

# Introduction

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As the climate and environmental justice debates heat up ahead of the COP21 scheduled for December this year in Paris, there is sparse hope that the official conference will address the climate and ecological debt owed from the wealthy countries to the Global South. And there are no reasons to expect a strong concerted action by the “creditor countries” that instead of alms-begging tries to bring the debtors to account, thereby helping to reach an agreement that would imply really substantial reductions to emissions of greenhouse gases.

Left to their own devices at COP21, countries in the Global North will likely push for a weak agreement that continues to benefit the North and avoid responsibilities to countries far less culpable for the climate crisis. The question of responsibility is a recurring one. From the responsibility that some refuse to assume. And the responsibility that others are fighting to assert in the face of this criminal inaction.

First off, there are early indications that the COP21 includes plans to eradicate Common but Differentiated Responsibility, a hallmark of the Rio Treaty of 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol. Further, claims for “loss and damage” from the most vulnerable countries to get compensation for the destruction brought about by climate change are being silenced, with polluters fearing it would open up legitimate discussions about their

liability for historical emissions and the reparations entailed.

Meanwhile, there is evidence demonstrating that climate change related impacts from both slow violence, such as sea level rises and fast violence, from cyclones, tornadoes and floods, have increased. Yet there is no mechanism for describing responsibility and no consensus on how to address loss and damage, particularly given that much of what is lost cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

In terms of addressing mitigation, several new carbon markets have been set up in California, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Quebec, Korea and China; just a few of the markets that could be linked in the future. This strategy will include the further commodification of everything that can be viewed as a carbon sink, especially forests in the new REDD agreement due to be signed at the COP21, but also including the oceans, soil, agriculture, pastoralist lands, and algae.

Some optimism can also be rallied by new strong voices and some unexpected allies that have been heard in the last two years urging solutions. There are increasing signs that the courts might be willing to intervene, as in The Netherlands urging a governmental policy of deeper cuts in emissions, and elsewhere supporting attempts to claim damages from fossil fuels

companies for climate change. Also, Pope Francis' ecological encyclical *Laudato si* acknowledges the science of climate change, powerfully defends the existence of an ecological debt from North to South (in paragraph 52), and criticizes carbon credits markets as sharply as any environmental activist could hope for (paragraph 171). The idea of "unburnable fuels", born in the Niger Delta and in Ecuador in 1995 and put into circulation by Oilwatch and diffused further by EJOLT, has been adopted by Nicholas Stern and many others in another guise, in the campaigns for disinvestment from the fossil fuel industries.

Moreover, in the streets and across the world, decentralised movements are opposing fracking, pipelines, false solutions and dirty coal, racking up victories and gaining strength. Movements are reframing their demands, and a rights-based discourse is complemented if not substituted by demands for autonomy, energy sovereignty, debt reclamation and assertion of responsibility to lands, the territories, and to the future.

This compilation of articles gives a voice to these resistances, shares vital research from destructive projects and demonstrates how the UN's lack of leadership threatens the planet and exacerbates the climate crises. The two main objectives of this project is to:

- Open space for debate on climate politics ahead of and beyond the COP21 in Paris
- Feed into the wider debate on climate and environmental justice

The following introduction reviews what is on the table at the COP21 in Paris and then outlines the contributions.

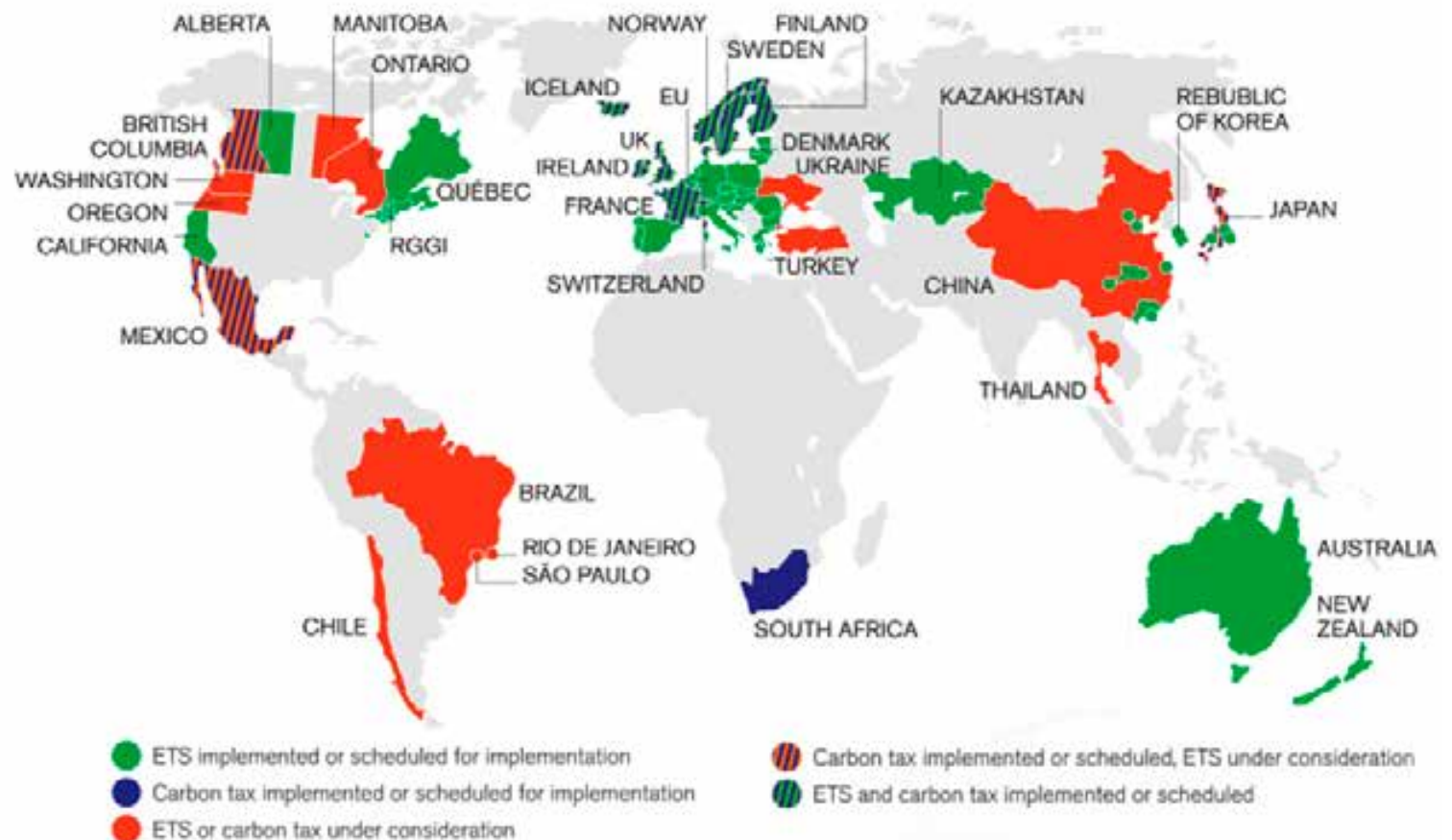
## A few key points on the table at the UN COP21

After 25 years of failed climate negotiations, climate justice advocates are preparing for the COP21 in Paris to be yet another round of shameful false solutions. This admission of "defeat" is far from what one might assume as "failure"; rather, changes are being made but they are happening outside the UN framework in the streets and on the lands. The UN approach distracts from effective solutions – limiting us to a view that sees climate change as a primarily financial and "cost-efficiency" issue. Therefore, alternative futures fail to be envisioned within this framework..

One failure of past COPs is seen in the carbon markets over the past decade and has demonstrated how carbon trading is both ineffective and corrupt.<sup>1</sup> The EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) – the largest functioning carbon market in the world – has not helped to achieve emissions reductions, nor has it been an effective tool for dealing with the real causes of climate change. From policy-makers looking after the interests of corporate lobbies, to windfall profits for heavy polluters and financial traders, using a neoliberal market-based system for stopping pollution has been inherently ineffective.<sup>2</sup>

1 Gilbertson, Tamra (2011) "Frauds and Scams in Europe's Emissions Trading System", *Climate and Capitalism*, May 2011. <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2011/05/05/fraud-and-scams-in-europes-emissions-trading-system>

2 See for example the Scrap the ETS declaration, <http://scrap-the-euets.makenoise.org/KV/declaration-scrap-ets-english/>



It is likely that the COP21 Paris agreement will not really achieve commitments to substantially reduce emissions quickly enough, and to stop “losses and damages”. It will instead direct some funds into reviving and expanding carbon markets and offsets, with plans to link international carbon markets in the future. Although the failure of carbon markets has been widely documented, there will be no debate in Paris on how to discontinue markets, rather the direction will be how to enhance current carbon markets and expand new ones in the Global South and North. The COP21 in Paris will likely see a return to carbon market fixes in order to build a broader field of climate policy through which capital can flow.

During the UN climate talks in 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, a new Green Climate Fund (GCF) was conceived, promising to counter climate change with US\$100 billion from the Global North to the Global South for “sustainable development” pathways. It was launched at the 2011 UN climate talks in Durban, South Africa, although the GCF has not fully been agreed upon in the UN, and this amount of money has not materialized. Financial players are hard at work to ensure it will be a profitable financial instrument in order to continue a neoliberal approach to climate finance, rather than a means to distribute public grant money to countries in need of new renewable energies and perhaps climate adaptation funds.

3 Gilbertson and Coelho, “The Natural Capital Finance Facility: A window into the “green” economy,” CTW and Counter Balance publication, Nov 2014. <http://www.carbonradewatch.org/downloads/publications/a-window-into-the-green-economy.pdf>

The GCF has quickly morphed into an avenue to use financial mechanisms created by financial intermediaries, such as banks and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) that will profit the most from the proposed “flexible” financing.<sup>3</sup>

Not included in the report but also on the table in Paris are expanded Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) markets and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA). Climate Smart Agriculture aims to apply the tenets of REDD to Farmland and envisions compensating investors from the Global North with carbon credits for their contribution to CSA projects in the Global South. Yet rather than refocusing and compensating small-holders for the work they already have done and do “cooling down the earth” through agro-ecological production within a food sovereignty framework – what could be termed “climate-wise” agriculture, CSA builds on staples of the Green Revolution such as modified seeds, chemical pesticides, and synthetic fertilizers, as well as high risk technologies such as synthetic biology, nano-technology and geo-engineering. This imposition of new biotechnology on farmers around the world threaten chaos within volatile ecosystems, increased dependency on markets and increased speculation within the food system.

As Pat Mooney of the ETC Group writes, “Climate smart agriculture has become the new slogan for the agricultural research establishment and the corporate sector to position themselves as the solution to the food and climate crisis.... For the world’s small

farmers, there is nothing smart about this. It is just another way to push corporate controlled technologies into their fields and rob them of their land.” CSA offers the same potential for conflict, injustice and cost displacement that has been demonstrated through the implementation of REDD.<sup>4</sup>

As John O’Neill explains, REDD is as a form of injustice through “displaced responsibility” whereby for example REDD forestation schemes contract communities with the responsibility to maintain and preserve trees for decades into the future. He gives the example of the N’hambita Project in Mozambique where communities were contracted to preserve trees for 100 years tying future as well as current generations into future obligations. He argues that here “Both spatial site and temporal scale of responsibility are displaced. In addition to the unjust displacement of burdens the policy is unlikely to be effective given the immediate subsistence needs of those who take on those responsibilities.”<sup>5</sup>

## In this report

Faced with UN “paralysis”, the first of the three sections grapples with UNFCCC COP politics, from past grievances to current debates, to the best way to mobilise against the UN framework ranging from a critical-realist perspective infused with historical overviews to creative and disruptive interventions.

Patrick Bond provides a sweeping overview of the shape of climate politics today. Affirming that

4 For more information on REDD, see for example, [no-redd-africa.org](http://no-redd-africa.org) and Cabello and Gilbertson (eds.) “No REDD, a Reader” CTW and IEN, 2011. <http://noredd.makenoise.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

5 John O’Neill, private communication.

mobilisation from inside is “suicide”, he lays out sources of hope for the principles of climate justice, from South Africa to Peru to New York. Acknowledging differences and challenges, he offers hope for a unity project that can globalise the resistances of what he terms “the central issue of our day.”

Sarah Bracking dissects the Green Climate Fund. She asks whether its financialised nature is a form of entrapment designed to depoliticise and divert any meaningful debate into fiscal jargon. She ends with an open question of how to move from alms-begging to autonomous prefigurative bases of resistance.

Maxime Combes provides one answer to her question from the perspective of the mobilisation in Paris, outlining the mass march strategy that aims to shift from a defensive and reactive position towards a self-defined climate justice agenda that aims to be forward-looking, pro-active and constructive, notwithstanding the outcome of the meeting.

Finally, the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination opens the invitation to “a mass participation trans-media action framework that merges the street disobedient bodies and cyberspace” so as to turn the city into a total resistance performance open to all.

While the authors agree that giving false hope for a just and effective climate agreement would be naïve, they all make the case that there is a need for stronger resistances and to learn from the past in order to move forward beyond Paris.

## Discourses and Alliances

The second section focuses on the broader discourses and alliances born from climate justice movements across the globe. Making the links includes articulation with labour movements, reviewing and understanding energy sovereignty, and rethinking large-scale renewable energy projects, not only from a decentralised perspective, but from a perspective of historical power relations. This section highlights the discursive battles over terms such as climate justice, responsibility and liability, renewable and “Green”. As Aaron Vasijntan has written recently, “Words can make or break whole movements. The way a problem is defined, the slogans that movements use, are incredibly important in order to make necessary policy changes.”<sup>6</sup>

The backlash against the term Anthropocene is the most recent reminder of how “wars of words” are fought over who gets to define meaning. Anthropocene expresses the reality of “humans fundamentally transforming the earth’s geology” that was noticed many decades ago yet has recently been in vogue. To many (including some authors here), the term Anthropocene serves as a rallying cry for the need for urgent action of climate change. Yet the term has been easily appropriated for other conclusions – from those who argue that we are beyond the point of no return so we may as well dance while Rome burns, to the headline-grabbing “eco-modernists” whose recent manifesto refers to the potential for a “good anthropocene” where endless and perpetual growth can be sustained by constant technological innovation and infinite “clean” energy in the form

<sup>6</sup> Vasijntan, Aaron. The Anthropocene debate. Why is such a useful concept starting to fall apart? <http://www.unevenearth.org/?p=684>

of nuclear power. While others recognise that “blaming” all humans brings about its own set of injustices.

Other words may not be as easy to usurp. Joan Martinez-Alier takes us through two approaches to climate justice through two recently published books, one from philosopher Henry Shue, and the other from journalist Naomi Klein. Shue’s book focuses on how responsibility and liability should be enacted in global negotiations, whereby justice requires that luxury emissions should decrease in order to meet the needs of those on subsistence emissions and where (causal if not moral) responsibility should lead to strict liability. Klein meanwhile acknowledges that ineffectual politicians and the UN will not provide the radical solutions needed whatever the advice from moral philosophers and that these solutions must come from elsewhere in the shape of anti-capitalist environmental justice movements that currently offer the only hope for a re-thought Anthropocene that takes justice for humanity and other species into account.

Kevin Buckland takes us on a journey on a flotilla of paper canoes through the Hudson river to the New York People’s Climate March in 2014 as a means to understand how the concept of the commons can inform this anthropocene in creation. Faced with the threat of “bomb trains” coming from the North Dakota Bakken fracked and water-polluted oil fields, and oil barges on the river that provides New York it’s drinking water, Buckland weaves a story of water as commons and posits framing resistance against fracking as resistance against incursions into the democratic commons.

Stefania Barca, a pioneering author on “working class environmentalism”, makes the case for recentering labour in the climate change debate and how an alliance between labour and climate mobilisation may offer both a starting point and necessary precondition for a revolution in the way production, reproduction and consciousness interact.

Pere Ariza grapples with the difficult questions inherent in the new concept of energy sovereignty, acknowledging the thorny questions this framing brings up, such as “who is the sovereign in energy sovereignty?” and at what scale should sovereignty be enacted? Pointing to sometimes conflicting forms of sovereignty that need to be navigated, and contrasting state sovereignty that aims to return power to the state from deregulated market regimes with internal sovereignty of the political community to decide on energy generation, distribution and consumption in a way that is appropriate within their ecological, social, economic and cultural circumstances, he offers examples of both at work.

This question of sovereignty and the appropriate scale for an energy transition is further developed in Hamza Hamouchene’s article on Desertec, the mega solar project that aims to harvest the sun from the North African countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria to power European energy demand. Hamouchene digs into questions of what the renewable future should look like, and questions the green panacea through centralized renewable energy production in the context of neocolonialism.

## Resistances

As energy conflicts (in extraction, transport, and waste as greenhouse gases) become ever more extreme, we can safely affirm that climate justice movements around the world are diversifying and growing in number and strength. The third and final section honours the courage and grit that it takes for communities to continue resisting around the world. It is in these spaces that people are taking back their lives and protecting all life on Earth. Frontline movements and communities work to keep fossil fuels in the ground and lands alive in often dangerous situations.

A recent article in *Nature* used detailed data and well-established economic models to calculate the most economically inefficient fossil fuels whose exploitation needs to be slowed down drastically or abandoned to limit global warming to under 2 degrees. They concluded that these “unburnable fuels” include vast amounts of oil in the Middle East, coal in the US, Australia and China, and that trillions of dollars of known and extractable coal, oil and gas, including most Canadian tar sands, all Arctic oil and gas and much potential shale gas, should not be exploited.<sup>7</sup> Yet purely monetary calculations provide a poor guideline for where to leave it in the ground. Cultural significance, social impacts, biodiversity and sacredness are more cogent reasons that can guide us where to leave oil in the soil, gas under the grass and coal in the hole.

Most important are the claims of those on the territory who oppose extraction and claim their right to live in healthy and safe environments and to

self-determination. They employ a wide repertoire of resistance ranging from innovative proposals for how to pay the carbon debt while keeping “unburnable fuels” in the soil, such as the proposal of the women from Fuleni, in South Africa, who are trying to Yasunize the coal reserves that are dangerously close to communities and to a natural park conserving rhinos as Patrick Bond and Faith Ka-Manzi argue in their article.<sup>8</sup> Yet in contrast to the Yasuni Proposal that argued for funds to be funnelled from climate debtors to the Ecuadorian state, this proposal argues that the funds should go directly towards supporting the activists themselves who are putting their lives on the line to defend the territories.

In Colombia, there is not yet much talk of leaving the coal in the hole (except perhaps in the very sensitive ecosystems of the paramos), but Andrea Cardoso argues that there is no time like the present. She demonstrates that as coal prices plummet the simplest math shows that the violence and environmental destruction of mining does not add up to the costs in the vast extraction fields of Cerrejon and El Cesar. She concludes by challenging the Colombian government to come to terms with this.

Can oil profits fund a social revolution? In Brazil, pre-salt oil was sold as the bonanza that would pave the social welfare state, yet several years in, amidst corruption and scandal, Marcelo Calazans, Tamra Gilbertson and Daniella Meirelles survey the scene and the growing movement that is proclaiming “Not one more well!”.

7 McGlade, Christophe, and Paul Ekins. “The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2 [deg] C.” *Nature* 517:7533 (2015): 187-190.

see also McGlade, Christophe, and Paul Ekins. “Un-burnable oil: an examination of oil resource utilisation in a decarbonised energy system.” *Energy Policy* 64 (2014): 102-112.

8 Temper, L., Yáñez, I., Sharife, K., Ojo, G., Martínez-Alier, J., CANA, Combes, M., Cornelissen, K., Lerkelund, H., Louw, M., Martínez, E., Minnaar, J., Molina, P., Murcia, D., Oriola, T., Osuoka, A., Pérez, M. M., Roa Avendaño, T., Urkidi, L., Valdés, M., Wadzah, N., Wykes, S. 2013. **Towards a Post-Oil Civilization: Yasunization and other initiatives to leave fossil fuels in the soil.** EJOLT Report No. 6, 204 p.

Lena Weber also takes up the theme of both the slow and the fast forms of violence that extreme energy wreaks, from the view of Algeria. Protests against fracking were perhaps the most visible environmental mobilisations in the country to date, and are contributing to new thinking about climate change across North Africa and new articulations with networked climate justice movements.

Finally, Leah Temper and Sam Bliss visit the Unist'ot'en camp resisting pipelines in British Columbia Canada. Here the Wet'suwet'en argue less in terms of human or indigenous rights but they rather affirm a very different understanding of responsibility than that which we began with – responsibility for them is what they are fighting for – responsibility to the salmon, to the watershed, to the ancestors and to the future.

## Conclusion

Can an ethic of responsibility to nature enacted from below counteract the apathy towards nature and care demonstrated by those at the top?

Across the world, communities are creating new frontiers of resistance against the opening of fossil fuel frontiers. Some struggles draw upon mutual inspiration and become linked and coordinated with each other, creating true resistance corridors. In this report, we see that communities are succeeding in rolling back and slowing the advance of the fossil fuels economy.

As networked climate justice movements around the world cohere and consolidate, focusing not only

on claims for an ecological debt but also on concrete instances of resistance on the ground, it becomes ever more apparent how the spokes of these networks follow the routes of oil pipelines, refineries and other infrastructures of fossil capitalism. This report begins to ask how can we subvert this power, through alliances with workers and other social actors, through new imaginaries and through spatial and strategic interruptions.

The next step for climate justice movements is to turn this power of the capitalist organisation of energy production against itself by forging greater unity between those at the points of extraction and transport, and the consumers of fossil fuels in coordinated actions. Paris provides just one such occasion to engage in a global collective strike against the gas, petro and carbon economy, but the next step is for a movement of movements to define a schedule of resistances.

Meanwhile, this report aims to share just a few of these important stories with the hope of placing emphasis on these actions in order to advance the discourse within the climate justice debate and include greater solidarity for frontline movements in the future. Finally, this report aims to send a strong message, that far from believing the UN can save the world's climate, resistance to global climate injustice and inequality is alive and building from the ground up.

