the ‘overpopulation’ argument. One, the argument quite simply plays into the hands of governments, nationalists and anti-feminists who are quite happy to

step up demographic controls, people management and anti-immigration policies. Two, interpreting population growth as the root cause of the climate crisis completely disregards the systemic nature of the problem and thus lets capitalism off the hook.

THE OVERPOPULATION ARGUMENT

So where is the problem? The UN projects that world population figures will rise from today’s 6.8 billion to 9.2 billion by 2050. For the prophets of demographic doom, Britain, in particular, is under threat. Government projections are that the UK population is to rise from 60.6 million (mid-2006) to 77 million in 2050. Obviously, demographic modeling contains lots of cultural and political assumptions, and its observations should be treated as politically informed rather than neutral. Human population behaviour is very random and unpredictable, not something that can be forecasted as unproblematically as tomorrow’s weather, say (and you know how inaccurate that is!).

Whatever the assumption, an increasing amount of global players (from government agencies to international organizations, think tanks, and celebrities) conclude that the planet is full. They argue that any such densely populated area as Britain would be unsustainable in terms of food production, housing and energy needs.

Also, within the green movement this is not a marginal position, and it is no longer limited to ‘deep ecologists’. The green-nationalist think tank ‘Optimum Population Trust’, for example, estimates that the UK can only sustain less than half its current population level. And they demand a national population policy that first stabilizes the number of people in the UK and then gradually brings it down to 30 million.

The fact is, however, that the UK population is growing primarily because of immigration. The argument thus is threefold. First, immigration puts pressure on national resources such as wa-

ter, energy, food and land. Second, new migrants tend to have more children than the national population, thereby accelerating the problem. Third, migration to 'first world' countries turns previously low-impact consumers into high-impact consumers, thereby increasing their ecological footprints. It comes as no surprise to us, then, that the BNP calls itself the 'real Green Party'.

The government's chief green advisor, Jonathan Porritt, has also time and again argued this point. But what to do? Porritt's suggestion is straightforward: zero net immigration! David Cameron also agrees that rapid population increase will put pressure on our natural resources. And again, his solution is to lower net immigration: "my focus today is on population, and here we should note that only around thirty per cent of the projected increase in our population by 2031 is due to higher birth rates and longer life-spans... the evidence shows that roughly seventy per cent - more than two thirds - of the increase in our population each year is attributable to net migration. Of that increase, forty-seven per cent comes directly from people to moving to Britain, and the rest from higher birth rates amongst immigrant populations."

THE FEMINIST DIMENSION

It becomes clear that in a sexist, imperialist, capitalist world, it is impossible to separate discussion of population control from hierarchies of oppression. Which population is going to be "controlled" and how will this control come about?

Any form of population control risks seriously impinging upon women's right to bodily autonomy. State-enforced population control programs, such as China's 'one-child policy', are usually enacted upon women's bodies; it is women who are forced to have abortions, to undergo sterilisation, or to take long-term birth control products (often with serious health repercussions). Rarely are men forced to undergo vasectomies, despite the relative easiness of this procedure when compared to tubal ligation.

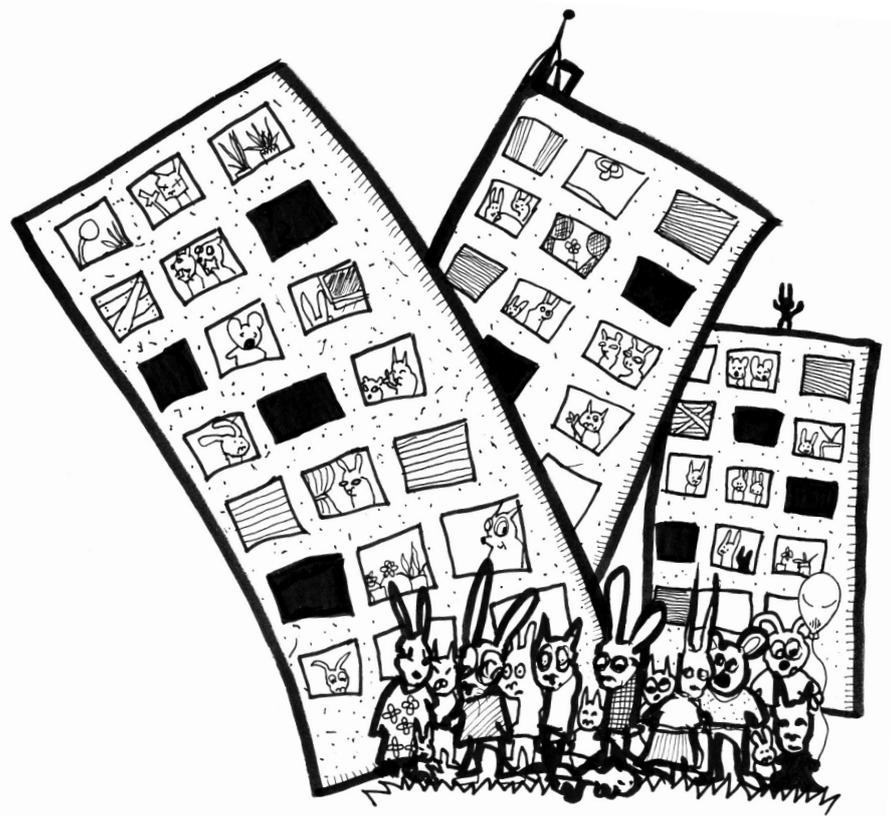


Illustration: Hampus Haraldsson

However, not all women will be affected equally; those from the Global South, ethnic minorities, those perceived as disabled, and the working class have historically borne the brunt of population control policies. Eugenicists in Victorian England were very clear about which segments of the population needed controlling: the poor and the disabled.

More recently, black British feminists in the 1970s and 1980s wrote about the need to campaign for abortion rights while at the same time also fighting for their right not to have abortions and not to be pressured into sterilisation. At the same time, dangerous forms of birth control, like early experimental forms of Depo-Provera, were being tested upon women in the Global South (and in predominantly African-American areas of the US) before being allowed for sale in the Western world. Today, women in the Global South are often 'encouraged' by NGOs to use long-term forms of birth control, like implants, that require a medical attention to stop (as opposed to something like the pill, which can be stopped at any time by the woman taking it). This history cannot be ignored

today when discussing population control in the UK. As single working-class mothers, immigrants and ethnic minorities (particularly Muslims) find themselves being increasingly demonised; any population control policies will target women from these groups.

MALTHUS

Throughout its history, the overpopulation argument has been used to present people and children as the source of inherently social problems, thus letting capitalism off the hook. The argument always goes like this: there are too many of us and the planet can't hack it. Whether it's the poor, the Jews, women, or migrants, all have been used strategically as scapegoats for an irrational and unproductive use of space and resources within a capitalist economy.

One of the most prominent writers on overpopulation was Thomas Malthus, a 19th century cleric of the Church of England. His treatise on overpopulation "A summary view of the principle

of population” was printed in 1830, but is still read widely today. Malthus stated that whilst population increased at a geometric rate (1, 2, 4, 8, 16...), doubling every 25 years, food production increases at an arithmetic rate (1, 2, 3, 4, 5...). Malthus believed this disparity between food production and population growth was the root cause of “checks to (human) growth” such as war, famine and disease.

The strong strand of prejudice within Malthus’ work, however, often goes unacknowledged by neo-Malthusians. He saw poverty as deserved rather than produced and blamed the poor for their “lack of moral restraint”, thus making them the primary focus of population policy. The inherent conservatism and class prejudice hidden behind a veneer of scientific objectivity has made Malthus a popular source of intellectual legitimacy for various conservative and authoritarian positions.

In the late 19th century, Eugenists began utilising and expanding on Malthus’s critique of the rapid population growth of the poor. Eugenists argued that this lack of restraint was geneti-

cally inherited and posed a threat to the future of the nation (one prominent Eugenist was Winston Churchill). Many discriminatory laws were passed to attempt to influence the outcome of breeding. Once again, systemic problems were naturalised and projected upon the very people most negatively affected by them.

NEO-MALTHUSIANISM

Many anti-migration authors have also propagated Malthusian ideas. These arguments have relied upon an analysis of national resources as closed and finite systems and exaggerating rates of migration. Proposals for the closing of borders are contrasted with images of swarms of migrants exhausting national resources like locusts. One example of this nationalist position, which supports the competitive nature of states, is this quote from the journal *Population and Environment*:

“Countries that are in the lead in reducing their populations should not give in to advocates of growth by allowing mas-

sive immigration. This rewards those who multiply irresponsibly.”

As environments change due to climate change, the monster of ‘overpopulation’ is being resurrected as a security issue. As we are seeing with climate change, environmental issues provide a space for the legitimisation of conservative and authoritarian policies.

Perhaps one of the most influential of these authors was Garrett Hardin, whose 1968 essay “The Tragedy of the Commons” masked a pro-private property stance beneath a veneer of scientific objectivity. Hardin believed that without private ownership of natural resources, unchecked population growth would lead to their exhaustion.

The same arguments were used to support the 20th century ‘green revolution’, and are appearing again with the G8 leaders in Japan agreeing to extend research into GM crops to deal with ‘overpopulation’. ‘Overpopulation’ is used as a convenient argument to support the agendas of specific political and economic actors.

THE FUTURE IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

For some years now everyone is talking about climate change – Angela Merkel, the G8, the World Bank, Al Gore, CEO’s, the farmers organization “Via Campesina”, all of them have something to say about the climate. Except the radical left.

Many in the Radical left often dismiss climate politics as a fashion topic of alternative leftists, to be of interest mainly to the green bourgeoisie. In this context ecological issues are quickly equated with the simple call for a renouncement of consumption, which will produce nothing but an individualization of the problem. For good reasons the need to distance oneself from the homeland security

type of environment protection, as well as from a bourgeois approach of an individually healthy, carbon-neutral life based on organic food, is enormous. But this cannot lead the radical left to the conclusion to simply renounce dealing with the issue.

For the radical left, the debate about ecological issues requires mainly a radical critique of economic growth

But let's not attack a straw man here. None of the green progressives here in the UK argue for more stringent migration controls (in contrast to parts of the green conservationist movement in the US). Nonetheless, we have witnessed population graphs being used in climate change presentations, which could have lead to knee-jerk reactions and dangerous political conclusions when taken out of their left-wing context.

EARTH FIRST?

The climate action movement of course recognises the repression faced by migrants and the fact that the groups of people who are hit hardest by climate change are in the Global South. However, even with the best intentions of warding off ecological destruction and creating better lives for people in the face of climate chaos, the 'overpopulation' argument still ignores the systemic logic behind climate change: capitalism.

The central flaw to Malthusian thought is its a-systemic nature. Regardless of the economic system or social organisation,

it views the root cause of most human suffering as population growth, and in particular the threat of the poor becoming richer (and thus consuming more). Poverty however, is produced not bred, and by projecting systemic flaws onto those it most affects, neo-Malthusianism both helps to protect the status quo from criticism and construct vulnerable social groups as legitimate targets of control.

As relatively rich Western countries consume the most energy, it is often argued that it is their populations, in particular, that should be curbed, whether by authoritarian state control or by individuals in the West simply realizing it is their moral responsibility not to reproduce. But to imply that the Earth should come before a child can lead down a dangerous path. It may lead to a resentment of those social groups that migrate or reproduce more often than others. Besides, social, economic, and cultural pressures to have or not to have children cannot be tackled through individual lifestyle choices and guilt trips.

An emancipatory response to climate change requires a political and social

solution. We should be attacking capitalism, not children and families. In a world where children are killed over oil and exploited at the hands of multi-national corporations, it isn't surprising that children will eventually be blamed for capitalism's fuck-ups. Capitalism doesn't make sense and neither do capitalist solutions. The 'overpopulation' argument ignores the contradictions inherent in capitalism that mediate the relationship between human beings and the environment and already limit our freedom and desires on a real everyday level.

Instead of acknowledging the unprecedented global disasters that seem to spiral as capitalism grows and spreads its destructive wings, the 'overpopulation' argument asks not for a new form of social organisation (that might see land and resources accessed and shared more evenly, contributing to less poverty, more sustainable lifestyles and fewer wars), but takes the shameful and hopeless route of asking people to have fewer children. In a world where we are repeatedly screwed over, we are now being asked not to screw!

and technology. If it was possible in recent years to avoid facing this discussion, it will become harder when talking about greenhouse gas emissions. What's clear is, that the effects of capitalist growth can only be solved socially, not individually.

But it has to be equally clear that the "Everything for everybody" policy we have propagated so far runs the risk of becoming an empty and arrogant phrase of the metropolis, considering the dramatically decreasing resources and the ecological burden distributed so unequally across the planet. What could this "all" be in the future, that is to be equally distributed? In our opinion the radical left in Germany has to search for a political reorientation, if she doesn't want

to loose the connection to the global left critical of the system pretty soon.

In the next years climate change will have drastic ecological, social and political effects - and this not only in the global south but also here in Europe. All parts of the radical left should confront themselves with these effects, if they want to have any influence in the upcoming conflicts of society. For example: What will happen, when the border regime we face today collapses under the mass of refugees and then gets replaced by the military? And what will happen by the time petrol gets so expensive that the average citizens cannot afford to fly to Mallorca for holidays anymore or drive to work with their cars? For the radical left

this offers the chance to scandalize the social failure of capitalism, and to dismantle it ideologically and practically. Right now the effects of climate change are shifted on to the poor people of the world without restraint and in open public - and only little dissent is to be heard from the rich metropolis...

Climate change does not only pose a threat, it is also a chance. By the time adjustments to climate change have been made, it will have lead to drastic economic and social instability, and the question will no longer be if there will be radical political changes, but which changes these will be.

(excerpts from a text originally written in German)

FORGET SHORTER SHOWERS.

WHY PERSONAL CHANGE DOES NOT EQUAL POLITICAL CHANGE

BY DERRICK JENSEN ILLUSTRATION: RITA TUTA

Would any sane person think dumpster diving would have stopped Hitler, or that composting would have ended slavery or brought about the eight-hour workday, or that chopping wood and carrying water would have gotten people out of Tsarist prisons, or that dancing naked around a fire would have helped put in place the Voting Rights Act of 1957 or the Civil Rights Act of 1964? Then why now, with all the world at stake, do so many people retreat into these entirely personal “solutions”?

Part of the problem is that we’ve been victims of a campaign of systematic misdirection. Consumer culture and the capitalist mindset have taught us to substitute acts of personal consumption (or enlightenment) for organized political resistance. An Inconvenient Truth helped raise consciousness about global warming. But did you notice that all of the solutions presented had to do with personal consumption - changing light bulbs, inflating tires, driving half as much - and had nothing to do with shifting power away from corporations, or stopping the growth economy that is destroying the planet? Even if every person in the United States did everything the movie suggested, U.S. carbon emissions would fall by only 22 percent. Scientific consensus is that emissions must be reduced by at least 75 percent worldwide.

Or let’s talk water. We so often hear that the world is running out of water. People are dying from lack of water. Rivers are dewatered from lack of water. Because of this we need to take shorter showers. See the disconnect? Because I take showers, I’m responsible for drawing down aquifers? Well, no. More than 90 per-

cent of the water used by humans is used by agriculture and industry. The remaining 10 percent is split between municipalities and actual living breathing individual humans. Collectively, municipal golf courses use as much water as municipal human beings. People (both human people and fish people) aren’t dying because the world is running out of water. They’re dying because the water is being stolen.

Or let’s talk energy. Kirkpatrick Sale summarized it well: “For the past 15 years the story has been the same every year: individual consumption - residential, by private car, and so on - is never more than about a quarter of all consumption; the vast majority is commercial, industrial, corporate, by agribusiness and government (he forgot military). So, even if we all took up cycling and wood stoves it would have a negligible impact on energy use, global warming and atmospheric pollution.”

Or let’s talk waste. In 2005, per-capita municipal waste production (basically everything that’s put out at the curb) in the U.S. was about 1,660 pounds (753 kg). Let’s say you’re a die-hard simple-living activist, and you reduce this to zero. You recycle everything. You bring cloth bags shopping. You fix your toaster. Your toes poke out of old tennis shoes. You’re not done yet, though. Since municipal waste includes not just residential waste, but also waste from government offices and businesses, you march to those offices, waste reduction pamphlets in hand, and convince them to cut down on their waste enough to eliminate your share of it. Uh, I’ve got some bad news. Municipal waste accounts for only 3 percent of total waste production in the United States.



If I buy 3 hybrid cars
I reduce the emissions
3 times as much!



Yes. And if you don't move
to a self-sufficient
ecovillage you have yourself
to blame if there's a
food shortage.



Exactly! everyone has to
do their share. I have a
sun-heated jacuzzi in my
straw bale house!

I want to be clear. I'm not saying we shouldn't live simply. I live reasonably simply myself, but I don't pretend that not buying much (or not driving much, or not having kids) is a powerful political act, or that it's deeply revolutionary. It's not. Personal change doesn't equal social change.

So how, then, and especially with all the world at stake, have we come to accept these utterly insufficient responses? I think part of it is that we're in a double bind. A double bind is where you're given multiple options, but no matter what option you choose, you lose, and withdrawal is not an option. At this point, it should be pretty easy to recognize that every action involving the industrial economy is destructive (and we shouldn't pretend that solar photovoltaics, for example, exempt us from this: they still require mining and transportation infrastructures at every point in the production processes; the same can be said for every other so-called green technology). So if we choose option one - if we avidly participate in the industrial economy - we may in the short term think we win because we may accumulate wealth, the marker of "success" in this culture. But we lose, because in doing so we give up our empathy, our animal humanity. And we really lose because industrial civilization is killing the planet, which means everyone loses.

If we choose the "alternative" option of living more simply, thus causing less harm, but still not stopping the industrial economy from killing the planet, we may in the short term think we win because we get to feel pure, and we didn't even have to give up all of our empathy (just enough to justify not stopping the horrors), but once again we really lose because industrial civilization is still killing the planet, which means everyone still loses. The third option, acting decisively to stop the industrial economy, is very scary for a number of reasons, including but not restricted to the fact that we'd lose some of the luxuries (like electricity) to which we've grown accustomed, and the fact that those in power might try to kill us if we seriously impede their ability to exploit the world - none of which alters the fact that it's a better option than a dead planet. Any option is a better option than a dead planet.

Besides being ineffective at causing the sorts of changes necessary to stop this culture from killing the planet, there are at least four other problems with perceiving simple living as a political act (as opposed to living simply because that's what you want to do). The first is that

it's predicated on the flawed notion that humans inevitably harm their landbase. Simple living as a political act consists solely of harm reduction, ignoring the fact that humans can help the Earth as well as harm it. We can rehabilitate streams, we can get rid of noxious invasives, we can remove dams, we can disrupt a political system tilted toward the rich as well as an extractive economic system, we can destroy the industrial economy that is destroying the real, physical world.

The second problem - and this is another big one - is that it incorrectly assigns blame to the individual (and most especially to individuals who are particularly powerless) instead of to those who actually wield power in this system and to the system itself. Kirkpatrick Sale again: "The whole individualist what-you-can-do-to-save-the-earth guilt trip is a myth. We, as individuals, are not creating the crises, and we can't solve them."

The third problem is that it accepts capitalism's redefinition of us from citizens to consumers. By accepting this redefinition, we reduce our potential forms of resistance to consuming and not consuming. Citizens have a much wider range of available resistance tactics, including voting, not voting, running for office, pamphleting, boycotting, organizing, lobbying, protesting, and, when a government becomes destructive of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we have the right to alter or abolish it.

The fourth problem is that the endpoint of the logic behind simple living as a political act is suicide. If every act within an industrial economy is destructive, and if we want to stop this destruction, and if we are unwilling (or unable) to question (much less destroy) the intellectual, moral, economic, and physical infrastructures that cause every act within an industrial economy to be destructive, then we can easily come to believe that we will cause the least destruction possible if we are dead.

The good news is that there are other options. We can follow the examples of brave activists who lived through the difficult times I mentioned - Nazi Germany, Tsarist Russia, antebellum United States - who did far more than manifest a form of moral purity; they actively opposed the injustices that surrounded them. We can follow the example of those who remembered that the role of an activist is not to navigate systems of oppressive power with as much integrity as possible, but rather to confront and take down those systems.



Jaha, vi kan
ju snabbt konstatera här att
benen nästan
har gått av och
att ditt tillstånd
är mycket kritiskt
och livshotande.
Därför har vi satt
upp som delmål att
ha ambitionen att
sy ihop köttsåren
med ca 5% per
år fram till år
2020.

"Alright, here we can observe that the legs are almost broken off and that your condition is very critical and life-threatening. Therefore we have made an intermediate goal to have the ambition to sew together the flesh wounds with ca 5% a year until the year 2020"

Sara Granér

THE ENVIRONMENT IS AN INDUSTRIAL CHALLENGE

from 'The Coming Insurrection' by the invisible committee

Ecology is the new big discovery of the year. It's been for the last thirty years that we've just been leaving that stuff to the Greens, laughing about it on Sunday and acting concerned about it on Monday. And now it's caught up to us, and is invading the airwaves like a hit song in summertime, since it's 68°F (20°C) in December now. A quarter of the fish species have disappeared from the ocean, and the rest don't have much time left either.

Bird flu alert: hundreds of thousands of migrating birds are to be shot in flight. The mercury levels in human breast milk are ten times higher than the rates allowable for cows. Lips swell up on biting an apple; it came from the market... The simplest gestures have become toxic. We die at the age of 35 from "a long illness" that's managed like everything else is managed... We should've drawn the right conclusions before things got this bad, where we're all patients at pavilion B in the palliative care center at the hospital.

It must be said that this whole "catastrophe" we're so noisily kept up on doesn't really effect us. At least not before it hits us with one of its perfectly normal and expected consequences. Maybe it doesn't concern us because it doesn't touch us. And that's the catastrophe right there.

There's no "environmental catastrophe." The environment itself is the catastrophe. The environment is what's left to man after he's lost everything. Those who live in a neighborhood, a street, a valley, a war zone, a workshop – they don't have an "environment;" they're living in a world, peopled by presences, dangers, friends, enemies, living and dying areas, all kinds of beings. This world has its own substance, which varies according to the intensity and quality of the connections that attach us to all these beings, all these places. There's no one but us, we children of the final dispossession, the exiles of the end times – who come into the world in concrete cubes, harvest our fruits at the supermarket, and catch the echo of the world through television – only we get to have an environment. And there's no one but us watching our own annihilation as if it were just a simple change of atmosphere. Getting indignant about the latest advancements of the disaster, and patiently putting together encyclopedia entries about them.

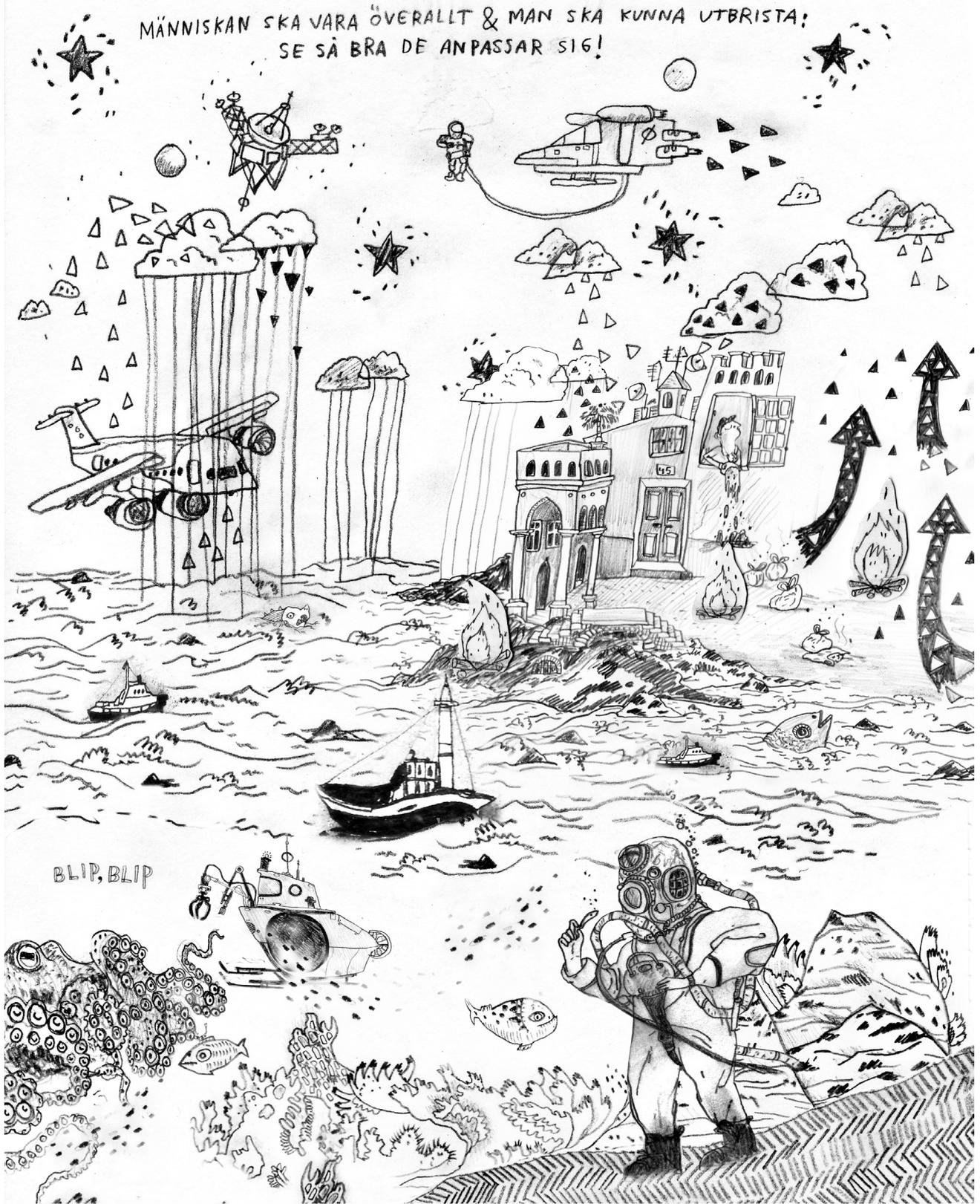
What is frozen in an environment is a relationship with the world based on management, that is, on foreignness. A relationship with the world where we're not made as well as the rustling of trees, the smell of frying oil in the building, the bubbling of water, the uproar of school classrooms, the mugginess of summer evenings, a relationship with the world where there is me and then there is my environment, surrounding me but never really constituting me. We have become neighbors in a planetary co-owners' meeting. It's hard to imagine a more complete hell.

No material surroundings have ever deserved the name "environment," except perhaps for today's metropolis. Digital voices making announcements, tramways with such a 21st century whistle, bluish streetlamps looking like giant matchsticks, pedestrians made up like failed fashion models, the silent rotation of a video surveillance camera, the lucid crackling of the metro electricity terminals, supermarket checkout counters, office time-clocks, electronic ambiances at the cybercafé, the profusion of plasma screens, fast lanes and latex. Never has a decor been so able to do without the souls traversing it. Never have surroundings been more automatic. Never has a context been so indifferent, and demanded in return such equal indifference in order to survive in it. The environment is in the end merely that: the relationship with the world that is proper to the metropolis, which projects itself onto everything that escapes it.

Here's the situation: our parents were employed to destroy this world, and now they'd like to make us all work to rebuild it so that, adding insult to injury, it becomes profitable. The morbid excitement that drives the journalists and ad-men these days in reporting each new piece of evidence for global warming unveils the steely smile of the new green capitalism, in the making since the 70s, which we waited for at the turn of the century but which never came. Well, here it is! Ecology, that's green capitalism for you! Alternative solutions, that's it too! The health of the planet demands it! No doubt about it anymore, it's a green scene; the environment is to be the pivot point for the political economy of the 21st century. A volley of "industrial solutions" are introduced for each new catastrophic possibility.

The inventor of the H bomb, Edward Teller, suggests spraying millions of tons of metallic dust into the atmosphere to stop global warming. NASA, frustrated at having had to put its grand idea of an anti-missile shield away in the museum of cold war horrors, suggests putting a gigantic mirror beyond the moon to protect us from the sun's now-fatal rays. Another vision of the

MÄNNISKAN SKA VARA ÖVERALLT & MAN SKA KUNNA UTBRISTA!
SE SÅ BRA DE ANPASSAR SIG!



BLIP, BLIP

"Mankind should be everywhere & one should be able to exclaim: look how good they adapt themselves!"

Clara Johansson

future: a motorized humanity, driving along fueled by bio-ethanol from Sao Paulo to Stockholm; the dream of a cereal grower from the Beauce¹, which after all only implies the conversion of all the arable land in the planet for soy beans and sugar beets. Ecological cars, clean energy, environmental consulting co-existing smoothly with the latest Chanel ad, throughout the glossy pages of the opinion magazines.

We are told that the environmental issue has the incomparable merit of being the first truly global problem that humanity has had to deal with. A global problem, that is, a problem that only those who are organized on a global level will be able to solve. And we know who that is: the very same groups that for almost the past century have been the vanguard of disaster, and certainly intend to remain as such, but with a minor logo change: cheap! That the EDF² has the impudence to serve us up its nuclear program again as the new solution to the global energy crisis says plenty about how much the new solutions seem to perfectly resemble the old problems.

Secretaries of State in the back rooms of alternative cafés always express their concerns in the same words, which are after all the same words as ever. People have to get mobilized. Not for to rebuild the country, like in the post-war era; not for the Ethiopians like in the 1980s, not for employment like in the 1990s. No, this time it's about the environment. It will thank you for it. Al Gore, Hulot³ style ecology, and de-growth stand side by side with the eternal great souls of the Republic to play their role in re-exciting the little left wing people and the well known idealism of youth. Voluntary austerity writ large on their flag, they work benevolently to make us compliant with the "ecological state of emergency to come." The sticky round mass of their guilt lands on our tired shoulders, intending to push us on to cultivate our garden, sort out our garbage, and compost the rest of the macabre feast in which and for which we are patronized condescendingly.

Manage the phasing out of nuclear power, the excess CO₂ in the atmosphere, the melting glaciers, the hurricanes, the epidemics, global over-population, the erosion of the soil, the mass disappearance of living species... such is our burden. "It's everyone's duty to change their behaviors," they say, if we want to save our fine civilization-model. We must consume little, in order to be able to go on consuming. We must produce organically in order to be able to go on producing. We must control ourselves in order to still have control. Such is the logic of a world trying to survive while giving itself an air of historical rupture. Thus they would like to convince us to participate in the great industrial challenges of the present century. And stupid as we are, we're ready to leap into the arms of the very same people that presided over causing the devastation, expecting them to get us out of it.

Ecology isn't just the logic of total economy, it's also the new morality of Capital. The system's state of internal crisis and the rigorous selection going on are such that we will need a new criteria to operate such sorting with. From one era to the next, the idea of virtue was never more than an invention of vice. Without ecology, how could we have today the existence of two different food

channels, one "healthy and organic" for the rich and their children, and the other notoriously toxic for the plebes and their offspring, damned to obesity? The planetary hyper-bourgeoisie couldn't make their ordinary lifestyle look respectable if its latest caprices weren't so scrupulously "respectful of the environment." Without ecology, no one would have enough authority anymore to shut up any and all objections to the exorbitant progress of control.

Tracking, transparency, certification, eco-taxes, environmental excellence, water police: all give us an idea of the coming state of ecological emergency. Everything is permitted to a power structure that authorizes itself to act as the representative of Nature, health, and well-being.

"Once the new economic and behavioral culture has passed into common morality, coercive measures will doubtless fall into disuse of their own accord." You'd have to have all the ridiculous aplomb of a television adventure show host to have such a frozen perspective, and at the same time to call upon us to feel "sorry for the planet" enough to get mobilized about it, and yet remain sufficiently anesthetized to watch the whole thing with restraint and civility. The new eco-asceticism is precisely that self-control is required of us all to negotiate the rescue operation for what the system itself has taken hostage. In the name of ecology, we must all now tighten our belts, as yesterday we did so in the name of the economy. The roads could certainly be transformed into bicycle paths; we ourselves could perhaps within a certain scope be one day gratified with a guaranteed income, but only at the price of an entirely therapeutic existence. Those who claim that generalized self-control will spare us from an environmental dictatorship are lying: the one will make the other's bed, and we'll have both.

As long as there is Man and Environment, there between them will be the police.

Everything about the ecologists' discourse has to be turned upside down. Whenever they call the blunders of the present management system for beings and things "catastrophes," we should really only see the catastrophe of its oh-so perfect operation. The greatest wave of famine known in the tropical belt to this day (1876-1879) coincided with a global drought, but above all it coincided with the apogee of colonization. The destruction of the provincial world and of its food-production practices had made the means of dealing with scarcity disappear. Beyond a mere lack of water, it was the effect of the colonial economy in full swing of expansion that covered the whole tropical strip with thin corpses. What presents itself everywhere as an ecological catastrophe has always been above all the manifestation of our disastrous relationship with the world. The way we don't really inhabit it at all makes us vulnerable to the slightest jolt in the system, to the slightest climactic risk. As the latest tsunami approaches, and the tourists continue to frolic in the waves, the islands' hunter-gatherers make haste to flee the coasts, following the birds. The present paradox of ecology is that on the pretext of saving the Earth, it is merely saving the foundations of what's desolated it.

The regular functioning of the world normally serves to hide our state of truly catastrophic dispossession. What is called "catastro-

phe” is no more than the forced suspension of this state, one of those rare moments when we regain some sort of presence in the world. Let the petroleum reserves run out earlier than expected; let the international flows that maintain the metropolis’ tempo get interrupted; let us suffer some great social disruption and some great “return to savagery of the population,” a “planetary menace,” or the “end of civilization”! Either way, any loss of control would be preferable to all the crisis management scenarios they envision. The specialists in sustainable development aren’t the ones with the best advice. The logical elements for a response to this problem, which could easily cease to be one, come out in times of malfunction, when the system short-circuits. Among the signatory nations to the Kyoto Protocol, the only countries that have fulfilled their commitments, indeed in spite of themselves, are the Ukraine and Romania. Guess why. The most advanced experimentation with “organic” agriculture on a global level has taken place since 1989 on the island of Cuba. Guess why. And it’s along the African highways, and not elsewhere, that automobile mechanics work has come to be a form of popular art. Guess how. What makes the crisis desirable is that in the crisis the environment ceases to be the environment. We are forced to re-establish contact, albeit a fatal one, with what’s there, to rediscover the rhythms of reality. What surrounds us is no longer a landscape, a panorama, a theater; rather, it is what we have to inhabit, something we should be made of, something we can learn from. We won’t let ourselves be robbed by those who’ve caused the possible content of the “catastrophe.” Where the managers platonically discuss among themselves how they might reverse emissions “without breaking the bank,” the only realistic option we can see is to “break the bank” as soon as possible, and make good use of each collapse of the system until then to increase our strength.

New Orleans, a few days after hurricane Katrina: in this apocalyptic atmosphere, life is reorganizing itself. In the face of the inaction of the public authorities, who were too busy cleaning up the “French quarter” tourist area and pro-

tecting the shops to come to the aid of the poorer city dwellers, forgotten forms are reborn. In spite of the sometimes forcible attempts to evacuate the area, and in spite of the “negro hunting” parties that the supremacist militias went out on, a lot of people refused to leave the terrain. For the latter, who refused to be deported like “environmental refugees” to the four corners of the country, and for those who from nearly everywhere decided to join them in solidarity, responding to a call from a former Black Panther, self-organization came back to the fore. In a few weeks’ time, the Common Ground Clinic was set up. This true country hospital provided, from the very first days, free and ever more effective care to those who needed it, thanks to the constant influx of volunteers. Years later, the clinic is still the base for an everyday resistance to the clean-sweep operation of the government’s bulldozers, which are trying to turn that part of the city into a pasture for property developers. Popular kitchens, supplies, street medicine, illegal takeovers, the construction of emergency housing: a

whole practical knowledge accumulated by people here and there over the course of their lives has a place to be put to use there, far from the uniforms and sirens.

Whoever knew the penniless joy of these New Orleans neighborhoods before the catastrophe, the defiance of the State that already characterized them and the mass “coping” that was already happening there, wouldn’t be surprised that all that has come to pass was possible. On the other hand, someone who’s trapped in the anemic and atomized everyday routine of our residential deserts might doubt that any such determination could be found anywhere anymore. Yet to reconnect with such gestures, buried under years of normalized life, is the only practicable means of not sinking to the bottom along with this world. May there come a time when we again become impassioned by those gestures.

- (1) A region in northern France, between the Seine and Loire rivers
- (2) Electricity of France
- (3) Mr Hulot, bumbling French movie character in films by Jacques Tati.



Illustration by Ella Tillema

Six Arguments against Alternative Industrialism

BY: MIKKO VIRTANEN

Almost everyone from capitalists to mainstream environmentalists and anarchists are proposing a massive construction project of alternative industrial infrastructure, replacing the current high emitting infrastructure, to solve the problem of global warming. These people say we need more wind energy, solar energy and ocean energy, a new electrical grid, electric cars, and even energy efficient household appliances. If critique of capitalism is uncommon these days, then critique of alternative industrialism is even less common. Here are some arguments often left out of the debate.

1.

To build a new green infrastructure of such a massive scale would require a lot of energy and materials, which can only be provided through the use of already existing fossil fuel based infrastructure. Inevitably this would lead to a lot of net greenhouse gas emissions, in a situation when we need to start reducing them quickly.

2.

The production of this new infrastructure will require a vast amount of raw materials, much of which are not renewable themselves, and are environmentally destructive to obtain. Alternative industrial technologies, such as wind turbines, solar panels and electric cars require a lot of rare earth metals that are already in short supply from the current alternative industrialism boom. It has yet to be proven if we even have the raw materials available to make enough wind turbines and solar panels to keep up current levels of energy consumption or any significant level of industrial production at all.

3.

The new surge in green manufacturing puts a lot of pressure to open new mines

and to build new processing plants. These new mines and other methods of resource extraction will inevitably destroy and poison local communities around the source of extraction. Even Jana Hartline, Toyota's environmental communication manager admits: "Mining in any way, shape or form is never an environmentally friendly process. That's the nature of the beast."

4.

If industrial production were to be ecologically sustainable, it would have to be a closed loop when it comes to non-renewable materials. In other words 100 % recycling. With current technology, this is impossible.

5.

A question that shouldn't be underestimated for anti authoritarians is whether or not it is possible to sustain the large scale co-operation and deep specialization necessary for running any type of industrial production, without falling into hierarchical ways of organization. This should not be taken lightly: the organization of CNT, the anarchist labor union which controlled much of industrial production in some areas of

Spain during the civil war, had at least six levels of hierarchy.

6.

It takes time to build new infrastructure, time that we don't have. There are diverging opinions whether any kind of alternative green infrastructure could be built quickly enough to be any kind of replacement.

What all this means is that if we want to halt global warming, we need to start questioning our dependence on industrial production and infrastructure. We need to put wind energy, solar energy and other alternative industrial solutions on the list of false solutions along with agrofuels, nuclear energy, and clean coal technology. As soon as possible, we need to start doing the only thing that can halt the destruction of our life supporting systems: reducing our industrial production and consumption to the absolute minimum.

FURTHER READING: SHARON ASTYK: A NEW DEAL OR A WAR FOOTING? THINKING THROUGH OUR RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE (CASAUBON'S BOOK, 11.11.2008) / JEFF VAIL: THE RENEWABLES HUMP (2009) AND RENEWABLE TRANSITION (THE OIL DRUM, 2009) / STEW COWANS: RARE EARTH SUPPLY CRIMP COULD DERAILED EXPANSION IN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INDUSTRY (RAREMETAL MEDIA, 27.8.2009) / STEVE GORMAN: AS HYBRID CARS GOBBLE RARE METALS, SHORTAGE LOOMS (REUTERS, 31.8.2009) / DAMIAN KAHYA: BOLIVIA HOLDS KEY TO ELECTRIC CAR FUTURE (BBC NEWS, 9.11.2008) / BRADLEY BERMAN: SHORTAGE OF RARE METALS FOR HYBRIDS IS OVERBLOWN (HYBRIDCARS.COM, 4.9.2009) / I.WERNICK AND N.J. THEMELIS: RECYCLING METALS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (1998) / ROBERT U. AYRES, LESLIE W. AYRES AND INGRID RÅDE: THE LIFE CYCLE OF COPPER, ITS CO-PRODUCTS AND BY-PRODUCTS (2002) / ROBERT U. AYRES: TOXIC HEAVY METALS: MATERIALS CYCLE OPTIMIZATION (1991) / BOB BLACK: ON ORGANISATION (CHAPTER 4 IN ANACHY AFTER LEFTISM, C.A.L. PRESS, 1997). SEE ALSO P. 14-5 IN MURRAY BOOKCHIN: TO REMEMBER SPAIN (AK PRESS, 1994) AND "CENTRALIZATION AND PLANNING" IN DANIEL GUERIN'S "ANARCHISM - FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE".

Twenty Theses Against Green Capitalism

BY TADZIO MULLER AND ALEXIS PASSADAKIS

Global capitalism really isn't doing so well these days: from mortgages to banks, from the banks to the car industry, from the US to Western Europe, from Western to Eastern Europe... Nobody seems to know where the crisis will strike next.

Be realistic, demand the possible!

All that is clear is that it will continue to strike, and strike, and strike. This is not a 'normal' economic crisis, i.e. one that is caused by the normal ups and downs of an economic cycle. This crisis goes deep: it is the result of decades of neoliberal assaults on wages and welfare benefits, leading to an excess of supply of goods and services over demand. Or in other words: there's too much stuff that wants to be bought out there, and not enough people with enough money to buy it. Profit rates are low, productivity growth is depressed, and this time, unlike the last few times a crisis seemed to threaten the wobbly edifice of neoliberalism, there is no new bubble in sight to soak up all the excess capital sloshing around the world. So to sum up: global capitalism really isn't doing so well these days, and that's not even mentioning the energy crisis, the crumbling of US-hegemony, etc., etc...

And then there's what we call the 'biocrisis': the multiple socio-ecological crisis tendencies that arise as a result of the antagonism between collective human survival in relatively stable eco-social sys-

tems, and the requirements of economic growth. The most prominent of these is no doubt the climate crisis, but further crisis tendencies, all of which stand in a reasonably direct relationship to capitalist production, are: loss of biodiversity; lack of access to water; loss of arable land through erosion and desertification; over-fishing; destruction of forests, and so on.

This biocrisis, while a threat to us as human beings, is actually quite interesting for capital: it might just be possible to use public concern about this crisis to channel massive investment flows into so-called 'green technologies', get governments to subsidise the construction of 'green cars', or maybe get a new 'green' construction boom going. This would mean kick-starting economic growth again, and – from the perspective of capital – all would be well again. Because that is all that capital can and must care about: economic growth. Whether or not the biocrisis is solved by such 'green growth' is not in fact the question – it cannot be. But what if solutions to the climate and biocrisis require actions that would reduce growth

rates below zero? Are the – largely – well-meaning advocates of a Green New Deal prepared to go this far? Nothing in their proposals so far seems to suggest that this is the case...

This is the context for our 20 theses against green capitalism. We believe that the biocrisis is fundamentally caused by economic growth in a fossilistic capitalist system. For example, 250 years of industrial capitalism have equalled 250 years of explosive rises in carbon emissions. Only if we manage to use the political space opened by the current crisis to really tackle the mad, destructive need for growth that is at the heart of both capitalism and the biocrisis can we hope to solve the latter – not through some social-democratic tinkering around capitalism's destructive edges. A Green New Deal sounds nice, but falls short of this. In the current climate, it is possible to challenge the fundamentals of capitalism. So we should have the courage to do so. Let's be realistic and demand the possible: shut down global capitalism – fossilistic or greenwashed!

I.

The current world economic crisis marks the end of the neoliberal phase of capitalism. 'Business as usual' (financialisation, deregulation, privatisation...) is thus no longer an option: new spaces of accumulation and types of political regulation will need to be found by governments and corporations to keep capitalism going.

2.

Alongside the economic and political as well as energy crises, there is another crisis rocking the world: the biocrisis, the result of a suicidal mismatch between the ecological life support system that guarantees our collective human survival and capital's need for constant growth.

3.

This biocrisis is an immense danger to our collective survival, but like all crises it also presents our social movements with a historic opportunity: to really go for capitalism's exposed jugular, its need for unceasing, destructive, insane growth

4.

Of the proposals that have emerged from global elites, the only one that promises to address all these crises is the 'Green New Deal'. This is not the cuddly green capitalism 1.0 of organic agriculture and D.I.Y. windmills, but a proposal for a new 'green' phase of capitalism that seeks to generate profits from the piecemeal ecological modernisation of certain key areas of production (cars, energy, etc.).

5.

Green capitalism 2.0 cannot solve the biocrisis (climate change and other ecological problems such as the dangerous reduction of biodiversity), but rather tries to profit from it. It therefore does not fundamentally alter the collision course on which any market-driven economy sets humanity with the biosphere.

6.

This isn't the 1930s. Then, under the pressure of powerful social movements, the old 'New Deal' redistributed power and wealth downwards. The 'NewNew' and 'GreenNewDeal' discussed by Obama, green parties all around the world, and even some multinationals is more about welfare for corporations than for people

7.

Green Capitalism won't challenge the power of those who actually produce most greenhouse gases – the energy companies, airlines and carmakers, and industrial agriculture – but will simply shower them with more money to help maintain their profit rates by making small ecological changes that will be too little, too late.

8.

Globally, working people have lost their power to bargain and demand rights and decent wages, so in a green capitalist setup, wages will probably stagnate or even decline to offset the rising costs of 'ecological modernisation'.

9.

The 'green capitalist state' will be an authoritarian one. Justified by the threat of ecological crisis, it will 'manage' the social unrest that will necessarily grow from the impoverishment that lies in the wake of rising cost of living (food, energy, etc.) and falling wages.

10.

In green capitalism, the poor will have to be excluded from consumption, pushed to the margins, while the wealthy will get to 'offset' their continued environmentally destructive behaviour, shopping and saving the planet at the same time.

II.

An authoritarian state, massive class inequalities, welfare given to cor-

porations: from the point of view of social and ecological emancipation, green capitalism will be a disaster that we can never recover from. Today, we have a chance to get beyond the suicidal madness of constant growth. Tomorrow, by the time we've all gotten used to the new green regime, that chance may be gone.

12.

In green capitalism, there is a danger that established, mainstream environmental groups will come to play the role that trade unions played in the Fordist era: acting as safety valves to make sure that demands for social change and our collective rage remain within the boundaries set by the needs of capital and governments.

13.

Albert Einstein defined 'insanity' as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." In the past decade, in spite of Kyoto, not only has the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increased – so, too, has the rate of increase. Do we simply want more of the same? Wouldn't that be insane?

International climate agreements promote false solutions that are often more about energy security than climate change. Far from solving the crisis, emissions trading, CMD, joint implementation, offsets and so on all provide a political shield for the continued production of greenhouse gases with impunity.

15.

For many communities in the global South, these false solutions (agrofuels, 'green deserts', CDM-projects) are by now often a greater threat than climate change itself.

16.

Real solutions to the climate crisis won't be dreamt up by governments or corporations. They can only emerge from below, from globally networked social movements for climate justice.

17.

Such solutions include: no to free trade, no to privatisation, no to flex-

ible mechanisms. Yes to food sovereignty, yes to degrowth, yes to radical democracy and to leaving the resources in the ground.

18.

As an emerging global climate justice movement, we must fight two enemies: on one hand, climate change and the fossilistic capitalism that causes it, and on the other, an emergent green capitalism that won't stop it, but will limit our ability to do so.

19.

Of course, climate change and free trade aren't the same thing, but: the Copenhagen-protocol will be a central regulatory instance of green capitalism just as the WTO was central to neoliberal capitalism. So how to relate to it? The Danish group KlimaX argues: A good deal is better than no deal - but no deal is way better than a bad one.

20.

The chance that governments will come up with a 'good deal' in Copenhagen is slim to none. Our aim must therefore be to demand agreement on real solutions. Failing that: to forget Kyoto, and shut down Copenhagen! (Whatever the tactic.)



Are We Anywhere?

THE (POST)POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE BY BEN LEAR

“Everything is rational in capitalism, except capital or capitalism itself
...the system is demented, yet it works very well at the same time.”

Felix Guattari, 1995

“We mean business when we talk about climate change.”

Jose Manuel Barroso, European commission president, 2009

The COP-15 summit appears likely to be the biggest political spectacle of the past few years. Inside the summit delegates from 170 countries, corporate lobbyists and NGO representatives will come together under the banner of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to broker a deal to “defeat climate change”. The COP-15 will be a core global governance mechanism through which climate change mitigation will be implemented and the deal that

will emerge has the potential to affect the entire socio-ecological field. Outside the conference both environmental activists and environmental ministers are calling for a mass mobilisation to save humanity from climate change. The COP-15 summit is a unique spatial and temporal condensation of the climate mitigation debate and as such provides a clear lens through which to view broader process of capitalist governance.

This article hopes to tease out some of the implications that a radical analysis of the (post)politics of climate change mitigation has for environmental movements in particular, and within global society more generally. A recognition of the unique characteristics of contemporary global governance is vital for those seeking to move beyond its limitations rather than operate within them.

THE POST-POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The formal political space of the COP-15, and climate change mitigation in general, can be defined by its emphasis on consensus. The articulation of antagonistic positions has been subsumed within a new political space grounded upon science and technocratic administration, where the only legitimate debates that remain concern the finer points of the governance mechanisms to be implemented.

Climate change has become depoliticised and debate is now framed within the scientific and apolitical frame of carbon parts per million in the atmosphere. However, despite appearing as a non-political issue, it is the exact opposite. Carbon emissions stem from concrete forms of production that are themselves the result of political contestation. By focusing on carbon and not the flows of capital responsible for their emission, policymakers are confusing the effects with the system that produces them. This focus on carbon helps to insulate capitalist production from criticism by externalising the prob-

lem and divorcing it from its social context.

While climate change has been defined and depoliticised in terms of carbon rather than capital, any policy needs political support to be implemented. The political willpower to act on climate change has been galvanised through an apocalyptic and millenarian narrative. The argument for averting climate change is clear and unequivocal: if climate change is not averted we will face global disaster which will most affect the majority world. Therefore, the argument continues, we must act this very instant in any way possible to avert this catastrophic build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Climate change therefore becomes framed as a universal problem requiring an immediate, united global response.

Faced with the prospect of apocalypse, old left-right antagonisms begin to look outdated and those standing outside this “carbon consensus” are marginalised as extremists or as relics of a previous time. The climate change banner is a (carbon neutral) rainbow leading towards a decarbonised society regardless of the mode of production which operates within it. The threat of apocalypse and the resultant emphasis on haste fail to recognise the daily crisis many already experience due to the processes of capital.

This discourse is also reproduced within radical environmental movements where the “necessities” of action are placed before “abstract” and “divisive” political debates. What is needed within radical movements,

we are told, are “more people”, “more awareness” and “more action”. Climate change discourse has therefore become a post-political space devoid of antagonism that is focused on implementing policy based on science, technology and markets. This appeal to universal action has helped to short circuit real political debate over possible future socio-ecological relationships. Within this depoliticised space David Milliband’s call for “millions on the streets”, in a “Make Poverty History” style mobilisation to give Gordon Brown a mandate at the COP-15, sits comfortably with environmental activists calling for a pragmatic engagement with the process. Much like the Gleneagles G8 summit, COP-15 appears to be recuperating antagonism in order to re-articulate global patterns of capital.

The post-political condition actively forecloses the creation of political – that is, antagonistic – moments in which the social relations upon which all reality is grounded come into question. The energy generated via social movements is funnelled into systems of governance in order to reproduce the basis of continued capital accumulation; that is, the initial source of discontent.

This is tying the world into a disastrous course of action. Climate change must be defined as an issue of capital, not carbon. Contrary to the claims of proponents of the emerging “green” economy, there is no equitable technological solution to climate change. A de-carbonised global economy (as many wish to see) will still be a capitalist econ-

omy with all the social and environmental damage this entails. A greener form of capitalism will be a more austere form of capitalism in which increasing unrest will require discipline through increasingly authoritarian forms of state power. At best, capitalist climate “solutions” will be a pyrrhic victory in which catastrophic climate change is averted at the expense of the global majority.

The COP-15 process can be seen as one part of this emerging ‘green new deal’ in which converging ecological and financial crises can be recuperated into circuits of capital accumulation. The burgeoning carbon market will primarily benefit private interests in the North, who will profit from the synergy between possessing surplus capital and the need to offset their emissions via “development” projects in the global South which look likely to only benefit small sections of local elites. Even changes within energy production systems away from coal (a target of many radical movements) towards renewable production appear likely to entail the enclosure of the commons, the displacement of communities and the re-consolidation of global energy corporations. Real political antagonism has been trumped by a process whose destructive and deeply political nature has been obscured behind a scientific and apparently universal mandate for action.

That the media and the entire political spectrum appear in support of this process makes a truly anti-capitalist intervention even more problematic. By demanding the end of capitalist social relationships and refusing to accept existing forms of bio-political governance we are articulating a demand that is impossible to be accommodated within the existing political sphere.

Despite this, we must act. Radical movements must remain relevant if they wish to be successful, and climate change has become a central motif for the organisation of contemporary global society. However, a principled intervention must embody a rejection of the current organisation of capitalism and the false solutions being supported by the COP-15 and many liberals and environmentalists who wish to “make Kyoto Stronger”, all of whom are in fact pushing for a more austere form of capitalism.

Faced with these choices, the only principled position for an anti-capitalist intervention is that of negation. Our politics must reject both the current form of capitalism and its emerging successor, “Green Capitalism”. This is not based on political idealism but rather on an objective analysis. The real idealists appear to be those that believe that capitalism can be reformed and can function sustainably within the objective barriers of the bio-physical world. Even if climate change is averted, the spectres of food, water and soil crises loom on the horizon. Those restricted by the activist ideology of immediate action are merely ensuring they will have an ample supply of causes and campaigns post-climate change.

In terms of environmental politics, a true anti-capitalist politics is nowhere. Climate change has become post-political. The only debates that remain at the COP-15 are over the finer points of the carbon market which will be implemented: a market which will produce new forms of structural violence. In an incredible demonstration of the adaptability of capital, many NGOs and environmentalists are supporting this process. Although it would be tempting to remain in our local communities, the impacts of climate change and its mitigation are so large that we cannot afford to retreat to localism.

The question of how to manifest a rejection of capitalist solutions remains, in my opinion, yet to be answered. Given the post-political context of climate change this will be very difficult to achieve. An analysis of post-political processes has severe implications for anti-capitalist interventions. If the formal political sphere is no longer a viable space for intervention, then what implications does this have for activists and social movements? Indeed, the truly antagonistic intervention against global climate governance may well be expressed in anti-austerity campaigns as the effects of food, water and energy precarity come to be felt throughout the social sphere. It is likely that these campaigns and events will be led by people not explicitly identifying with climate change politics as they are currently expressed. Whether we are “successful” or not in re-politicising climate change, we must begin to recognise ways in which we can support these autonomous uprisings rooted in our everyday experiences of capital.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN COPENHAGEN?

WWW.CLIMATE-JUSTICE-ACTION.ORG

WWW.NEVERTRUSTACOP.ORG

DEALING

With

DISTRACTIONS

