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FIGHT THE FIRE

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editorial note



The climate justice movement is picking up the pace. Action is widespread, polarizing, often blunt. It is currently the life force of social movements in the world. Links are being made to the cost of living protests, with a growing component of social justice. Yet, the clock is still running against us.

For the first time in many years, the movement wasn't sucked into the COP process, but rather set its own agenda - with Scientist Rebellion, Letzte Generation, Debt for Climate, Just Stop Oil, End Fossil Occupy, among others, at a higher and more confrontational stage than feeding the rotten institutional process of global capitalism. That is a victory itself. Governments in the US and the EU increased interest rates to fight inflation, which will transform the cost of living crisis into an austerity crisis.

The system's elites trust that a new moment of mass mobilisation like the one that started with the Arab Spring will be fought off by the new far-right. The center is counting on reactionary forces to fight off any alternative, and so have decided on unemployment and general bankruptcies to fight the inflation caused by the massive profits of the oil and gas companies.

In this issue, we will delve into the cost of living crisis, we will present the first part of an analysis of the far-right, there will be a first balance of the school occupations for End Fossil Occupy and we will dig deep into advertisement's role in capitalism. The last articles look into the historical degradation of liberation movements in Southern Africa and the exposure of why COP27 could never have been Africa's moment.



gas in the center: profit, cost of living and the climate crisis


BY JOÃO CAMARGO

João Camargo

We have a hard narrative task ahead: we need to challenge the normalisation of the "cost of living crisis" as something that simply happened. This crisis has been directly provoked by the oil & gas industry and their historically high profits.

It is not a "cost of living" crisis, but a super-exploitation, massive profit crisis, that directly takes wealth from those who depend on fossil fuels, that is, all those that live in modern societies, and hands it out to private fossil fuel companies.

Looking back a little over a decade, we can remember the 2008 financial crisis of the banking system that was turned into the crisis of sovereign debts when governments bailed out the banks. Then, the crisis of sovereign debts was turned into a massive austerity crisis when the governments that had bailed out the banks paid applied massive cuts in public spending, which led to a recessive spiral of bankruptcies and mass unemployment.

The "energy crisis", which largely precedes the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, gave an unprecedented amount of money to big oil and gas, well before any shortage was expected. This energy crisis turned into an inflation and price crisis, when an economy deliberately dependant on fossil fuels reverberated in every product the profits of the fossil companies. It morphed into a food

crisis, a transport crisis, a clothing, a heating, a health crisis. Inflation in Europe is the highest since there is the Euro. In many countries it is the highest in over 50 years. Energy and gas prices have increased sometimes over 400%.

Governments' responses to this have been small one-off payments to the people, sometimes for specific purposes such as energy bills or transport, while promoting energy savings for households. Simultaneously, they have slashed taxes on energy, oil and gas, and directly subsidized energy-intensive industries, creating all sorts of favourable conditions for more gas imports.

Finally, to fight inflation, the central banks of the EU, UK, US and others have decided to increase interest rates, to try and take money out of the economy. What this means is that every loan in a highly and purposefully indebted society, will rise, sometimes skyrocket. This will conclude the vicious circle. In the end, people will have paid for gas high prices in at least five ways: their energy (for home and transport), the absolute majority of the products they need (specially food), wage compression (where wages increased, it was always under inflation rates), in the tax cuts to energy and fossil companies and in the high interest rates. It would be dramatic in regular times. In the middle of the climate crisis it is simply unbelievable.



Protests have long since started, first led by the far-right, then slowly tilting to the left. In the UK, Enough is Enough mobilised massively under the strike dynamic that has been created by Mick Lynch's RMT and the crumbling Conservative Party. Although there was support by climate justice organisations, the main message was far from touching the energy and climate crisis through a clear solution. In France, NUPES energised the March Against Expensive Cost of Living and Climate Inaction, which was also strongly participated. In different countries,

there is a sense that mass mobilisation will be inevitable, but there is also sense of waiting to see what happens.

In many cases, to get to more people, there is a specific focus on cost of living while leaving climate and energy, seen as a divisive issue, out of the calls and the proposals. That is bad.

The sabotage that happened in the NordStream pipelines, combined with Bolsonaro's and Trump's defeats in the Presidential and Congressional elections in Brazil and the US have left the far-right without a clear rallying cry to hit

the streets again. We must not be content with this. They will find good rallying cries, and clearly enough, the policies from the capitalist establishment will give it to them in a golden platter.

The right and the center have chosen carnage as the politics to take on the current crisis. This time, they will count on the far-right to do part of the containm of popular movements.

What then is to be done?

The trouble with letting the system control the narrative of the origin of this crisis, is that it will - and oil&gas companies in particular - dominate the proposals to solve it, effectively blocking any possibility of a solution that cuts them out, which is the only

functional hypothesis of maintaining civilization and, in particular, of not permanently repeating profit, energy, cost of living and austerity crises in the next years.

The narrative about the current crisis needs to be snatched out of the hands of the system's establishment. It also needs to be decisively separated from the invasion of the Ukraine. This crisis needs to have a first, second and last name: Gas, gas, gas.

They have put all the chips on more gas as the way to go, with public resources being mobilised to guarantee a new network of gas infrastructures, creating what they call diversification, that is, increase imports from the USA, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Nigeria, Algeria and so on.



In a crisis created by dependence on fossil gas, they have chosen to double down on gas, even if shortages are growingly likely. If we didn't know about capitalism's insanities from before, this would be a perfect school for that.

It is crucial to tackle the component cost of living together with the component gas and climate. Only an articulated program can expect to achieve any decent and credible proposal. No increase in wages will do if their plan is to deliberately provoke a contraction in the economy and make money more scarce. There is no answer within the capitalist market that doesn't mean a new and excruciating crisis for the "99%".

We need to go for the jugular. This is the moment for a mass deployment of renewables that allows us to cripple fossil monopolies and take political and economic power away from coal, oil and gas. Yet, there are still some important traps laid in our path, that can't be denied.

Focusing specifically on the energy component of the problem, I identify six main conflicts:

- **Gas and Coal:** considering the deliberately created dependence on fossil gas (in particular in the EU and US), there will be a push to try and reopen coal plants that have been shut down or delay the closure of those set for closure.





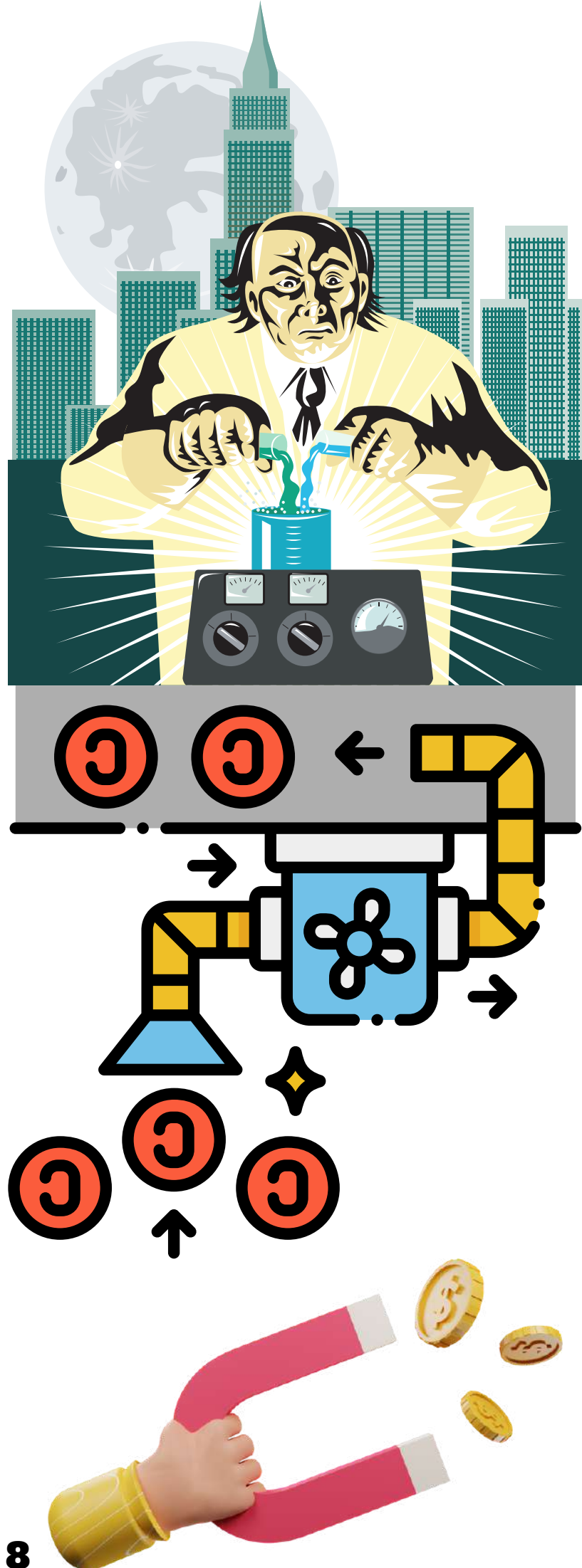
A lot of the work done in the last decades by the climate justice movement has made coal and oil a complete no-go for transition. The same needs to happen with gas now. We can't go back, in countries where coal is still a threat, gas needs to be leapfrogged altogether

- **Public gas and private renewables:** in a crisis created by the prices of gas which is determined by private companies, governments have chosen to increase this dependency with publicly paid infrastructure. The money they say they don't have to pay for the transition is being spent on more gas. In the meantime, they have decided that renewables should be deployed by the market, that is, by private capitalists. Renewables' prices are absurdly low when compared to fossil energy, but green capitalist pricing and subsidizing mechanisms pay for them much above their costs, because the purpose isn't to make energy, only to create another (or in some cases, the same old) gang of billionaires. In the Iberian marginalist system, electricity prices are set by the most expensive plant to provide electricity, which means that when renewables are cheaper and gas more expensive, the more profitable the renewable business becomes. That is why so many of the old energy utilities are simultaneously investing in fossils and renewables: they need both to achieve maximum profit.

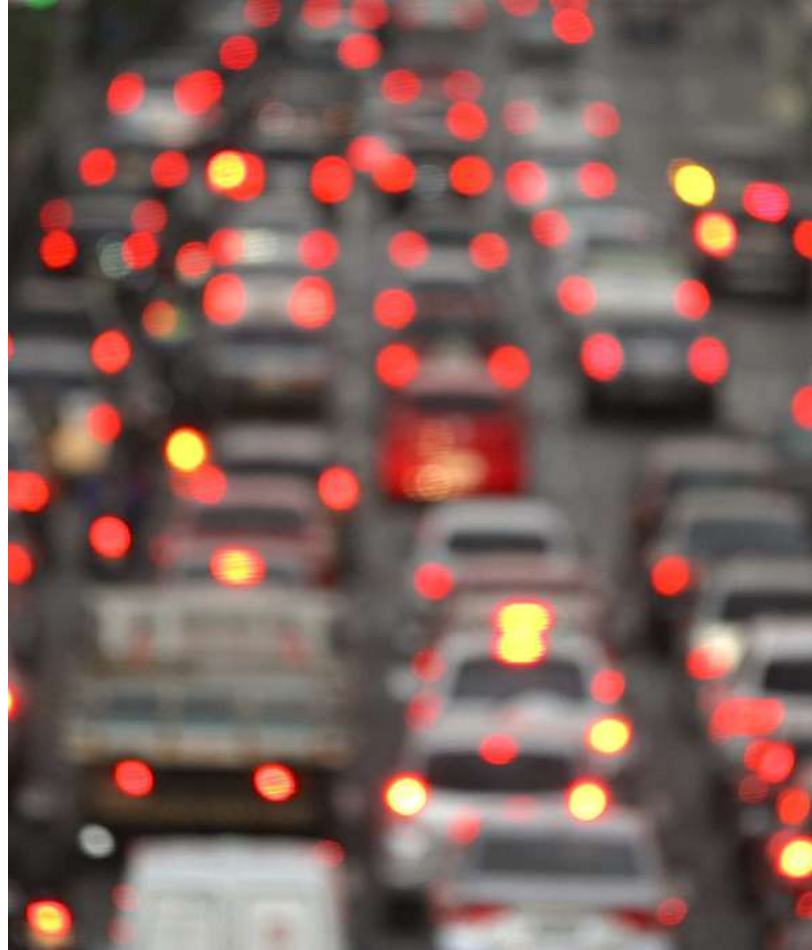
A privately owned renewable sector is unreliable and will cause hindrances both on deploying at the necessary speed, on controlling prices and on cutting the necessary emissions. We need a massive publicly owned renewable industry.

• **Green frauds, Gas and Hydrogen:**

this menu of science fiction technologies (Carbon Capture and Storage, Carbon removal, offsets) is heavily supported by governments and the fossil industry as an excellent diversion from the only effective action of shutting them down. When gas prices peaked, a deliberate confusion was created between gas based projects and renewable projects, in a huge communicational effort from lobbyists and the industry. In October, the ENTSO-G gas industry report revealed the plans for the next 10 years in Europe, with 300 new gas projects, connections, floating LNG units, new LNG ports, biogas and hydrogen projects. Hydrogen has, in fact, been a key for expanding the gas infrastructure, with lobbyists advocating for the "mix" of hydrogen with natural gas in the existing pipelines and building new hydrogen pipelines (much more expensive than the others) where gas can also be transported. The current proposals amount to a 23 thousand kilometres network to be built until 2040, a veritable life insurance for oil and gas companies.



- **Nuclear vs Renewables:** the nuclear delirium, with hugely expensive and dangerous infrastructure that could only start working in almost 10 years is strongly defended by technopositivists and the far-right. It would have no interest but to divert resources and financing to hinder any energy transition. Over half of France's nuclear power plants had to shut down this summer due to the heatwaves, and even in the autumn emergency shutdowns are recurrent. Extreme heat and drought are aggravating the dangers of nuclear technology, rendering it even more expensive and inoperative. In the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, all episodes recurrently happening around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant reveal a permanent apocalyptic risk, even more so in a world in growing convulsion with unbridled nationalism and militarism.



- **Transport and electricity:** the prices of everything that is moved are directly indexed to the prices of fuel, which have also beaten records recently. The public transport systems are seldom electrified, let alone decarbonized. Most of merchandise transports, public transports and all non-electric energy are completely in the hand of the fossil industry and there is no proposal at the moment to change this situation. There were some emergency measures, in Spain or Germany, with temporary free public transportation, but no shift was proposed or is generally being discussed in this, one of the most heavily emittent and dependent sectors. It is still fully in the hands of the OPEC and other producers in their race for maximum profit and climate collapse.



- **Electricity and Heating:** in the course of the last decades, a lot of housing heating was converted into gas. This entire grid was set up in particular in Central Europe to use Russian gas and makes it particularly sensible to tackle. Insulation and heat pumps are some of the most technologically savvy solutions, and should be used to break the dependency chains created for fossil gas.

An alliance to go on the attack

The climate justice movement has been very active in the last five years. It has been diverse, bold, innovative. It needs to be effective and it needs to build broader alliances.

The current crises - energy, cost of living, inflation, austerity - have the exact same origin as the climate crisis: the capitalist system and its components. When it comes to energy, the system is putting all its chips in one thing: fossil gas. We need to build an alliance to go on the attack and dismantle its main plan, which is its weak spot.



As long as they maintain their narrative, all debates will be light years away from the need to cut half of the global emissions by 2030. Even in this multicrisis, capitalists only think about increasing emissions, growing ever more and increasing energy production - with gas, coal, nuclear and renewables - even if this reinforces all the crises we are living. We will solve none of them if we don't create and execute proposals outside of market mechanisms - this requires major social conflicts. It requires confronting capitalists at the national and international level now and break the rotten consensus on these crises.

Capitalism as a whole is the ultimate crisis of Humanity, but in this moment, fossil gas is a crucial vector that needs to be stopped.





The New Right: Racism, Gender and Climate

BY NANCY LINDISFARNE
AND JONATHAN NEALE

This is the first of three articles on climate politics and the new racist right. The first two pieces explain how that right combines working class hatred of elites, traditional racisms and aggressive sexism into a package that has attracted large numbers of angry and suffering working-class men and women to conservative politics. In the third piece we look at why this politics is aligned to a hatred of climate activism.

The first thing to say is that the new racist right is a global movement. In the United States, people often explain Trump in terms of American politics and history. But the two most influential figures in the racist right internationally are President Putin in Russia and Prime Minister Modi in India. Over the last few years other elected national leaders have included Orban in Hungary, Meloni in Italy, Netanyahu in Israel, Duterte in Philippines and Bolsonaro in Brazil. In Britain, Brexit was a triumph for the racist far right. In most countries in western and central Europe there are now significant movements or parties that have not yet won elections.

The movements come from very different roots in different continents, but they are now converging. Activists in all of these countries are watching and learning from each other.

This movement also links the global south and the global north. All versions of the movement are racist, but the objects of their racism differ in line with traditional patterns of

prejudice. In Hungary, Gypsies are important, but in Israel Arabs are the enemy. In Brazil, Bolsonaro talked mainly about indigenous and LGBT people. But it stands out that the majority Afro-Brazilian northeast of Brazil just voted heavily against Bolsonaro, and the majority in the rest of the country voted for him.

In India Modi has tried, with a good deal of success, to unite upper caste and lower caste Hindus against Muslims. And one tragic legacy of George W. Bush's War on Terror is that Muslims are important enemies almost everywhere. In Philippines, without significant immigrants or an obvious racist object, the enemy has been drug users and drug dealers.

For Trump, in Britain and across Europe, immigrants, both white and non-white, are the central object of hate. In South Africa hostility to immigrants from other African countries works in a similar way.



Across the globe, these are grassroots movements. Trump did not create the particular complex of hatreds that he now markets. He started from a basic racism and then articulated the themes that he found appealed most to the crowds at his rallies.

The new racist right works in the way that socialist and communist movements worked fifty or a hundred years ago. In the US, for instance, they have activists (though not necessarily party activists) in most white working class neighborhoods, workplaces and rural small towns. In India, the network of activists is even larger and more often partly political. But everywhere, this is a movement from below.

As with the old-time socialists and communists, the main form of this activism is slipping the politics into more general conversations. Large numbers of activists feel comfortable with just talking, but violence is important too.

A NEW POLITICAL PROJECT

These movements of the new far right have deep historical roots. But they are also working toward something new.

The classic European fascist parties in the 1920s and 1930s were right wing movements aiming for dictatorship. Most of their support came from farmers, business people and office workers. In Germany or Italy in 1930, these people were a majority of society. Those fascists never had much support from manual workers or in working class neighborhoods, where people supported the socialists and the communists.

That was a century ago, and there has been massive demographic change since. In Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America working class people are now the majority. No fascist or neofascist movement could not win an election if they relied on the old base. (India, where there are still large numbers of farmers, is a partial exception, but even there Modi directs his appeal at both farmers and urban workers.)



Instead, the far-right movements of the twenty-first century have built support among working class people, and use that support to elections.

Forty years of neoliberalism have brought hard times for many working class communities. And working class suffering has intensified in the long aftermath of the financial crash of 2008. Increasingly, politics polarizes. Increasingly, politics polarizes. The politics of the old center-left and center-right appear increasingly out of date, and are bleeding support. The new far-right parties and movements recruit support among working class people because they are suffering.

Various radical-left movements are also growing in the process. Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and Jeremy Corbyn have led electoral movements. Even more important have been the climate movement, Me Too, Black Lives Matter and above all the revolts for democracy that have erupted since the Arab Spring began in 2011.

We will discuss these movements in more detail in a later article. For the moment, though, we are sticking to the far right.

The far right have not become working class parties in this process.



Rather, they have brought together angry working-class people with traditional conservatives among the better off, the self-employed and small business people.

This is not as easy trick, but many such “populist” movements have done spectacularly well. In some countries the majority of support comes from working class people and in others it does not. But these are always alliances across classes.

In Britain, for example, the turning point for the racist right was not an election but the referendum on Brexit. There was much debate at the time on the left and center about whether the Leave vote mainly reflected racist hatred of immigrants and refugees, or an anti-capitalist vote against neoliberalism. The answer was that it reflected both. And these were no longer separate constituencies. They had been coming together since the crash of 2008, and then coalesced during the referendum campaign.



Many people had changed their politics, and their understanding of the world, in the process of supporting this new package which legitimated racist hatred, personal bitterness and deep anger at elites.

This change was not, and will not, be easy to undo. Brexit marked a swing to the Conservatives among many white workers. And while Bolsonaro in Brazil and Trump in the United States lost elections, they continued to have the support of very large minorities, and could easily win elections down the line.

THE CENTER LEFT

The successful leaders of the far right have become members of the ruling class. And as we said, it is a difficult trick to combine hatred for elites with support for the ruling class. But one thing has made it much easier – the fact that the governments and movements of the center and the left have been so dreadful. The Democrats in the United States, Labour and the Tories in Britain, the Congress in India, the neoliberal reformers in the 1990s in Russia, the old governments in the Philippines are examples.

From the 1980s on, governments presided over a grinding process of long-term falls in the incomes of manual workers, and endless stretching of inequality, with relentless humiliation and an eating away at people's self-respect.

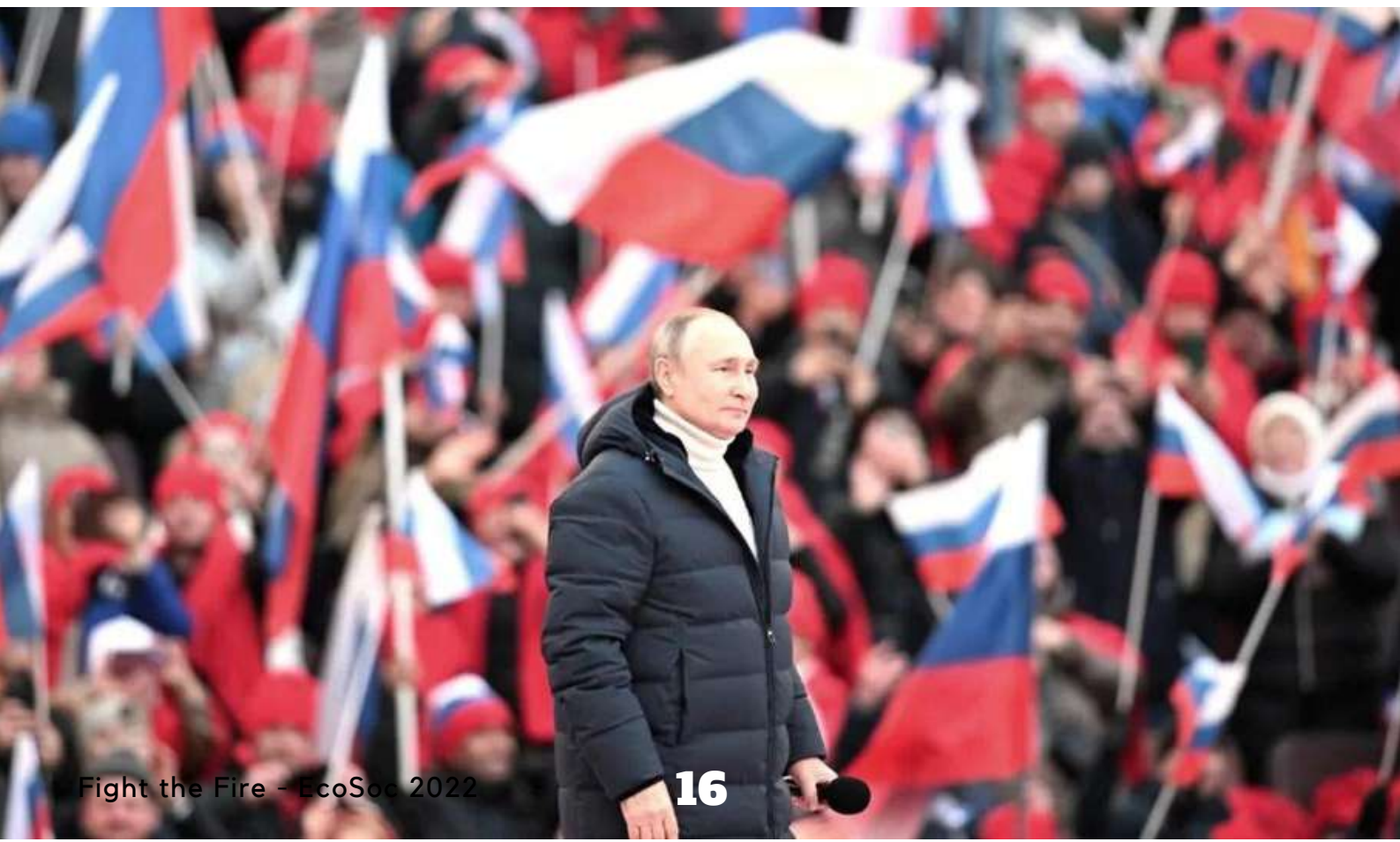
Russia was an extreme example. The wave of neoliberal "market reforms" after the fall of the Soviet Union created mass unemployment, and a wave of suicides and death from alcoholism among both men and women, but particularly middle-aged men. The central reason that Putin has enjoyed so much support since 2000 is that he restored state subsidies to declining industries, and stopped the fall in life expectancy.

The United States is another example. There the median male income stayed almost steady from 1970 to 2008. That

median male was likely to be a skilled blue-collar worker. The median woman worker saw a small, but real improvement.

The top 20% of women saw a massive increase in incomes and opportunities. In 1970 those women were earning roughly the same as a skilled blue-collar worker. By 2000 the top 20% of women had pulled away, leaving old expectations about the relationship between men and women in pieces.

Then came the financial crisis of 2008-2009. Barack Obama led the way globally to rescue Wall Street and throw Main Street under the bus. A wave of austerity and cuts from governments of the left and right followed. What made this particularly galling was that the governments of the center did not care.



Obama did not care, Hillary Clinton obviously did not care, and Joe Biden very obviously still does not care. Donald Trump's movement wear hats saying Make America Great Again. One thing that means is that America is fucked right now. Trump's supporters know this, and they are enraged. But so do most other Americans. That knowledge, that pain, cannot be voiced by the center, because they are either part of the elite themselves or they identify with the elite.

Btu the problem goes far beyond the United States. This reflected a change in electorates in many countries. Thomas Piketty's work has been important in highlighting this. After 1945, Piketty says, there was a long time when manual workers in the US, Britain, France and many other countries tended strongly to support a party like the Democrats, Labour, on in France the socialists or the communists. More affluent people tended to support parties of the right. But in recent decades, party support has divided differently along class lines. Educated people working in the public sector or the intellectual trades increasingly vote for the center left.

In the United States this has reached the point that during the 2020 election all the television commentators assumed that the affluent suburbs would vote for Biden, and that predominantly white



working class areas would vote for Trump.

But shifting allegiances also mean there are great swathes of pain neither the center nor the far right can speak for. Racism means they cannot speak for black people in pain in the United States, or Muslims in India.

In the United States, there are tens of millions of girls and boys, black and white, now grown, whose fathers were sent to jail in the mass imprisonment associated with neoliberalism over the last forty years. Black Lives Matter can speak to their shame and pain and loss. But the mainstream Democrats cannot, and neither can Obama or Biden.

And it is important to ask who speaks for the pain of the middle aged and elderly in the rust belts and former

mining communities of Britain? Not the local Labour Party which run the local Councils that have been humiliating tenants and claimants for decades. Rather, it is now Nigel Farage and the Bracist Brexiteers who speak to their pain and justified rage.

The failures and betrayals of the center are the reason why the far right can build racial or religious coalitions of racial majorities. This partly explains the anger and often obsessive rage of the new right. The new humiliations of growing inequality produce tangled hurt and shame that dares not speak clearly.

But another process too makes the anger incoherent. The leaders of the far right have to square a circle – to deny the contradiction implicit in mobilizing class rage to reshape and



refuel the control of the ruling class. This is not an easy trick.

Conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism often help to make the trick work. It may appear that the country is controlled by corporations run by many rich white men, and some rich white women. But many on the far right, in many parts of the world, now argue that the real enemy is the Jews, who are said to actually control the corporations. Or the enemy is a ring of pedophiles controlled by Hillary Clinton.

One part of the trick is to talk about elites, not class. The culture wars are crucial here.

On one level the culture wars are attacks on feminism, on immigrants, black and LGBT people. But at the same time the right shapes the culture wars by saying that a new, illegitimate elite are actually in charge of the society. This elite are bad, highly educated intellectuals who look down on ordinary people as stupid. And this elite are building an alliance with lesbians, trans people and black radicals, and they care nothing about the suffering of ordinary white people and all the jobs that working people have lost.

By framing the culture wars this way, the far right can change the object of working class rage. Back in the day, the corporations and the capitalists were the enemy. Now the enemy is an arrogant elite.

But if the far right articulate class rage in a tangled and deceptive way, the center left and the left do not articulate class rage at all. Instead, they speak about policies and about abstractions. They are often against capitalism, neoliberalism and austerity. All are real forces, of course, but they are not people. On the left there is sometimes a hatred of the police or the Tories. Anger at the collective ruling class who actually run the system is much rarer.

On the left an abstract anger at the system is often linked to a visceral disquiet at the “Trumpies”. Much of the left and far left explain the appeal of the far right by saying that working class people are stupid. For example, in Brazil many people explain Bolsonaro’s stubborn support by saying that people are fooled by propaganda on social media that they are too stupid to see through. And in the United States, the charge that Trump supporters are stupid is standard.



DON'T CALL PEOPLE STUPID

Stupid is a word dripping with class hatred for people below you. Inherited wealth and private education are crucial for the class position people inhabit. But education matters too. As it happens, wealthier families can afford better schools and universities for their children, and both tests and teachers favour children from wealthier families.

Many people in the professions justify their relative wealth and status by their educational achievement. They deserve more, because they were smarter. For the majority of people, school teaches them that they deserve their position in society because they are not smart enough to do better. Thus economic inequality becomes internalized as personal worthlessness. This is a painful process, deeply resented. Working class people also know, more or less clearly, that it is not true. People with degrees from good universities are not in fact smarter than electricians and cleaners. But it can be very difficult to hang onto this knowledge in moments of unemployment and money worries.

Well-educated and well-paid people make their arrogance toward the less educated and worse paid evident all the time, in endless moments of micro-aggression and macro-humiliation.

And when well-educated people on the left explain the appeal of the far right by

saying that they are stupid, they evoke a world of hostility and pain. The "left" here are choosing a class side, and it's the wrong side.

CONCLUSION

Our basic argument so far is that the far right has built a movement from below by combining class pain with racist explanations. They have been able to do this because the experience of ordinary people under governments of the center left has been so bad, and because the upper classes treat working class people with contempt.

In this situation, if we want to build a better world, we have to win back a substantial proportion of the working-class people from the far right. This cannot be done by conceding any ground to racism, sexism or transphobia. That trajectory, sometimes called triangulation, is the instinct of many on the center-left. Step forward Keir Starmer. But it only weakens our movements and encourages the right.

The reaction of some of the far left have been even worse. In Britain, for example, many of them embraced and redwashed the racist project of Brexit. On a global level, many on the left, particularly those influenced by communist parties, have adopted Putin's talking points on Ukraine. For many of these people, as for Trump,

Putin and Bolsonaro, hostility to transgender people is also important. Instead of ceding ground, we need to build grassroots movements from below that speak to pain, loss and working class rage.

The next article on this series will be about the sexual politics of the far right. We will begin with why Putin keeps saying that a central reason for his invasion of Ukraine was the threat that transgender people and gender critical theory pose to his political project. And we will end by showing

that he is right, we do threaten him, and a that is a good thing too.

The third article in the series will show why the far right is so consistently hostile to climate activists. And we will outline a climate politics that can challenge both the far right and the center-left narratives and offer a chance of creating a renewable world.





end fossil: occupy

BY MATILDE ALVIM
& NOAH HERFORT

“End Fossil: Occupy!” was born out of the premise that as youth, revolution is our task and radicalization our duty. The action callout was launched in March 2022, with the goal of re-igniting the mass youth movement and at the same time to escalate the conflict with an increasingly decrepit institutional status quo.

Let’s start with a recap. On September 14th, Fossil Free Penn kicked off “End Fossil: Occupy!” when they occupied part of their campus in Philadelphia with two climate and social justice demands directed at their university. Their occupation lasted 39 days, culminating in the invasion of the football game between Penn and Yale. On October 24th, students occupied the main hall of Göttingen University (Germany) for a week. On November 2nd, occupations began in Spain, lasting over a week at the University of Barcelona until they won one of their demands. On November 7th, it was time for Portugal, Germany and the UK to occupy. These occupations lasted around one week, with new ones springing up in other cities in Germany and the Czech Republic in the following days. Right now, three occupations are taking place in Austria and more are expected in the Netherlands.

So far, around 25 occupations have taken place under End Fossil. Although occupations continue, in

this article we will present our initial takeaways to reflect, draw lessons, and pave the way for a strategizing process that will strengthen the movement.

Our main takes: lack of “virality” and not enough disruption

If we had to put the initial evaluation into short words, it’d be lack of virality (quantitative) and not enough disruption (qualitative). This shouldn’t demoralise us as we pave the way for the radicalization of the youth movement. But it’s crucial to analyse what didn’t go as expected.

Why didn’t it go as viral?

The initial logic was to launch a simple, easy to reproduce, yet powerful action that could take place across the world. The goal was to ignite a fire like Fridays for Future had done between the end of 2018 and early 2019, where anyone who went to school or university could actually participate in the action and take ownership in a worldwide movement. However, End Fossil never caught fire like pre-pandemic FFF. We think there may be two primary reasons why.

1. Rolling Occupations

End Fossil occupations were spread out over four months. The rolling nature of occupations within a confined multi-month period offered flexibility to occupying groups, all of whom had

different schedules flexibility to occupying groups, all of whom had different schedules to navigate. Temporal flexibility ensured that interested groups actually occupied. However, this may have elevated the tactic itself above the importance of international coordination.

For example, if all occupations were coordinated to happen within, for example, a ten day period, then it would have given the image of a mass international action rather than a patchwork of loosely connected actions. Here we can draw on the strike model, which chose a specific day on which millions left school to demand climate justice. This tight international coordination enabled widespread media interest and cultural permeation. Going forwards, a second round of occupations ought

to specify a shorter time period in which occupations must take place. This would ensure for movement consolidation, inter-occupation solidarity, and real time strategizing.

Imagine one hundred schools and universities from around the world are occupied at the same time and are in active discussion with one another. One week in and most have had little progress on their demands. Due to coordinated dialogue and shared strategizing, the collective international decision is made to escalate, a tactical shift that is then fine-tuned and executed according to each local context. As a connected international organism, occupations would create a palatable global narrative for the media and wider public.



2. Dominance of Local Demands

The second contributing factor to End Fossil not going viral is the predominance of local demands. The End Fossil demand structure suggested that each occupation makes its own demands, which could be at the national, regional, or local level. Most often, occupations in one country shared one national demand plus local demands directed at their university. For example, in the UK, the national demand was to nationalise the fossil fuel industry while local demands focused on cutting all University fossil ties across research, recruitment, and finance.

In theory, demands should be mutually reinforcing so as to advance the actual demand of the campaign: to end the fossil political economy. However, in practice, the national demand, which operated as the glue to bind different occupations in the same country, was at times trumped by local University-specific demands. This exacerbated the movement fragmentation already caused by temporal disunity.

Local demands certainly provided flexibility to occupying groups, who could choose a demand that best suited their context. They are also more “winnable” than a big national demand like ending the fossil economy by 2030. But at this stage of advanced climate breakdown, we can be under no illusions that “winning”



is nothing short of a rapid, equitable abolition of fossil production. For the second round of occupations, we must be more strategic with our demand structure. This may include revisiting how local demands can be connected to a national demand, especially in leveraging high schools and universities as powerful cultural institutions with the capacity to directly lobby government, or

dropping University and school specific demands altogether.

Lack of disruption

Shifting the angle from quantitative to qualitative, our second takeaway is that the existing occupations were not disruptive enough. Or, more specifically, occupations were not ready to shut down schools. The lack of



disruption made it less appealing to the media, while at the same time contributing to creating a sense of conformity within ourselves.

Except in the case of some high schools in Portugal and of the invasion of the homecoming Penn vs Yale football game in the U.S., occupations were largely siloed to one lecture theatre or building. Tactical atomisation, rather than interconnected campus-wide disruption, stifled the necessary social chaos to actually bring the normal functioning of the school or university to a halt – the prerequisite for any advances on a national demand. For the second round of occupations, we must create the enabling conditions for greater disruption.

This requires taking the third End Fossil principle of occupying until we win more seriously. A good example was End Fossil Barcelona's response to the University's warning to kick them out: a letter explicitly saying they were occupying until they win the demand, and ringing the fire alarms of the building as a way to make a powerful statement. However, this is not enough. We must prepare ourselves to be able to leave negotiation behind and provoke and organise real political turmoil. Another way with which "occupy until we win" can take its real political meaning is by engaging in

movement-wide coalition building in each country, creating a big moment of disruption spread across different places of society: schools, public squares, roads, infrastructure, company headquarters, etc..

Lessons and next steps

Throughout this article, we have analysed our two main takeaways from this wave of school and university occupations under End Fossil. Although some things didn't go as expected, there is no reason to be demoralised. We are determined in building the path for a radical climate justice youth movement that can provoke, organise, and lead an ecosocialist revolution that topples the fossil economy.



We are confident that these occupations were just the beginning of a larger trend towards radicalization. In countries like Germany and Portugal, school and university occupations were a somewhat innovative tactic for the climate justice movement. And at international level, this was a first attempt to coordinate occupations under the same broad demand of ending the fossil economy, with the

intention of disruption. So, even though we have not achieved all we wanted, we did create international synergy towards a more militant, organised and radical movement.

To use this energy wisely, we must constantly learn and reinvent ourselves. Some countries have already committed to a wave of occupations in the Spring. In order to create a powerful, international



mass moment like Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring did in the early 2010s, we must sit together face to face and have serious discussion around key questions:

1. What does it mean to occupy until we win?
2. How can we expand this callout internationally?
3. Who are our allies in building strong and radical coalitions to end the fossil economy?

This was just the beginning - or, in other words, the 25 international occupations were just a prototype of what's to come.

Until victory, everything is a rehearsal.



beyond the hype: advertising's true colors

BY
EMILIE
TRICARICO

WITH PRECIOUS INPUTS
FROM ROBBIE GILLET, RENAUD FOSSARD AND
FREDDIE DALEY



The issue of corporate advertising may appear less pressing at a time when social and ecological crises converge, calling for nothing less than a full system rehaul. But it would be a mistake to dismiss the impact on people and planet of a global business of over 1.3 trillion dollars. Undeniably, advertising is a powerful force in the global economy and a political tool for corporate influence, acting as a central lever for capitalist accumulation by creating new needs and desires in order to keep extracting rents.

Advertising and the climate

The story of advertising dates back to the end of the 19th Century, when brands were publishing information about their products in the popular media of the time, mostly newspapers and radio. Towards the end of the 20th Century, the volume and content of advertising greatly evolved. This showed that advertising was not a mere information tool, but in reality served a function of consumer influence. Advertising's consequences for mental and physical health as well as gender stereotypes are now well evidenced. Besides, a 2014 UN special report raised concerns about the insidious impact of advertising over people's decision-making after finding that advertisers techniques are able to stimulate an emotional response and circumvent individual rational choices.

But outside the traditional counter-cultural circles, far less attention has been placed on its environmental impact among mainstream climate campaigners. This is likely explained by the fact that until recently advertising was mainly analysed through a cultural lens rather than a political economic one - despite advertisers boasting about the positive role of advertising on GDP growth. However, new studies carried out at the macro-economic level, in both the U.S. and France, have been able to quantify the extent to which advertising increases aggregate household consumption. While in the U.S. this represented a share of 7% of household consumption, over a





30-year period, in France it is estimated to be about 5.3%. In both cases, to finance that additional consumption, people had to work longer hours, while companies increased their markup.

More specifically, when we look at what kind of consumption advertising generates, it is often the most damaging for the planet and our health. Among the world's top advertisers are several car manufacturers, soft drinks and fast food giants including Coca-Cola and McDonalds. A similar result was found at the national level in France.

Unsurprisingly, advertising isn't bolstering the much-needed socio-ecological transition but rather helps shoring up the profits of global corporations with the most harmful climate impacts. New studies have also been able to quantify the CO₂e impact generated by advertising. In the UK it was estimated that in 2019 advertising added up an estimated 28% to the annual carbon footprint of every resident.

Other studies have shown that globally adverts for airlines and cars in particular were respectively responsible for adding up between 202-606 million tonnes of CO₂e emissions or the equivalent to the entire GHG emissions of the Netherlands to about twice that of Spain's total emissions for 2019.

The new frontiers of advertising's influence

In consumer-driven societies, advertising plays a huge function - that of boosting demand to fuel the capitalist engine of growth. New trends of product obsolescence, like the intentional reduction of a product's lifespan organised on an industrial scale, are essentially driven by marketing campaigns. This is particularly prevalent in the fashion industry and is the number one reason for buying a new mobile phone today.

Greenwashing

But with an increasingly saturated market share, brands now must have recourse to ever more astute strategies of influence by appealing to consumers' values. It is therefore not surprising that with the rise in public concerns over the climate

crisis, corporate advertising has significantly shifted towards showing its 'green colours'. This is becoming a huge problem for climate campaigners, who have to face an increasing amount of greenwash advertising which serves to boost those companies' green credentials while confusing the public about the real impact of their business model. Lately, the practice of greenwash marketing has taken up huge proportions. The apparent rule of thumb is that the worse the company's impact on the environment, the more outrageous its greenwashing stunts.

In fact, fossil fuel companies and other high-carbon firms have a special interest in maintaining their social licence to operate while public opinion is steadily mounting against them.

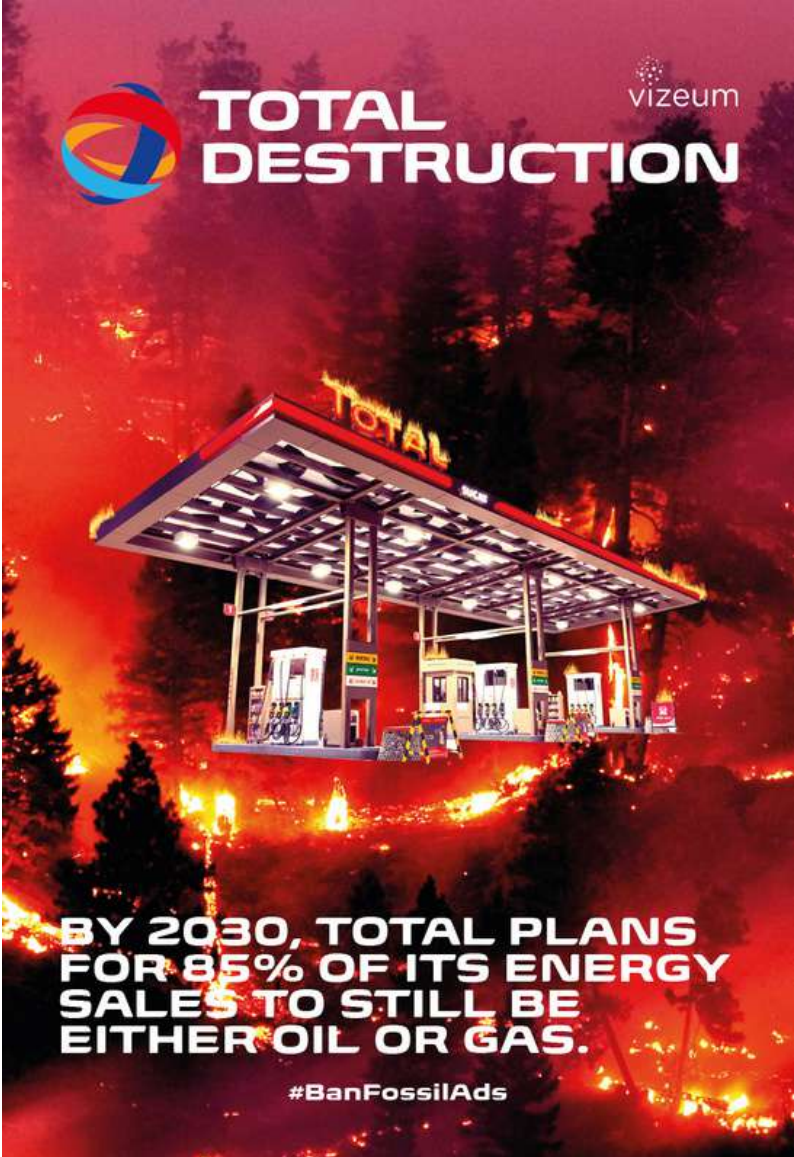
Oil companies like Shell, Total and BP are well known for their misleading green marketing. Shell came under fire recently over its 'CO2 neutral' advertising campaign after law student



brought a complaint to the advertising self-regulatory body in the Netherlands, which ruled the advertising was indeed misleading.

This year in France, NGOs took Total to court for commercial deceptive practices due to the fossil fuel company's inability to support its claim of achieving "net carbon neutrality by 2050". BP, famously known for rebranding itself 'Beyond Petroleum' in a green PR stunt designed with the ad agency Ogilvy & Mather in 2000, is also surfing over the current global energy (and climate) crisis to launch marketing campaigns that portray the company simultaneously as a reliable partner for energy security and an investor in low-carbon energy - a contradiction that is only lost on the oil & gas company.

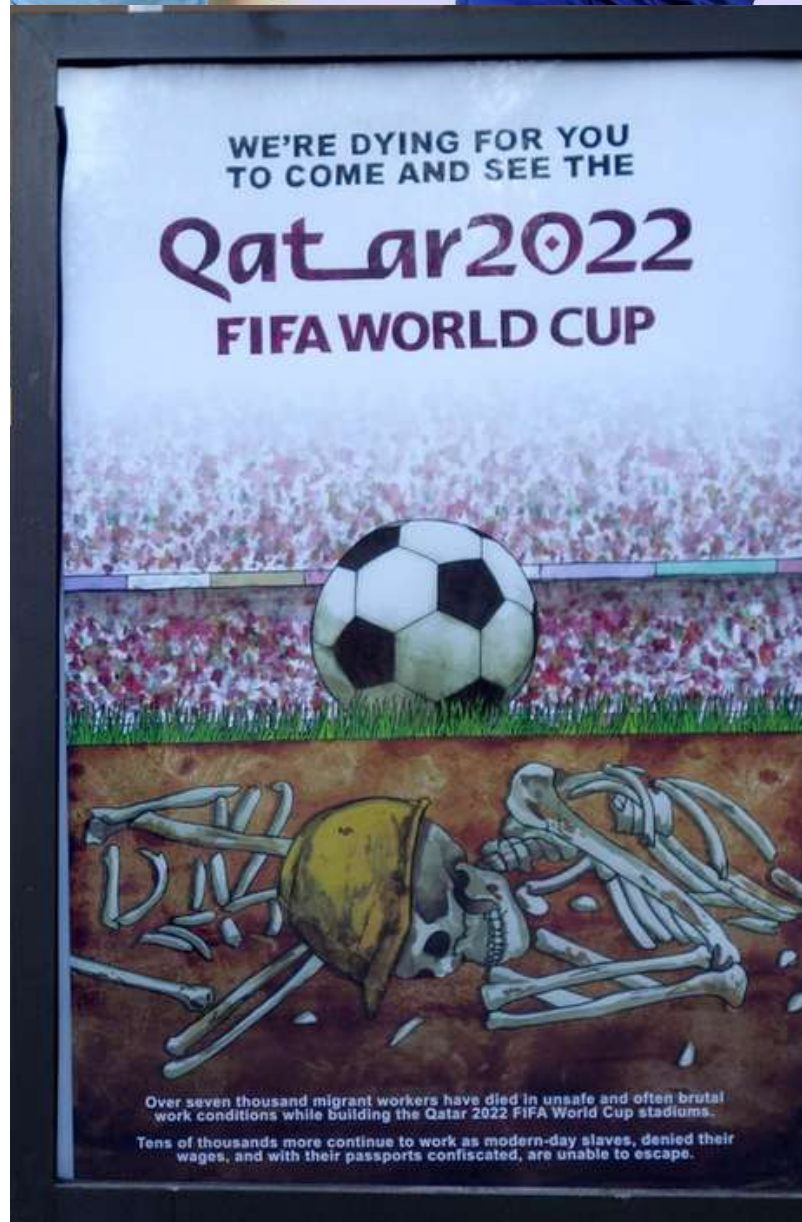
Airlines have also got on board the greenwash trend by promoting 'carbon-neutral' flights based on false promises of carbon offsetting schemes and sustainable aviation fuels. Easyjet's greenwash ad campaign which was timely released during COP26 in Glasgow, was targeted in complaints to the UK self-regulatory authority for its misleading nature but the authority decided not to rule against it. KLM, which aired similar adverts, is facing the world's first lawsuit over an airline greenwashing.



Sportwashing

A further area where corporate influence is at play is in sport. This is simply a continuation of what cigarette companies used to do, before tobacco advertising and sponsorship were banned, using the field of sports as a billboard for their deadly products. Indeed, contradictions don't seem to be a concern in the advertising playbook. Today, big tobacco has been replaced with big oil, carmakers, airlines and other harmful companies. One report that looked at the extent of high-carbon partnerships in global sports finds over 250 deals struck between polluting companies and sporting events, clubs, leagues and associations. The automotive industry was found to be the sector taking the lead on 'sportwashing'. Recent deals include British Cycling's eight-year partnership with oil giant Shell, which backfired among athletes, health professionals and climate activists. Many British Cycling members also publicly resigned their membership.

Sportwashing is set to reach new heights with the Men's FIFA World Cup in Qatar - a football tournament like no other. The organisers are claiming that this tournament will be the first 'fully carbon-neutral' World Cup. But the main ad partners are fossil fuel giant QatarEnergy, state-owned airline Qatar Airways, and SUV giant Hyundai: an unholy trinity of high-carbon sponsors. There's no



doubt that the state of Qatar is using the 'soft power' of football to launder its reputation on the world stage as it emerges as a fossil gas superpower.

A new movement of resistance against harmful ads

Several cities across the globe have already taken a stance against advertising and decided to reduce or remove outdoor advertising sites altogether. The movement started from São Paulo when the city removed most of its outdoor advertisement in 2008. In 2015, the french city of Grenoble followed by removing 326 advertising billboards. The Mayor of Grenoble commented, "We want a city which is less aggressive and less stressful to live in".

Over the last few years, with the pressing climate emergency, the focus has increasingly shifted over the adverts of big polluters. Among others, campaign groups like Reclame Fossielvrij in the Netherlands, RAP in France, Badvertising in the United Kingdom and Sweden, Clean Creatives in the U.S. and Comms Declare in Australia have all contributed to frame advertising as an issue of climate concern.

The interest generated in the topic led to the launch of a European Citizens Initiative to demand a ban on fossil ads



and sponsorship - including adverts for fossil fuel, car and airline companies. While the petition didn't pass the required one million threshold to force a debate in the EU parliament, it received huge public support with over 300,000 signatures and opened up a public debate about the issue.

In addition, several wins have been achieved in various localities around the world: Sydney in Australia voted to ban fossil fuel ads. Other localities in the Netherlands following Amsterdam's lead are taking steps to ban fossil ads at the city level. Three English councils have done the same, and discussions were sparked at the political level in both Sweden and Spain.



Subvertising tactics

With the democratisation of printing, graffiti and paint technologies from the 1960s onwards, 'subvertising' became a prominent practice employed by protesters and culture jamming collectives. Subvertising - derived from subverting and advertising - is the practice of appropriating and subverting dominant culture by targeting outdoor advertising spaces.

Groups like the Billboard Liberation Front in San Francisco and BUGA UP in Sydney were some of the first collectives coming together in the 1970s to build a visual response to the aggressive advertising of alcohol and cigarette companies. Through writing their own manuals and appearing in local media channels, these collectives helped the expansion and diversification of subvertising practices across cities around the globe.

Today, climate groups are appropriating subvertising tactics in their own campaigns to expose climate criminals. In September 2022, widespread subvertising actions took place in 15 European cities, including Rome, Lisbon, Barcelona, Nantes, Paris, Liège, Brussels, Amsterdam, Utrecht, London, Bristol, Brighton, and Manchester. Grassroots groups used satirical artwork to cover-up billboards and to specifically

denounce the airline industry's harmful and greenwash advertising as well as projects of airport expansion in cities like Bristol and Liège. Campaigners were also keen to publicly name and shame the ad agencies working for these airlines.



Fossil ad bans

In December 2020, Amsterdam became the first city to pass a motion against high-carbon advertising. The motion states that, “excesses of advertising for fossil products, such as for flying holidays for dumping prices or directly for companies working in the fossil fuel industry, should be prohibited” within the city. Following Amsterdam’s lead, five other Dutch cities – The Hague, Utrecht, Leiden, Enschede and Haarlem – passed motions to ban fossil ads. The Hague, however, later rejected an opportunity to include a fossil ad ban in the local ordinance.

In August 2022, following recommendations from a Climate Citizen Convention on the need to ban

advertising for all polluting products, and in particular for SUVs, the French Government adopted, with much reduced ambition, a law to restrict advertising for fossil energy. The ban specifically targets advertising for petroleum energy products, coal mining and fossil-based hydrogen. Adverts for natural gas will still be able to be aired until June 2023. However, French anti-advertising campaigners have expressed concerns at the limited potential of the ban given that it does not prevent fossil-based companies to take part in greenwashing marketing, like the adverts for renewables which make up the majority of these companies’ advertising. Besides, adverts for energy products containing a minimum of 50% renewables are still permitted under the new decree.



In August 2022, the city of Sidney voted in favour of a motion to ban fossil fuel adverts and sponsorship. This move follows an open letter to the Council, coordinated by the campaign group Comms Declare, with more than 200 health professionals and organisations demanding a ban on fossil advertising and sponsorship. Earlier in the year, two Australian councils passed motions to restrict fossil ads and sponsorship on council-owned sites. In the United Kingdom, three local authorities (Norwich, Liverpool and North Somerset) adopted motions in 2021 in favour of ethical or low-carbon advertising policies - removing adverts from high-carbon companies on their council-owned sites.

While there are solutions to limit advertising's harmful impacts, more remains to be done to problematise it across society - and in particular that of high carbon products and companies - as a block to deliver effective climate action. But what is certain, is that greater scrutiny is now being placed on both ad-land and corporate giants who are feeling the heat after recent public complaints, subvertising campaigns, initiatives and lawsuits were filed against them. Now it is about making the tide bigger and keep winning battles against corporate advertising's pervasive reach.



From Liberation Movement to Neoliberal and Extractivist Betrayal: The ANC and FRELIMO



BY ILHAM RAWOOT, ANABELA LEMOS AND PATRICK BOND

The most vital reminder of how national liberation movements' exercise of power contradicts their former ideals is the durability of radical and often anti-imperialist narratives in times of political panic.

It is then that those in power attempt to disguise how the spoils of liberation are being devoured by corrupting neo-colonial forces both within and without the nation.

It is then, too, that the international threats are conjured up (sometimes

together with ethnic fear-mongering), so as to distract attention from the party's immediate failings. Two Southern African countries, Mozambique and South Africa, boast among the world's most vivid examples of this tendency to 'talk left and walk right.'

In South Africa, the more the African National Congress (ANC) is threatened as the ruling party, the more this populist tendency will be given voice. This happens just as at the time that genuinely destructive neo-colonial forces—especially those in the financial

markets insisting on fiscal austerity – amplify the society’s already extreme contradictions.

By the end of 2022, the ANC will have governed South Africa for more than 28 years, after the movement’s unbanning in 1990 was won through exceptional protest and coordinated international solidarity. Economic, political, cultural, social, environmental and other policy changes adopted during the 1990s were profound in many respects, especially in terms of the ANC’s most celebrated success: one-person one-vote in a unitary state, the primary goal of liberation.

But the ANC soon became a party run by the elite which moved quickly towards neoliberalism and opening the market. One of the main vehicles for the party’s durability and the breadth of loyalty by its members was what became known as ‘tenderpreneurship’: a vast web of state contracts given to cronies.

Yet in electoral terms, the ANC retained enormous, consistent popular support thanks to loyalty that was based in part on its liberation movement prestige and in part on subsequent patronage power.

In February 1990, the apartheid regime unbanned the liberation movements. The ANC’s leadership was consolidated in a 1991 conference that made Nelson Mandela the party president, and current president Cyril Ramaphosa the General Secretary. In different ways, both succumbed to what Ronnie Kasrils has called the ‘Faustian Pact’ with local and global big business which catalysed South Africa’s neoliberal era.

In 1999, Thabo Mbeki took Mandela’s place as state president and served until September 2008, followed by Jacob Zuma. Both were in the spotlight during the exposure of the ‘Arms Deal’ in 2011, a massively corrupt deal that cost the taxpayer R142 billion (\$8.2 billion at today’s rate) to pay off German, French,



British and other arms companies for submarines, corvettes and other military equipment.

A lot had changed since the writing of the Freedom Charter of 1955, written by the Congress of the People which promised that the “The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.” Instead, already in 1994, the ANC’s Reconstruction and Development Programme’s wide-ranging strategies for transformation were ignored. In contrast, a listing of the dozen most damaging 1990s ‘Faustian Pacts’ between the ANC and capital (to quote former Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils) included:

- repayment of the US\$25 billion apartheid-era foreign debt, which denied Mandela money to pay for basic needs of apartheid’s victims (October 1993);
- borrowing \$850 million from the International Monetary Fund, with tough conditions that included rapid scrapping of import surcharges that had protected local industries;
- joining the World Trade Organisation on adverse terms, as a “transitional”, not developing economy, in turn destroying many clothing, textiles, appliances and other labour-intensive firms (June 1994);
- lowering primary corporate taxes from 48% to 29% and maintaining countless white people’s and corporate privileges (1994-99);
- relaxing exchange controls, which led to sustained outflows to rich people’s

- overseas accounts and a persistent current account deficit even during periods of trade surplus, raising interest rates to unprecedented levels (March 1995);
- privatising parts of the state, such as Telkom, the state-owned telecommunications company (1997);
- permitting most of South Africa’s ten biggest companies to move their headquarters and primary listings abroad, leading to permanent balance of payments deficits and corporate disloyalty to the society (1999).

These decisions led South Africa to disaster. Unemployment was at 16% during the 1990’s. Then it increased from 25% in 2015 to 28% in 2021. And 30 million people still live in poverty. Again and again, South Africa is cited by researchers as having the world’s worst inequality, and Johannesburg is measured as the world’s most unequal city.





The socio-economic grievances of the vast majority soon became profound and unresolvable. Today uprisings still continue to escalate – South Africa has been dubbed the ‘protest capital of the world’. People are burning trains and blocking highways and burning tires for access to toilets. In August four people were killed, allegedly shot by police in a protest in a Johannesburg township demanding lower costs of electricity and basic services. And later that month thousands around the country took to the streets to protest the high cost of living. The disease of xenophobia has continued spreading, with people blaming people from other African countries, including asylum seekers, for their poverty. This has led to extreme violence against immigrants.

Earlier this year, former Thabo Mbeki warned current President Ramaphosa that the country is headed towards its “own version of the Arab Spring”. Over the last few years, for months at a time, South Africans have been dealing with

loadshedding, scheduled power outages. Even hospitals and schools are not spared from these power cuts, and businesses who can afford it have had to purchase generators. All the while the South African government is spending billions of dollars on overseas fossil fuel investments and is the third highest coal producer in the world.

In South Africa, straight after the creation of the Republic, some politicians – most of them former freedom fighters – had an uneasy relationship with the dominant white business bloc. But many of these men and women readily circulated into financial institutions and mining houses before or after their state service, including Rothschilds, Goldman Sachs, Allan Gray Investment, ABSA Bank, Shanduka/Lonmin/Standard Bank, AngloPlats, and BHP Billiton.

State and private extractivism became so closely linked, that they led to disasters like the Marikana Massacre at Lonmin Platinum mine of 2012 which left 34 striking mineworkers shot dead by police. Ramaphosa, then member of the ANC’s national executive committee, held a 9% ownership in Lonmin, and the massacre was catalysed by Ramaphosa’s urgent emails to the police minister to send more police to the protests.



Today, South Africa has 549 mines, owned by 174 people, and is the world's top producer of platinum and third largest producer of coal. The extractive industry has brought destruction and disaster. Entire generations of mineworkers have contracted lung cancer and silicosis, hundreds of thousands have lost their homes and livelihoods from displacement, and in 2013 already coal-mining town Witbank was named by the European Union as having some of the most highly-poisoned air on the planet, where respiratory illnesses among children are frighteningly common.



This travesty is not unique to South Africa. In neighbouring Mozambique we see the same downward spiral once the country became free, the same promises and dreams destroyed by neoliberal agendas.

After decades under Portuguese colonialism, the country only gained its independence in 1975 when many other African countries had already obtained their freedom, some decades earlier.

Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), a movement with a Marxist-Leninist ideology created in 1962 to fight the colonial system, became the only party and the sole ruler of Mozambique. Under the communist system, one year after independence the government nationalised property,

education, health and many manufacturing industries, based on the ideals to end poverty and to become a socialist country, exemplary to the world.

The people were ready to build an independent country from the ground up, where everyone had equal rights, where decades of poverty, slavery, racism, human rights abuses, inequality, extractivism and all injustices would be a thing of the colonial past. They had a dream and believed in it.

So began the mass mobilisation characteristic of communist countries, with Frelimo propagandising itself as the only legitimate party and the liberators of the country. With the dream in place, it had huge success with the people, and this continued even when the situation



morphed to one of food shortages, supply rations for each family, queues for just about everything and worst of all, no freedom to speak out against either the state or the party.

These hope and ideals meant the population was willing to make sacrifices, and did so, but could no longer look away from the frightening changes taking place before their eyes. Government began talking about the need for free markets, and foreign investment to develop the country, yet still within a proto-communist system. Those dreams and that steadfast hope disappeared.

Today, Mozambique is one of the world's most corrupt countries. Those who were once revolutionaries and freedom fighters are now becoming dollar millionaires. They open doors to any corporation or fossil fuel company that comes knocking, allowing them freedom to take as much as they want, leaving people affected by these private projects in misery.

Government officials make speeches at major international conferences about 'development', and their right to extract fossil fuels, just as northern countries have been doing for centuries. They speak without acknowledging the climate crisis the country and world faces today, and their people's rights to food, land, water, and energy sovereignty, which are being ripped away by these industries.

Today, gone is that hopeful socialist ideology and what was once named the "People's Republic of Mozambique" that evoked such pride. The country is now

merely the 'Republic of Mozambique', a brutal, capitalist state based on neo-colonialism and extractivism.

Frelimo still rules the country after 47 years, and it is now the third poorest country in the world, on the ten bottom worst countries in the UN Human Development Index. Only about 30% of people have access to energy, though the country is a major energy exporter).

Mozambique is also a growingly devastated country, with huge loss of forests, mostly due to illegal logging with the involvement of government entities. Land-grabbing from rural communities to give place for fossil fuels exploitation or other foreign investment is common. The brokers' deals and secret loans create illegal debt that has cost the people and economy billions of dollars.

To maintain this state of things, there is an increasing number of threats, arrests and disappearances of journalists and increased daily violations of human rights. Civil society space is shrinking. Right now organisations are fighting to stop a proposed law that will provide the state with greater control over civil society and undertake witch hunts of organisations they deem threatening. Activists are threatened, and it is illegal to march or demonstrate without authorisation. There is impunity for corporations and the private sector who are able to get away with what they want.

In Mozambique, just as in South Africa after independence, politicians moved into the realm of mining and fossil

fuels, and the impacts have created economic disaster, deepening debt spirals and a social system that has left the people with little hope that the promises made by the liberation movement would ever be fulfilled.

The extractive industry is causing mass destruction of the environment, livelihoods and the country's economic wellbeing, spreading its claws through deforestation, hydropower dams, coal, ruby-mining and gold across the country. Extractivism in Mozambique started with coal, when huge coalfields were discovered in Tete Province after independence. People were made to hear long speeches about how coal would bring development and a better life for all. But soon there was no clear division between government and corporations. They spoke the same language, they made the same promises, they visited communities together.



When affected communities started to raise their voices and demanded their rights under the agreements with companies, and as per the Constitution, government special military forces would be brought in to quash dissent. The first of these attacks was in 2012, and since then communities have experienced arbitrary arrests and shooting up into the air in places full of innocent children and women. Communities were impacted by the industry immediately. Mining companies cut off their access to water, and in cases where water was accessible it would be polluted. Any attempts at going to court have proven futile, not surprising when there is no separation between the state, the ruling party, the legal system and the power of corporations to continue destroying people's lives with impunity.



In the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Inhambane and Nampula, gas drilling has been bringing monsters from across the global north, such as Total from France, Eni from Italy, ExxonMobil from the US, and Sasol from South Africa, and several Chinese

Indian and British companies and financiers, as well as the governments themselves.

Just like the way international companies such as Shell and Barclays propped up the apartheid system in South Africa, other corporations still exploit the people for their resources. And colonial powers like Portugal, through its fossil fuel company Galp and bank Millennium BCP, are major players in Cabo Delgado's liquified natural gas (LNG) industry.

Sasol is a company created by the South African apartheid state, a regime which contributed greatly to the civil war in Mozambique. And Sasol has been extracting gas in Pande and Temane for two decades, in a deal that has lost the Mozambican government billions of dollars in taxes. The deal has also enabled Sasol to practice tax avoidance, accusations of transfer pricing by local civil society, and left communities displaced and living in severe poverty. Absolutely none of the revenues from this

project have benefited the economy or people in real terms. Sasol now has concessions to explore for gas in the Angoche Basin in Nampula province, for projects that will destroy protected islands and entire communities of fishers.

Colonising powers against whom the Frelimo and ANC parties were founded are now still eating away at the substance of the countries. In Cabo Delgado, once again, none of the revenues from the \$50 billion LNG projects will benefit Mozambique. In fact, they have in fact already ruined the country's feeble financial stability. Before any gas has even been extracted, Total, Eni and ExxonMobil have already set up special purpose vehicles in Dubai which will lose Mozambique \$5 billion just by withholding taxes. They have displaced thousands of people, fueled a war that has created one million refugees and has already damaged the onshore and offshore environment, and led to



irreversible climate damage which will continue at a rapid and unstoppable pace.

The rhetoric used by northern companies and states is that Mozambique and South Africa, like the rest of Africa are corrupt. This convenient lie enables them to exploit the country by benefiting a small number of elites, in the name of 'sovereignty'. They are quiet about the way in which their own corrupt regimes put certain politicians in place as pawns, who would allow them to continue their extractive and destructive systems even when they were out of power. They are quiet about the bilateral agreements in place, and agreements with the IMF and World Bank that keep the countries hostage to northern, wealthy states.

Mozambican and South African political elites who either own, or are owned by, the fossil fuel and extractive industries, as well as the governments exploiting their resources, emphasise the need for 'fossil fuels for development'. This narrative has proved to be untrue. Extractivism only benefited the apartheid and colonial regimes and since then has left disaster and ruin in its wake. This narrative goes as far as accusing anyone against it as being 'anti-development'.

How often do we hear from African oligarchs and governments that those who oppose these fossil fuels are trying to keep Africa 'behind'? They exploit the suffering of people who are still struggling because of the legacy of institutionalised oppression and colonialism. What was once a system that these former freedom fighters were fighting against, is now one

that they are perpetuating, one that is keeping people downtrodden and in constant struggle. That system keeps these countries and their people, once with so much hope, in a state of desperation and poverty.





polluters COP, not and African COP

BY NNIMMO BASSEY

Countries that have been on the receiving end of climate change have to carefully examine the narratives driving the conversations and negotiations at the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is important because for years the debates have regressed from demanding real actions to defending lifestyles and dominant geopolitical power positions. Although the COPs are presented as democratic spaces it has always been clear that it is actually a space of imperial and indeed colonial domination.

Calling the COP27 held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt as an African COP was aimed at presenting the false notion that this it was an opportunity to solve the ravages of climate change on the continent and other vulnerable nations and territories. That this would not be so should be clear. This was the fifth COP to be held on the African continent — it has been held once in Kenya, twice in Morocco and once in South Africa. Indeed, around the time it was held in Durban, South Africa, storms battered the region leaving stark warnings and tales of woes. Since then cyclones on the South Eastern seaboard of the continent have inched up the latitudes and snuffed the lives out of hundreds of thousands of Africans. Locust invasion of virtually biblical proportions have stripped dreams of

robust harvests and left desolate, hungry populations. At the time of COP27 Pakistan was still recovering from massive flooding and large swathes of territories in Nigeria lie under water.

None of the COPs has shifted grounds to take real climate actions, especially recognizing the fact that so-called carbon capture or the new sing-song of carbon removal must be approached from the sensible understanding that continual extraction and burning of fossil fuels is counterproductive and injurious to the planet, the people and other beings.

Rather than taking the glaring global heating pathways as real threat to life and leaving fossil fuels in the ground, the world locks itself on the path of voluntary emissions reductions and weakly whispers a commitment to “phase down” the continued use of coal, whatever that means.

How could Sharm El Sheikh be an African COP when Africans ravaged by floods, droughts, receding coastlines and forests were unaware that political leaders and technocrats were toying with their fate on the banks of the Red Sea? How could this be an African COP if the victims of climate change were debarred from defending their life-giving forests and ocean and have no access to the tourist haven where decision makers were ensconced for two weeks in November 2022 to

perpetuate the rituals of carbon trading and hoist distant flags pointing at when their grandchildren will attain net zero carbon emissions?

The COP process has transformed itself into a platform for avoidance of actions and the appropriation of ideas and ideals of indigenous peoples of the world who have been fighting for the respect of the rights of Mother Earth with a clear understanding that to do otherwise spells doom for humans and other species on this Blue Planet.

Corporate profit interests, political and military dominance have perpetuated the myths that the climate debacle can be solved with mathematical formulae while certain lifestyles and investments are secured by destructive activities

including irresponsible extraction, consumption and wars.

COP 27 threw some corn and coins on the ground in the guise of payment for loss and damage caused by ongoing climate inaction and false solutions. It studiously avoided historical harms that have virtually exhausted the carbon budget. Even the net zero and other colourations of carbon offsetting were couched in languages that excuse Europe to throttle Africa with pipelines of discontent as the continent is forced to meet the fossil fuels shortages arising from the Russian war on Ukraine. While the industrialized nations test their bloody war machinery in Ukraine, the fangs of the fossil fuel companies are being sunk into the necks of Okavango in Namibia and Botswana; Saloum Delta of Sénégal and the Virunga forests of Democratic





Republic of Congo. Rather than halting the predatory moves in these world heritage sites, new pipelines of discontent are being planned to such gas from the Niger Delta for delivery to Europe through Morocco and Algeria. Others are planned to convey heavy crude from the Lake Albert region of Uganda to an export terminal at Tanzania. While it is yet inconceivable for rich nations to take climate action, multinational forces are set in battle array to defend the gas pipelines and other investments in the killing fields of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique.

COP27 could have been an African COP if African leaders and others from vulnerable, exploited and exposed regions were not marching

into traps that dangle shinny mirrors, presenting polluting activities as development and holding up ruinous tipping points as desirable destinations. It could have been an African COP if leaders and representatives were going there to demand Climate Justice and insist on the payment of a climate debt for historical and current harms. The value of such a debt could be approximated to a value of about 2 trillion dollars that the industrialized nations spend on warfare and armament annually.

It could have been an African COP if the marketization of nature, including through diverse forms



carbon trading, were denounced and rejected. It could have been an African COP if the gathering agreed that investment should be in agroecology with supports for majority farmers, rather than industrial, colonial or plantation agriculture that depend on fossil fuels, promotes risky technologies and continues to devastate the environment, displacing communities and feeding climate change.

It could have been an African COP if binding emissions cuts returned to the negotiations and polluting nations agreed to do their fair share on the basis of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) rather than the Nationally

Determined Contributions (NDCs) that so far have not dented more than 2 gigatons of the 27 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent needed to keep temperature increase to not more than 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. The Emissions Gap report of UNEP has once more shown that the NDCs are a sham. The COP at Sharm El Sheikh ended up as another sham COP.

It could have been an African COP if the Paris Agreement was overturned and a new upper temperature target of well below 1.5°C was set with a clear understanding that 1.5°C global average means 2.2°C temperature increase for Africa in general and that such a temperature scenario will utterly cook the continent.



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