Why Climate Change is NOT an Environmental Issue

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An Intro...

It has been ten years since the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle was shut down by tens of thousands of protesters. This moment is still considered by many as the birth of "the movement of movements," although it actually grew out of a long process of global alliance building. On the streets of Seattle we saw activists from many different struggles combining forces in a display of collective power.

This pamphlet is produced in the midst of the mobilization for the UN climate summit COP15 to be held in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The COP15 will bring together so-called world leaders, multi-national corporations and the biggest NGO's, to sign a deal meant to prevent catastrophic climate change. But while the impact of climate change is already being felt around the globe, the strategies and ideas up for discussion are no more than false solutions that reinforce the interests of the most powerful actors. In reality their plans will only further the expansion of capitalism and colonialism, putting more power in the hands of the few.

With this pamphlet we would like to connect the dots once again: How is the reality, as well as the discourse, of climate change linked with other struggles? Yes, we also feel the clock ticking but we refuse to be rushed into draconian solutions that will only increase inequality and social injustice around the world. This pamphlet looks at climate change from the angles of capitalism, militarism, nuclear energy, gender, migration, labour & class, and food production. We have asked activists from across Europe involved in these various struggles to contribute texts and make the links. Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It is but one symptom of a system ravaging our planet and destroying our communities. We hope that this pamphlet can again underline our common struggle; let it inspire us to take massive direct action all around the globe, and to join together in taking control over our lives and real solutions...

09/09/09

Capitalism: Markets, markets everywhere...

The next crucial decades in the battle to avert the worst catastrophes of climate change will be dominated by the response of governments and corporations crafted at the COP15 summit in Copenhagen this December.

The root cause of climate change should by now be clear: capitalism itself. For the last century capitalism (in which we roughly include the variety of totalitarian state-capitalism that branded itself as 'communism' or 'socialism', subverting our understandings of those terms) has expanded industry rapidly, primarily due to the massive amounts of cheap energy that carbon-emitting fossil fuels provide.

Skyrocketing carbon-emissions are the by-product of the over-industrialisation of commodity production and the ever-increasing flows of products on airplanes, trucks, and ships across the globe in response to created, ever-growing consumer demand. Meanwhile, the forests which are a key part of the earth's carbon-cycling capacity, massive 'carbon sinks' or 'lungs' that absorb and contain much of the carbon dioxide on the planet, are being destroyed by logging, mining and burning by corporations in their pursuit of profit.

None of this matters to capital. All that matters is that capital and human labour can transform natural resources into commodities, which are in turn sold on the market for a profit, which is then reinvested into the production of ever-more commodities, in the pursuit of ever-higher profits. In order to increase profits, factories are increasingly automated, natural resources are extracted by force and wages are pressured downwards in order to minimise costs. As the cycle reaches ever more frenzied heights, it naturally results in a crisis: a scarcity of jobs and wages so low that there is no one with enough money to buy the sheer over abundance of stuff. In short, capitalists are in constant search of markets to expand and create, in order to accumulate more profit. By doing so, they dispossess those who do not have the economic capacity to be part of the market, or those that the system needs to exclude for the sake of cheap prices.

Since the 1970s, in the search for profit capitalism has avoided crisis by creating a fantastically immaterial financial market of derivatives (see glossary at bottom) and debts, in order to let us keep buying stuff on our static or falling wages. The issuing of unsustainable levels of debt, and the accompanying derivatives which bet on who would repay these debts, created massive profits for banks and 'investors'—until 2008. Then with the collapse of the financial market, the faith in the future of capitalism itself was put into jeopardy. But despite the evident instability, witnessed by the collapse of imaginary 'derivatives'

markets, the exact same ideas are the basis for the creation of yet another new market: a carbon market that puts a price tag on the very carbon in the air itself.

The main outcome of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (see glossary) for "solving" the climate crisis has been the creation of a global 'carbon market' in which companies and corporations can buy and sell 'credits' that symbolise the right to pollute. The official rhetoric to justify this is that charging companies to pollute will encourage them to reduce their emissions in order to reduce their costs. But looked at more closely it becomes apparent that the right to produce carbon emissions has just been privatised, meaning that those who can afford to pay are able to benefit from polluting practices, while those who cannot afford to pay are excluded from them.

By what act of black magic does anyone decide on the price of carbon emissions? Just as the bankers had to basically invent a price for complex financial derivatives, using mathematical equations so complex that even those running the trading floors confessed to having no understanding of how they were created, governments and markets are literally inventing a price for carbon. What follows is elementary: whenever there is a market for an immaterial commodity, whose price is basically an act of black magic, what is guaranteed to follow is a massive amount of speculation and fraud, leading to a giant bubble and then the inevitable burst.

Companies can even get more carbon credits through two clever and conveniently complicated market schemes called the 'Clean Development Mechanism' (CDM) and 'Joint Implementation' (JI). Within these 'flexible mechanisms' (see glossary) companies are allowed to buy credits by investing in a project in the Global South or Central and Eastern Europe that emits less carbon dioxide than a potential alternative project that might have otherwise been built. The system is infested with fraudulent practices. It has become a cash cow for industrial expansion across the global south, used to funnel money into industries such as chemicals factories and coal— because the 'otherwise' scenario is predicted by the company itself, who then decides how much carbon they have 'saved'. The credits they earn can be used to 'pay' for emissions from the company's current stock of industrial plants (meaning that they don't have to reduce them) or can be sold on the carbon market to create even more profits for investment.

The CDM and JI do nothing to reduce carbon emissions from their current levels. Instead they give companies a way to earn extra credits which permit them to continue polluting at current levels, while also earning money to invest in expanding their industries. Moreover, it has been widely documented that these

projects (ie. monoculture plantations, construction of mega-dams, large scale windmill farms, among many others) are causing serious environmental, social and economic problems in the local communities where they are implemented. The schemes are also a convenient way to undermine a cap on carbon emissions—by creating new credits there is no longer a cap—and to legitimize the appropriation and extraction of natural resources in the Global South and Eastern Europe.

The carbon market is the Emperor's new clothing for this capitalist system, with one crucial difference: this time, it is not just the profits of bankers and big corporations and our jobs which are at stake, but irreversible and catastrophic climate change that will leave our children inheriting a wasteland. Indeed, if the history of carbon markets like those of the European Emissions Trading Scheme is any guide, they only serve to increase carbon emissions. Carbon markets are ultimately dangerous because they provide a convenient lie that lets us sleep easily as land grabs, industrial expansion, rapid decrease of our finite natural resources and climate crunching carbon emissions continue unchecked; this while diverting attention away from the real solutions to climate change which involve a substantial transformative change to our systems of political and economic organisation.

Markets are always created by taking at gunpoint that which is free and held in common, and making it private property to serve profit. Around the world, local and indigenous communities have for millennia cultivated their land in common without regard for property titles, taxes, or boundaries; but wherever these communities have been unfortunate enough to live on top of fossil fuels or mineral resources, close to dammable rivers, extended lands for mega-project imlementations or in the rainforest, powerful corporations have conspired with governments to rob the people of their land in order give ownership rights to the companies for extraction and exploitation.

Under the United Nations agreement "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries," (REDD) currently being negotiated within the UNFCCC, this process is intensified: forested land is privatized and given to corporations, abolishing indigenous and local people's decision-making power or removing them from the land altogether, so that the corporation can 'preserve' the forest in order to make a tidy profit from the carbon credits earned. Ironically, 'saving the environment' will become the latest fashionable excuse of oppressive authorities. Indigenous and local communities in the Global South are being dragged kicking and screaming into this new form of green colonization, just as our European ancestors were dragged from their lands in the land grabs that accompanied the dawn of western industrial civilization.

It is not just carbon emissions that must be stopped in order to prevent climate change, but the capitalist form of production. Even if capitalism could reconfigure itself so that it could keep producing without carbon emissions, the crux of the problem is that the imposition of market relationships does permanent violence to ecosystems and the humans who live in them. Unlike mass-produced monoculture plantations, the naturally evolved rainforests that absorb our excess carbon cannot be easily replaced. Neither can the indigenous ways of living that may very well provide some of the few remaining clues of how humans can relate to the world without destroying it.

Instead of recognising climate change as the ultimate warning that our current systems of organisation, energy use, production and consumption are just not working, governments and corporations are hijacking climate change as an excuse to embark on yet another round of capital accumulation. The creation of new markets, that justify further global inequality and unjust practices, are the only solutions they have devised after almost two decades of talking.

Capitalism may have functioned well enough to provide a level of material comfort for a minority of people on this planet, but its assumptions that there would be never-ending natural resources (including atmospheric capacity) have now come to an end. And like anything that outlives the material conditions it evolved under, the reign of capitalist production must come to an end, to create the space necessary to learn from the already existing alternatives, common to many local experiences; different ways of life better suited for the present. Instead we must harness the incredible productive potential of humanity for the benefit of the planet. What is genuinely useful must be expropriated, and the rest must be destroyed. A new form of life that holds this world in common must be fashioned, and we must learn how to relate to each other not as commodities but as real living human beings.

Glossary:

Derivatives: A type of trade made on the financial markets whose price depends on the price of something else—e.g. a bet taken on the future exchange rate of Euros to Dollars—with the possibility to make huge profits if the bet wins.

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—the international governmental agreement to do something about climate change, ratified in 1995. To achieve its goal, there is an annual UNFCCC 'Conference of the Parties' (COP)—where governments (parties to the convention) and their associated corporations sit around a big table and discuss how they can make money out of climate change and look "green" at the same time.

Flexible mechanisms: Emissions Trading, the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation. These are market-based mechanisms defined under the Kyoto Protocol (negotiated at the COP meeting in Kyoto in 1997) intended to lower the overall costs of achieving emissions targets. They are designed to allow rich Northern countries to trade credits among themselves or buy new ones in "poorer" or Southern countries instead of reducing their emissions in their own countries. In reality, they simply provide a way for rich countries and their corporations to make more money.

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

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

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

The movement against environmental racism, which started with people of colour in the U.S. struggling against environmental injustices, confronted the racial discrimination in environmental decision-making. Later on, it started to be identified as not only a race struggle but also as a class struggle, since regulations and laws (international treaties in this case) were being enforced with a deliberate impact on marginalized communities in terms of toxic waste disposal, implementation of heavily polluting industries, or mega

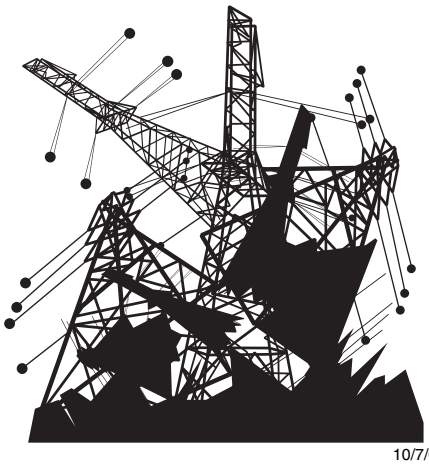
projects that produce 'clean' energy for someone else.

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

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

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

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



Migration, Borders and Climate Change

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

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

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

The extreme-right British National Party in the UK gives very serious attention to questions of environmental damage, peak oil, famine and food supply. For fascists like them climate change provides the perfect opportunity to try and argue their view of the world that humanity consists of races and nations in constant conflict and competition. What these people might advocate in the face of the effects of climate change does not bear thinking about.

This year, in April 2009, the NATO war alliance celebrated their 60th anniversary with a summit to discuss NATO's new strategic direction. A strategy paper published in April 2007 stressed the need for a more "proactive approach," in which

the pre-emption and prevention of threats are central. To the NATO strategists an array of threats exist in today's uncertain world, from terrorism and transnational crime to unrest following food crises, extensive migration to the countries of the NATO alliance and social conflicts as a result of climate change. The paper maintains that proper "defence" requires the concept of "homeland security", which entails a "comprehensive approach" of the military, police, politicians, researchers, academics and civil society, and the continued blurring of internal and external security, to build up a "global security architecture." We can already speak of a global market boom in databases, biometric readers, data mining programs and other new technologies of control, with multinational corporations poised to make huge profits.

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

Freedom of movement is a contested common right. Understood as a form of grassroots globalization, migration is contained, managed and restricted by a top-down process of trans-nationalization. And with an increase in mobility and migration, irregular migration is being perceived as a threat to the world-order and to the integrity of the nation state. "Project Nation State" is challenged by an unregulated globalism. Borders are an attempt to limit and privatise freedom of movement as a common right. Wherever physical migration occurs, new borders are erected where one is "processed," "profiled," "sorted," "filtered," "contained," or "rejected". The border is a site of unequal power relations where a selection is made between the useful and unwanted in relation to market demands. The border is a site of conflict that is costing yearly the lives of many who try are trying to cross borders in spite of the latest technological advances in security, surveillance and control. These people are suffocating in containers, drowning in rivers and seas, exploding on mine fields, or being shot by border guards.

'No Borders' is a clear anti-authoritarian position that fights for the freedom of movement for all and the abolition of borders, while recognizing the massive injustice which exploits people and resources around the world for the benefit of few. The immigration system of Fortress Europe is designed to preserve this division. And while the EU is working towards One Europe,

"Project Nation State" continues far outside the EU borders. New borders are created and existing borders are transformed to also exclude from Europe the growing group of climate refugees.

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

Gender: Climate Change is a Feminist Issue

As evidence of climate change becomes ever more compelling, the battle over who gets to frame its causes, effects and solutions will intensify. Whose voices get heard and whose don't will continue as a key political issue of our time, bringing class, colour, age and gender divisions to the forefront. Women and children living in poverty are the least responsible for climate change yet the most burdened by its impact. Excluded from channels of information and shut out from local and international decision making structures, those that resist are criminalized. Such is the case of the Mapuche indigenous woman that has been in jail for more than five years defending her territory and their forests against the forestry companies in Chile.

Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women in poorer rural regions. Women here fulfil combined roles as producers and providers of food, water and fuel, income earners, household managers and care givers. Their responsibility for using and preserving land for food and fuel production and their resulting dependency on the soil make them vulnerable to the effects of climate change such as desertification, erosion and soil degradation. Decreasing crop yields and capacity

to sustain livestock, less productivity and lower income are consequences of these effects. The decreasing biodiversity affects women's role in healthcare and their access to medical plants. We quickly forget that about 80% of the world's population uses traditional medicine to meet their basic health needs. So when the resource base on which these women rely is undermined, their food security and family well-being are seriously threatened. The depletion of natural resources and decreasing agricultural productivity only increases women's workloads and further reduces their time available to participate in decision-making processes (that is, if they are allowed to participated in these processes in the first place).

In many areas, women are the primary guardians of the forests and their rich biodiversity. Women possess extensive local and/or indigenous knowledge on tree species, edible plants and those with healing capacities, but their role in forest conservation has yet to be acknowledged: Women are virtually invisible in formal forestry and particularly in decision-making positions. Their voices are ignored when the same forest has to make way for large corporate-run eucalyptus plantations—a fast-growing hardwood tree that is a favourite of the international forest products industry, which plays a key role in international governmental climate change agreements. In their approach to carbon trading, and games with ficticious carbon accounting systems, international negotiators favor these large-scale CO2-absorbing projects in the South while marginalizing non-corporate, non-state and non-expert contributions toward climatic stability.

In Minas Gerais, Brazil, for example, the Plantar S.A. Corporation has asked for carbon finance for its expanding monoculture eucalyptus plantations.These plantations not only occupy public lands that according to Brazillian law belong to poor peasants, they deplete and divert the water supply away from local villages and greatly reduce biodiversity. The Kyoto Protocol's 'Clean Development Mechanism' has effectively shut the door to small-scale, non-corporate, grassroots solutions - such as systems that encourage local control of existing forests and improvements in their ability to absorb CO2 while producing, sustainable fuelwood supplies. Instead, new exclusionary forms of property rights are created that cut women off from their fuelwood collection and food and seed domestication. Nor will these women have access to the few 'forest guard' jobs that will be created.

The struggle for land is fought alongside the struggle for water. Due to climate change, fresh water will become more scarce as temperatures rise and natural water sources dry up. Privatisation here adds further pressure to a just water distribution. Low-income households, particularly those headed by women, struggle

to pay large lump sums for water connections and additional monthly payments. Therefore, women have been central in the struggle against the sale of public water services to transnational companies.

Women suffer greatly in wars, which will inevitably increase as people battle for access to decreasing supplies of resources such as fresh water and arable land. In war, women are often ruthlessly violated when rape is used as a military weapon, and are left to single-handedly care for their families in precarious conditions when their husbands are required to fight.

When it comes to immediate natural disasters–such as hurricanes or tsunamis –the forecasting information networks and early warning systems are oriented towards males and often don't take into account women's channels of information. Due to their limited access to information, women are running bigger risks. Cultural restrictions on women's mobility can add to the problem. During the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh many more women died than men because early warnings were displayed in public spaces from which women were prohibited and women delayed leaving their homes for fear of breaking cultural modesty standards. The field of disaster management is similarly dominated by men, and women's needs for information and services are often neglected in disaster response.

Poor women in particular are excluded from information that will give them agency to act at the moment of impact; or in the long-run, information that helps them recognise systemic patterns, and recognise that injustice, as well as justice, is social and has a long history.

Climate change is real, but it is also used as a new rhetoric to fuel old systems of control and repression. This means we need to keep an eye on well-publicised concerns about the threats posed, and judge whether they are justified or used for alarmist discourses that serve other more problematic objectives and reinforce repression. For example, the population threat: Predictions of population growth overshooting the carrying capacity of the planet have long been popular in environmental circles. Those seeking to shift the blame for climate change from Northern consumption and production patterns to poor people in the South are safely letting capitalism off the hook. Their 'overpopulation' argument does not dare ask for a new form of social organisation that might see land and resources accessed and shared more evenly, contributing to less poverty and more sustainable lifestyles, but is implicitly stating that the fertility of a certain group of women must be controlled. In the past, such reasoning has contributed to the implementation of oppressive population policies, deeply harmful to the health and rights of impoverished women all over the world, women of color and women of working-class.

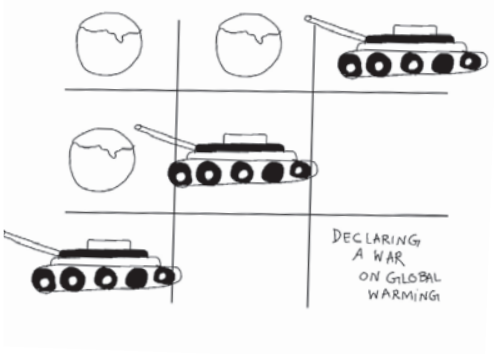
In the context of climate change poor women see themselves faced with fighting multiple battles: in combatting partriarchy, in regaining control over their land, their food and water resources, in claiming access to medicinal herbs and information, and finally in keeping control over their bodies.

The exclusion from international climate negotiations of women, children, the poor and in general the voices of the majority of people who will be most affected by the consequences of climate change, means that such negotiations are entirely undemocratic and ignore the solutions already lived by such peoples, favouring instead a series of false solutions that create huge profit for the special interests who are permitted a place at the negotiating table, at the devestating expense of those who are excluded.

Militarism: Declaring a War on Global Warming

With the amount of money spent on war each year, our beloved 'world leaders' could easily meet the Kyoto Protocol's international targets on climate change as well as their Millennium Development Goals for poverty alleviation and development; they could phase in energy efficiency and localised renewable energy technology for all and they could prevent huge destruction of human and animal life and the environment...

But what are budgetary priorities when current power relations need support and reinforcement, especially in times like these of multiple crises? War is big business and a major industry that thrives on crisis. It alone ensures constant crises either by physical force or by political discourses that justify a constant cash flow. For example, from the far Right to more moderate environmental NGOs, a discourse of panic suggests a tsunami of bodies about to hit our countries, that starving waves of climate refugees are expected to wash up on our shores. Population alarmism is linked here with a climate change scenario where the depletion of carrying capacity in overpopulated areas causes increasing wars, disease, starvation and ultimately migration to the North. We find this threat narrative reproduced in the NATO strategy paper discussed at the Strasbourg summit in April 2009, where climate change scenarios were used to justify an increase of budgets for internal and external military border control and to legitimize NATO's personal war on the very group of refugees it helped to create.



If we look further at the role of the military in the climate crisis we see that the military apparatus disproportionately consumes energy supplies: energy for the manufacture of vehicles and weaponry, energy for building and dismantling military bases and facilities, energy for the construction of roads for military access, and energy consumed while rebuilding whatever the military blows up. Let alone the energy required by the military's partners, like NASA and the nuclear industry. In the case of the U.S., the irony is that the military is using vast amounts of oil to fuel a war in Iraq fought at least in part to ensure future American control of oil supplies. The Pentagon is the single largest consumer of oil worldwide.

Up to 10% of total carbon dioxide emissions are a result of military activity. A single KC135 plane uses 44 gallons (167 liters) of fuel per minute – the same amount of carbon dioxide as 2000 cars. The world's military forces are also responsible for the release of more than two-thirds of CFC-113 into the ozone layer. The US military is the world's single largest polluter and generates more toxics annually than the top five chemical companies combined... so much for ecological bootprint. After the direct impact of war, we are left with chemical and sometimes radioactive contamination of air and groundwater, oil spills or burned forests, and of course devastation of homes and local infrastructure, all further endangering the habitats of people and animals for generations to come.

The hunger for resources extends far beyond fossil fuels like oil. The military's use of metals like aluminium, copper, nickel and platinum is greater than the entire demand for these materials in the Global South. Though it is in the Global South that US-trained paramilitary troops wage war against unarmed small farmers and indigenous communities, displaced from land to be privatised in mining projects for bauxite (aluminium), copper or uranium, and it is in the Global South that wars are raging with kalashnikovs, clubs and knives, wars to control and earn the incomes from the raw materials necessary to make more war with tanks, fighter planes and missiles.

Meanwhile, in those regions where the impact of climate change is already apparent, wars over fresh water resources and arable land have already claimed many lives. The profits to be made from green capitalist solutions to the changing climate, like carbon offset plantations and agrofuels, only intensify neo-colonial land grabs. The new endorsement for nuclear power takes for granted the conflict zones and repression necessary around uranium mining sites, the depleted uranium by-product of enrichment being a welcome resource for the armour plating of tanks, bomb making, and in machine-gun bullets.

Capitalism results in the need for continuous war and ever increasing rates of resource extraction, causing environmental degradation, climate

change and social injustice and yet more war. The solutions to climate change within this system only feed the war machine and strengthen authoritarian regimes of control, while further degrading the rights of indigenous peoples and animals.

The US military recently launched its 'war on global warming', assigning the 'military to play a key role in tackling climate change'. A new frontier in the fight for freedom and justice...

Nuclear Power and Centralised Energy Production

Only a decade ago the nuclear energy industry was dead in the water. The high costs of building and decommissioning nuclear power stations, the impossible task of safely disposing of nuclear waste, and the human and environmental catastrophes of Chernobyl, Tokaimura and Three Mile Island (among many others) made nuclear energy a highly undesirable form of electricity production. A number of European countries made plans to phase out nuclear power altogether.

But recently, in a stroke of strategic genius, the nuclear industry have constructed for themselves a lifeline out of climate change. Within the framework of the international climate negotiations, ruthless lobbyists are pushing nuclear energy as a low-carbon climate solution. Over the past four years they have sucessfully forced nuclear energy back onto the European energy policy agenda in what has been branded a 'nuclear renaissance.'

At the end of 2005 EU parliamentarians signed a "Statement on Climate Change and Nuclear Energy," initiated by Foratom (the European Atomic Forum, an association for the nuclear energy industry in Europe). "Nuclear energy should play an increasingly key role in the worldwide fight against climate change and remain a pillar of EU energy and environment policy," the paper said. "We're firmly convinced that the increased use of nuclear energy -- the biggest single component in the fight against climate change – is essential."

But nuclear energy is neither efficient nor effective in cutting CO2 emissions; is not a renewable energy source, and it is equal to, if not worse than, fossil fuel energy in the devastation it wreaks from mining through to waste disposal and decommissioning.

Taking into account all the steps needed to produce electricity in a power station, the reality is that nuclear energy production creates large amounts of CO2, from uranium mining, enrichment and transport across the globe, the construction and decommissioning of facilities and the processing, transport and storage of radioactive wastes. All these consume huge amounts

of carbon-based energy such as oil and coal. Even a massive, four-fold expansion of nuclear power by 2050 would provide only a 4% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Nuclear power plants themselves release unknown quantities of greenhouse gases more powerful than carbon dioxide – such as the ozone-depleting chloro- and hydro-fluorocarbons,as well as sulphur hexafluoride. Emissions from nuclear will grow over time as the depletion of uranium sources will increase the amount of energy needed to mine the same amount of useful uranium. Furthermore, a growing number of studies tell us that if we were to outright replace all fossil-fuel generated electricity with nuclear, there would be enough economically viable uranium to fuel reactors for only three to four years.

But it's not only about greenhouse gases. Like coal and oil, uranium is extraced from the lands of indigenous peoples across the world; the uranium mining, nuclear power and nuclear weapons industries are resposible for human rights abuses and displacement of indigenous communities in Southern Australia, Arizona, New Mexico, India, China and across Africa. The indigenous people whose land and communities are destroyed are also the same people who have been employed in the process, unaware of the biological hazards of working with radioactive materials. At the end of 2006 indigenous peoples from around the world, victims of uranium mining, nuclear testing, and nuclear dumping, issued a global ban on uranium mining on native lands.

Profiting from nuclear waste

Depleted Uranium (DU) is nuclear waste left over after enrichment activities for the nuclear power industry. DU is expensive and hazardous to store, so it is sold at a very low cost to arms manufacturers. Both industries profit greatly from the deal.

Each kilo of reactor-ready enriched uranium produced leaves behind seven kilos of DU. DU is a chemically toxic heavy metal and is radioactive, releasing alpha, beta and gamma radiation. It is used in armour-piercing munitions because of its very high density – 1.7 times that of lead – and as armour in battle tanks, in Tomahawk cruise missiles and in some types of landmines.

Estimates of DU munitions expended run to 280 tonnes in the Gulf War of 1991 by US and UK forces and 14 tonnes in the Balkans in the latter half of the 1990s by NATO. There was further large-scale use in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and also in Afghanistan in 2001. Use of depleted uranium in armaments leaves behind toxic and radioactive wastes that contaminate the land and water for years after the war is over, poisoning the people and ecosystems who are left to survive there.

Maintaining a centralised energy infrastructure

For some people, there is little to be gained from repeating familiar arguments about the costs, carbon-intensity, capacity and risks of nuclear energy. These arguments are already widely known.

But another crucial aspect of the argument against nuclear energy that is often ignored – and one reason why this dangerous technology has been enthusiastically adopted by governments in preference to localised renewable energies – is that it is simply a convenient replacement for centralised, industry-owned, technocratic and highly profitable energy production, at a time when fossil fuels are fast becoming socially unacceptable.

Modern societies have created elaborate socio-technical systems that link production, distribution, and consumption in coherent patterns. The current energy regime is characterized by large, complex, centralized, and hierarchically managed systems that position 'energy users' as 'energy consumers,' purchasing from an energy system whose internal structure is of no particular public concern. Centralised power production serves to centralise political and economic power, disconnects communities from responsibility and control over energy and creates a vast, wasteful system. Currently, almost all discussions about the future of low-carbon energy make the basic assumption of centralized generation by large-scale systems.

Even wind power is promoted with images of massive wind-farms. Geothermal, nuclear, hydropower, hydrogen and bioenergy, the main low-carbon systems, are all large-scale projects based upon a centralized production system. But the development of such energy systems, promoted as climate-change solutions, change only the inputs to the system, continuing the social and political characteristics and the political economy of our current fossil-fuelled infrastructure, strengthening authoritarian and capitalist social relationships. Any discussion of our social relationship to the production and consumption of energy is sidelined or altogether ignored. If we are to recover democracy, a key element must be democratizing power production.

International negotiations

Through a post-Kyoto climate agreement, to be signed at COP15 in December 2009, the nuclear industry hopes to get credit for something it cannot deliver: clean, cheap and safe energy production. Inclusion in the 'flexible' mechanisms (Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation) will allow rich nations to build power stations in other countries and get pollution credits for reducing carbon emissions.

For ten years the nuclear industry has tirelessly lobbied for nuclear power stations to be included in the CDM. Now they are setting their sights on the Joint Implementation (JI) mechanism. If successful, this would mean companies receiving carbon credits for building nuclear power stations across Southern 'developing economies' and in Central and Eastern European 'economies in transition'.

Those pushing for nuclear to be included in the CDM claim that they want to share these progressive technologies with countries across the world, and that governments should be free to decide for themselves which technologies are sustainable and which are not. Some Southern countries support the nuclear option, with its promise of subsidized capacity, but others fear nuclear power carbon credits will favor high-growth projects over smaller sustainable projects. The nuclear lobby has recognised that an emphasis on renewables will deter investment in nuclear energy, and conversely a policy emphasis on nuclear energy, with the attendant government subsidies, will mean reduced investment in renewables.

The nuclear industry has over the past ten years hijacked the climate change discourse to successfully pressure governments into a new round of nuclear power plants across Europe. Many member states, including Britain, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland are now planning or in the process of constructing new nuclear plants or extending their existing ones. Sweden has lifted a 30-year ban on new nuclear, more than 20 years after banning nuclear energy Italy has signed an agreement with France for at least four nuclear plants, and debates on "new builds" are under way in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Hungary.

Such centralised, large-scale and privatised energy production is exactly opposite to the reduction and localisation of energy production that is evidently necessary to tackle climate change. Nuclear energy represents only a simple switch of inputs from fossil-fuels to uranium, side-stepping any challenge to the current social, political and economic organisation of energy production and consumption and the relationships and power dynamics that such organisation creates and enforces. It also happens to be expensive, dangerous, carbon-intensive, finite and its waste is a cheap and convenient raw material for depleted uranium weapons of war.

Food Production and Climate Change:

Industrial agriculture, factory farming and ecosystem collapse

It is well documented that our modern methods of food production—industrial agriculture and intensive factory farmed meat—are heavily reliant on fossil fuels and create large amounts of carbon dioxide emissions. On the opposite side of the coin, our capacity to produce food will be severely reduced by the consequences of climate change. Around the world, small farmers and networks like Via Campesina are fighting for food sovereignty and small-scale sustainable agricultural production. Meanwhile, agribusinesses and agrochemicals companies such as Monsanto are sitting around the tables of the intergovernmental climate negotiations pushing for a further intensification of industrial agriculture as their 'solution' to climate change.

The modern system of food production uses vast amounts of toxic petrochemical pesticides and fertilisers and heavy, oil dependent machinery to plough, irrigate and harvest the land; it transports food thousands of miles across continents from production to consumption, refrigerating it for days or weeks while it is in transit, on the supermarket shelves and then at home before it is eaten.

Traditional farming relied on planting a diversity of crops that attracted a range of insects, some of which are natural enemies of insect pests. Industrial-scale agriculture prefers large monoculture plantations; this leaves fields without the usual range of insects, and crops became vulnerable to insect pests, requiring an increase in the use of pesticides. Much of the sprayed pesticide drains off into the groundwater and is a major source of water pollution in every agricultural region of the world. Pesticides also cause soil depletion and erosion by killing off millions of microscopic organisms and their habitats which maintain the fertility and structure of the soil. The depletion and erosion then requires ever-increasing amounts of petrochemical fertilizers to maintain the level of output. Despite the number of livestock we rear, industrial farmers use artificial fertiliser made from natural gas instead of using animal manure (poop) to bind nitrogen in the soil. This causes the release of even more nitrous oxide, which is a very strong greenhouse gas.

Aside from the high levels of petrochemicals used to maintain the system, industrial agriculture and intensive animal farming necessitate widespread deforestation and land-use change. Burning down forests and savannahs to create new fields for keeping livestock and producing grain (much of it for cattle feed) causes massive CO2 emissions, and the drying of swamps for similar purposes releases vast quantities of methane. These practices heavily contribute to

climate change. As industrial methods of agriculture deplete the soil there is an ongoing need to burn down more and more forest to provide new land, and new soil, on which to grow crops. Furthermore, deforestation causes less water to evaporate in an area, which leads to less rainfall. The result is poorer harvests which force soy and cattle-farmers to use the remaining rainforest even more quickly, perpetuating a downward-spiral.

The industrial system has, over centuries and all across the world, "enclosed" farmland, forcing subsistence peasants and small farmers off their land so that it can be used by corporations for growing profitable export crops such as cocoa, sugarcane or soy. Millions of people lose their land and communities, and their independence and ability to grow their own food: they can then access food only through the market, forcing them into waged labour as their sole option for survival. Increasing agricultural output, using petrochemicals and new technologies, has little effect on global rates of hunger because it ignores the issues of access to land and purchasing power and diverts attention away from real solutions such as land redistribution and sustainable and affordable farming.

As for meat production, on top of the well-documented evils of factory farming—the inhumane conditions, the genetically modified animal feed, the hormones and antibiotics animals are pumped with and the practices used in slaughter—the intensive production of meat and dairy worldwide is responsible for about 18% of the greenhouse gases caused by humans. That is more than the percentage caused by global traffic and transport combined. Within the European Union alone huge numbers of animals (153 million pigs, 123 million cows, 99 million sheep, more than 500 million battery hens and almost 11 million tons of chicken meat) are produced for food consumption every year.

Animals produce greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2) and methane (CH4—around 62 times stronger than CO2) during the digestion process, while other greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide (N2O—around 275 times stronger than CO2) come mainly from decomposing manure.

Factory farming of animals is also more energy intensive than traditional ways of raising food animals, requiring large inputs of fossil fuel, industrial fertilizers, and other synthetic chemicals. The ratio of fossil fuel energy inputs to food energy produced—not including food processing and distribution—averages 3:1 for all US agricultural products combined, but for industrially produced beef the ratio is as high as 35:1.

In many parts of the world meat consumption is considered a luxury. Increasing prosperity in the global

south leads to the adoption of Western patterns of meat consumption, adding pressure on the land to produce all the extra grain needed for cattle feed, meaning ever less land is available for actual food production. Overall one third of the world's arable land is used for animal feed production.

The irony of this is that climate change is currently responsible for an increasing and dramatic loss of natural homes and animal habitats, contributing to the extinction of millions of species that we haven't yet domesticated for our personal consumption. Many animal and plant species are unable to adapt fast enough to higher average temperatures and changing weather patterns that in turn affect the food chain and cause even more species to die out. Dr James Hansen, now ex-chief climate scientist at the NASA space institute, has said that "climate change will become the primary cause of species extinction...The tipping point for life on the planet will occur when so many interdependent species are lost that entire ecosystems collapse." The iconic image of climate change is the desperate polar bear swimming until he dies amongst melting ice caps. This is a tragic image, but also one which does not do justice to the range of eco-systems that are collapsing because of climate change and the natural disasters it causes.

Warming temperatures, increased rainfall, floods and droughts resulting from global warming threaten to disrupt farming systems around the world, dramatically reducing the amount of arable land available for growing food. Countries in the Global South will be hit hardest simply because of their location – those that are closer to the equator naturally have higher temperatures, and those temperatures are closer to or already higher than the temperatures suitable for agriculture. Seasons and weather patterns are already becoming unpredictable and extreme. Climate change also disrupts and alters pest and disease patterns, posing risks to agriculture everywhere.

In a few places, such as northern Europe and North America, higher temperatures will initially encourage higher yields, but this will be far less than enough to replace the volume of land that will be lost from the other effects of climate change.

Until recently, agriculture has been neglected in UNFCCC negotiations. However, further intensification of industrial agriculture is now being proposed as part of the solution to the problems of climate change, to which it has contributed in the first place, and proposals are being made to include agriculture as a source of credits through the Clean Development Mechanism; for example, agrofuels and genetically modified plants are both being proposed and employed as 'solutions' to climate change.

Agrofuels are promoted as a 'green' alternative to fossil fuels, made from sugary or oily plants such

as sugarcane, rapeseed, oil palm, soybean or jatropha, for use in cars, airplanes, and for electricity generation in power stations.

Large areas of land are needed to grow enough agrofuel to replace a small amount of fossil fuel. Agrofuels are becoming the main reason for rainforest destruction. They cause significantly greater greenhouse gas emissions than fossil fuels because entire ecosystems are destroyed to make space to grow them. Agrofuels come from large-scale industrial agriculture; as industrial agriculture is one of the biggest single causes of climate change, expanding it to grow fuel is a dangerous idea.

A UN spokesperson has warned that 60 million people may soon become "agrofuel refugees"—people forced off their land to make way for huge areas of agrofuel crops. In Argentina alone, 200,000 families have been forced off their land for soya—many more will be displaced by the new agrofuel soya boom.

Moreover, the rapid expansion of agrofuels was one of the main causes of the 2007-2008 food crisis, when many food prices rose by over 100%, triggering riots around the world as people could no longer afford to buy rice or corn. Using food crops to make fuel for cars and using land to grow agrofuels instead of food causes food prices to rise, meaning less people across the world can afford to feed themselves.

Genetically modified (GM) crops are already being promoted by corporations as a solution to the food insecurity that will result from the effects of climate change. We are told that GM crops will increase productivity and that GM technology will create plants that are resistant to droughts and other agricultural problems caused by climate change.

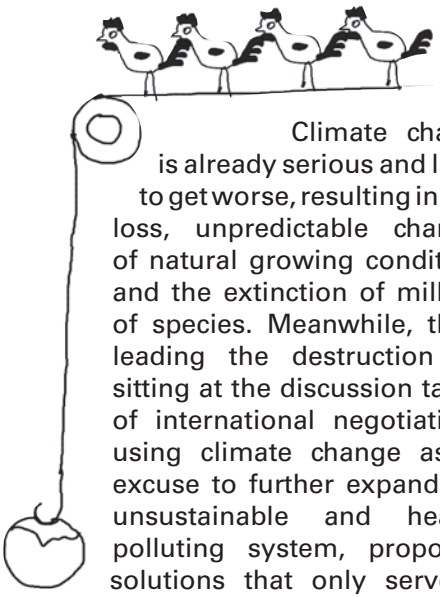
What we are not told is that GM contamination of the food system causes a loss of biodiversity and weakens agro-ecosystems, making them vulnerable to plagues, creating pesticide resistance in insect pests, and the loss of crop varieties reduces an ecosystem's potential to adapt to climate change. GM crops in fact themselves contribute to climate change as the expansion of GM crops is used to justify further deforestation. Most GM crops produced today are used to feed livestock and sustain an emissions-intensive animal farming industry (and therefore also covertly poisoning the food-chain). And conveniently for chemicals companies (like Monsanto, who already owns 95% of all the GM crops in the world as well as producing the attendant pesticides and fertilisers needed to grow them), GM crops necessitate a further increased use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

GM crops suit well the corporate desire to patent seeds so that they can be exclusively commercialised and highly profitable. Especially for rural communities, the largest in the world and the most affected by

climate change, genetic modification of agriculture will prevent them from accessing seeds, causing more poverty, hunger, and therefore the further break-down of communities and environmental refugees. For northern consumers the lack of control and safety measures on GM products will weaken consumer choice and have health impacts such as increasing resistance to antibiotics, and increasing incidents of allergies and cancer. Ultimately, GM crops are yet another step further into a model of intensive monocrop agriculture for global exports basically based on intensive fossil fuel use, and only serve to weaken our capacity to face a major collapse – practically, politically and physically.

But really it doesn't have to be this way. The international network for farmers' organizations, Via Campesina, emphasise and demonstrate that small-scale agriculture actually reduces carbon emissions and climate change, as well as minimising the environmental impacts of farming on plants and animals, as well as the air, water, and soil. Organic and diversified farming practices increase bird and mammal populations on farmlands and ensure biological diversity for the planet. In terms of preserving and increasing soil productivity and biodiversity, small-scale sustainable agriculture is far more beneficial and efficient than industrial practices.

Industrial agriculture and intensive animal farming devastate our land, water, and air, and are now threatening the stability of our climate. Massive chemical and biological inputs cause widespread environmental damage as well as human disease and death, while vast monoculture plantations reduce the diversity of our plants and animals. Habitat destruction practices endanger wildlife, and factory farming practices cause untold animal suffering. Centralized corporate ownership of our food production system also destroys farm communities around the world, leading to mass poverty and hunger.



Climate change is already serious and likely to get worse, resulting in land loss, unpredictable changes of natural growing conditions and the extinction of millions of species. Meanwhile, those leading the destruction are sitting at the discussion tables of international negotiations, using climate change as an excuse to further expand this unsustainable and heavily polluting system, proposing solutions that only serve to expand and further centralise corporate control of food production. The problem cannot be solved by simply regulating the use of particular chemicals, or banning gm products in individual countries. The problem is systemic, and as such, requires a solution that dismantles and replaces the entire system.

Last words (for now)...

The social disaster that is climate change is already apparent. It can no longer be framed as 'just' an environmental issue, or as a topic of debate only for scientists. The real question now is just how capitalism will turn climate change to its own advantage, or whether climate change can provide the revolutionary rupture that the world so desperately needs. The stakes have never been higher: Revolution or Death is the last scientific certainty.

We have seen the emperor without his clothes – so many times now – but out of fear of climate disaster he is still given the benefit of the doubt. Beause if not him, who has the capacity to save us? When the governments at the negotiating tables are so far removed from the people they are supposed to represent, and corporations have gained their power and place at these tables by the very practices that are responsible for climate change, will they honourably change their ways for the benefit of humanity and the ecosystems we rely on? Or will they continue to expand the system of private property, exploitation and technocracy, with the borders and wars necessary to maintain it? We should not stop asking questions and we must continue exposing the emperor, but now is the time to kick him off his throne for good and burn the ugly thing—and how many carbon credits is that again?

Any true alternatives to the capitalist system that has created this mess will throw us into conflict with powerful interests, the people behind them and their footsoldiers. Creating and defending real solutions from below will not come without a struggle. Like climate change, our defence must know no borders.