

GREEN DEALS: WHERE IS THE GLOBAL JUSTICE?



POLICY PROPOSALS
FOR GLOBAL
AND INTERNATIONALIST
GREEN DEALS

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Green deals: where is the global justice? Policy proposals for global and internationalist green deals.

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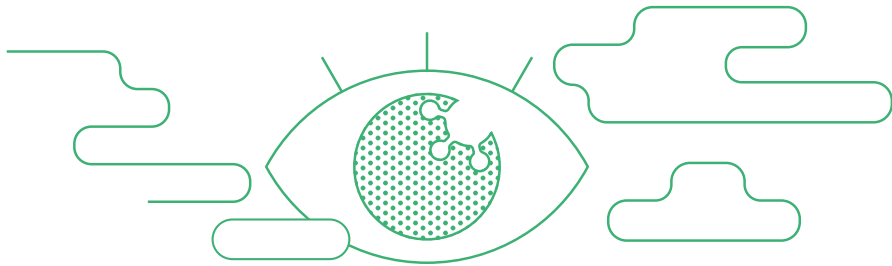
In recent years, the proliferation of green deals and the growth of a green mainstream in political, economic and financial action has shaped the formation of green agendas and the ways we imagine different futures.

As Alfons Pérez discussed in *Green deals in a time of pandemics: the future will be contested now* (2020), the complexity of constructing wide-ranging policy proposals has been challenging, opening up public debates and generating social tensions. These debates offer a window of opportunity to propose deep structural changes and put forward feminist, decolonial grassroots proposals to transform the world from the ground up.

For this reason, we believe it is fundamental to map the ideological frameworks that converge in these debates, understand the roots of their proposals and the lives that they envisage and contextualise them from a base in the global, internationalist part of the map. This idea gave rise to the piece of research you have just begun to read, which aims to show the paths which we are currently following and propose others that do not jeopardise, endanger or indebt the lives and territories of the Global South.

We need global
agendas: global green
deals that enable us
to learn to live in
a new way without
forgetting where
we came from
or the inheritances
that we carry.

IMAGINING FUTURES IN A TIME OF PANDEMICS



Living in a time of emergencies permeates the way we envisage, imagine and construct futures which are exciting, desirable and necessary. The **convergence of multidimensional global crises** (the health, climate, environment, care, social, political and financial crises, among others) not only impacts the economic and financial worlds and their processes, philosophies and requirements: it **imposes uncertainty and insecurity** on lives, bodies and territories, leading them to question the situation. This questioning is ideological, challenging the hegemonic political, economic, social and cultural premises which sustain our world-system. **In the intersection we are currently living in**, we are navigating the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis (from which we never managed to recover), the acceleration of a new recessive economic cycle brought on by the global Covid-19 pandemic and increasing and deepening violence, inequality and emergencies within our societies.

We did not come to this situation out of the blue. The construction of a **global governance model based on the accumulation of capital has come accompanied by a significant degree of environmental destruction**, which seems to never cease, and a **deep transformation of social**

Wide-ranging social pacts are required to allow us to make the urgent changes needed to address the Earth-system alterations that pervade us.

relationships, which have become more hierarchical, divided and exclusive. This model is supported by **a triple denial of vulnerability, interdependency and eco-dependency**, and grew without regard for the processes which produce and support life and disconnect-ed from the material, physical and ecological conditions which make it possible. The accumulated impacts of its actions over more than two centuries have brought on a **deep ecosocial and reproductive crisis**, where the effects of climate change are intertwined with biodiversity loss, limited availability of material and fossil energy resour-

ces, the development of counter-geographies of globalisation¹ loss of autonomy, the institutionalisation of debt and many other issues.

The political and environmental contexts surrounding these developments have caused an **increasing convergence between those declaring a state of emergency and the political class**. The severity of the warning has escalated with the production of more scientific knowledge demanding large-scale and immediate change increasingly urgently; at the same time, we see an acceleration in the appearance of extreme climatic phenomena as well as the degradation and exhaustion of reserves of peripheral use-values² in our day-to-day lives. From 2019 onwards, this has sparked the creation of **numerous institutional proposals**, which are diverse and pluralistic and set out programmes of economic reforms from

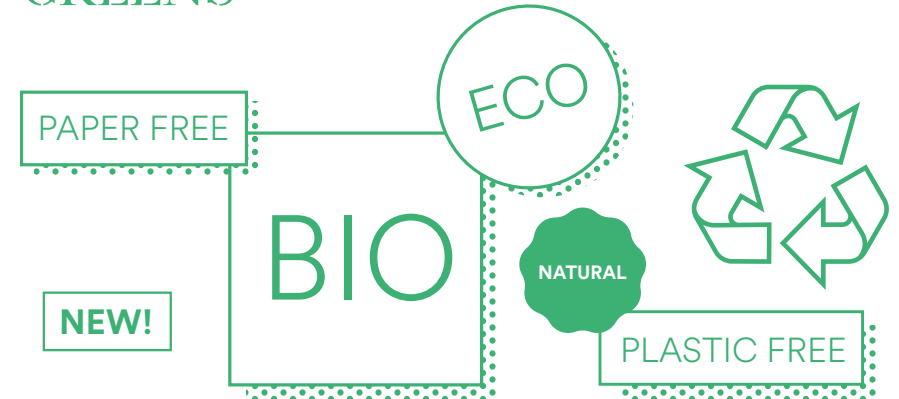
¹ The concept of counter-geographies of globalisation describes the cross-border economic circuits which have emerged in response to the impacts of privatisation and commercialisation, austerity, debt and unemployment. It encompasses extractive supply chains involving everything from natural resources to care, highlighting the processes which make life more precarious and pervade body-territories. To find out more see: Sassen, S. (2003). *Contra geografías de la globalización. Género y ciudadanía en los circuitos transfronterizos*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.

² Peripheral use-values are resources which (at a global level) have been accumulated and traded in an unequal way through global markets. Therefore, they include use-values ranging from work, fertile soils and forests to the social reproduction capacities of the Global South. (Alj, 2021b).

a “green” perspective. The concept which has succeeded in bringing all this theoretical and programmatic work together is the Green New Deal, which has taken on a wide, diverse and complex meaning, recognising that the global challenges of the 21st century require wide-ranging social pacts to allow us to make the urgent changes required to address the changes to the world-system which pervade us. Ultimately, this opens the door to a **new political mainstream: no changes or political pacts are possible without the “green” perspective.**

Green deals, also known as Green New Deals, go beyond the proposals put together by institutions and we believe it is necessary to examine them closely. Although they encompass state-level (and sometimes ambitious) policy reforms, green deals as they are proposed fall a long way short of fostering deep, structural change. It is for this reason that, since the beginning, their name and the narratives accompanying them have been questioned and doubts have been expressed as to whether they are really green, whether they are really new, and whether they are really deals in the sense of social pacts.

LOST IN A SPECTRUM OF GREENS



The political, economic, social and financial reorientations towards the incorporation of the green perspective into forms of relationship and production has been accompanied by the process of constructing what we understand to be “green”. We are immersed in a sea of greens, where neoliberal reorientations in response to the environmental question sit alongside proposals from the world of political ecology with transformational perspectives.

What are we trying to say here? That the formation of a *green mainstream* in our collective imagination has not translated into real policies for “greening” the economy or recognising the biophysical limits of the planet but has led to the **monetisation and commercialisation of the “green”** (Seoane, 2020). We are referring to the process of assigning monetary values to ecosystems and natural cycles as a means of protection using a variety of methods including environmental accounting, the concept of “natural capital”, payment for ecosystem services policies, and futures and carbon markets: a whole series of **market mechanisms** which appraise and quantify the environment and every single element found within it, converting them into consumer goods and generating new **speculative bubbles and financialisation processes** related to nature, biodiversity and climate.

Financialisation is a process and a current phase of the capitalist economy in which finance has become extraordinarily powerful, penetrating the daily lives of people and shaping international, national and local politics. Instead of generating wealth and social well-being through investment in the real reproductive economy, such as the manufacture and production of basic goods, investments are made based on **speculation in future profits** and have become the principal means of generating money in our time (Citizens for Financial Justice, 2019).

We can see how financialisation intrudes into our lives by looking at the common goods which have become financial products: land has become a tradeable asset and housing has become a consumer good instead of a human right. Their use and access values are transformed into a money-making machine for big investors, which directly affects the processes which support the sustainability of life and worsens violence, inequality and social insecurity.

Within the green sphere, financial actors have developed various tools to enable them to extract profits from natural and health disasters, the exhaustion of water supplies and the extinction of species through the **issuance of debt** (such as green bonds,³ among others) and the consolidation of **new transnational markets**. These tools perpetuate accumulation processes whilst presenting themselves as solutions to the socioecological crisis.

Whilst these tools dictate that everything is tradeable and that everything is a financial product, in parallel **we see the naturalisation or biologisation of the environment, which desocialises and dehistoricises struggles in defence of ecosystems, the environment and territories** (Seoane, 2020). That is to say, the environmental question is being depoliticised, so that it is not considered incompatible with the process of accumulating and growing capital: it becomes a catalyst, deepening the processes of extraction, biocide,⁴ exclusion and destruction. It becomes the fuel powering the search for new businesses niches.

³ For more information on green bonds: <https://www.climatebonds.net/market/explaining-green-bonds>.

⁴ The term *biocide*, which has its origins in ecofeminism, describes the dynamics which capital permanently imposes on subordinated body-territories and which threaten and destroy life, perpetuating a violent and unequal world-system which functions in disregard of its own survival.

The **process of depoliticising the environmental question** underscores the fact that the creation of a green capitalism does not necessarily mean that capitalism is internalising its environmental externalities or that it is sustainable. It means that the economic sectors and investments linked to climate crisis adaptation and/or mitigation represent new spaces for accumulation, conflict and geopolitics.

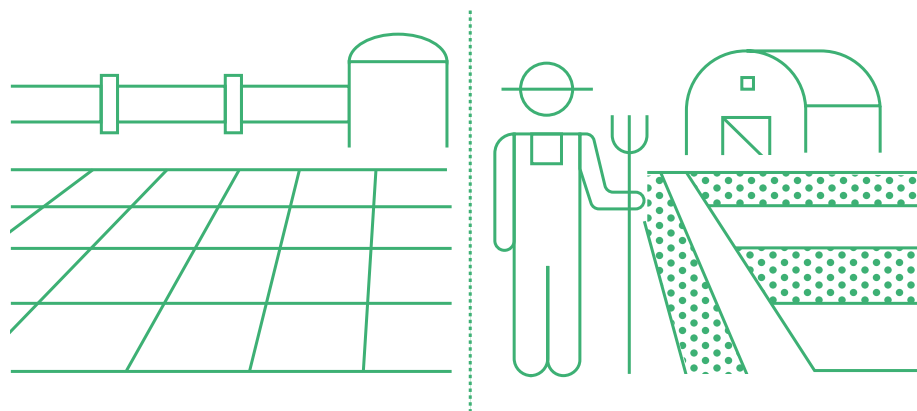
Green capitalism is a version of capitalism which does not directly challenge the issue of climate change, but challenges any solution to the socioecological crisis which questions the supply chains, relationships, material resources and energy sources which sustain it (Goldstein, 2018). It is a disciplined, blinkered perspective, based on futures that have not yet arrived and are set in a world that is still not green, which keeps faith in the abstract promises that:

- × **Infinite growth on a finite planet is possible.** All natural capital can be replaced.
- × **Future generations will always be wealthier than ourselves,** and this wealth will trickle down from the rich to the poor sooner or later.
- × **All actors in markets are perfectly informed and** make rational decisions.

The formation of a green mainstream in our collective imagination has not translated into real policies for “greening” the economy or recognising the biophysical limits of the planet but has led to the monetisation and commercialisation of the “green”.

It is easy to find examples of these depoliticisation processes in the **energy sector**. Developments such as the promotion and expansion of renewable energy across territories or the hydrogen economy are planned (by corporate powers) based on a **philosophy of rapidly replacing energy sources**. This means that the technologies are rolled out without considering whether local needs are met in the places where they are installed, **without planning or prioritising energy technologies and uses and without questioning the extractive supply chains and territorial impacts associated** with the intensive production and consumption involved in the current model.

This “green” is inextricably linked to **more violent, more degraded and more crisis-ridden futures** and is reflected in a reductionist environmentalism which claims that what is destroyed can always be replaced or retained. One colour of green in the spectrum is the concept of neo-colonial green capitalism, which confronts neither injustice nor inequality.



GREEN DEALS AND CONTESTED FUTURES

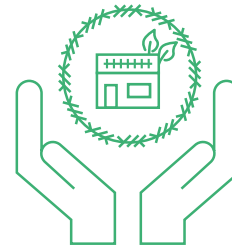


As set out in the book *Green deals in a time of pandemics: the future will be contested now* (Pérez, 2021), it is evident that the diversity in approaches to the green perspective has materialised as a **proliferation of green deals and a huge and diverse range of political proposals**. The various perspectives involved **can be categorised based on various factors**, from the background from which they emerged (who developed them, which debates they aim to contribute to, which futures they imagine and for whom they imagine them), to the themes they place special emphasis on.

Based on the work of Ricardo Mastini, Giorgos Kallis and Jason Hickel in their article *A Green New Deal without Growth?* (2021),⁵ Pérez proposed a comparative categorisation into six categories based on the deals' central objectives and proposals for political action. The 1933 New Deal put forward by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt was taken as an original model on which the others are based. Then, the institutional narratives which have been gestating since 2008 were split into two categories: green deals 1.0 and green deals 2.0. The former principally aim to stimulate growth and increase employment and environmental standards, whilst the second additionally aim to mitigate climate change and incorporate a social and environmental justice perspective. The analysis then went beyond these and included socially-constructed proposals with degrowth, post-extractive and feminist backgrounds. In this way, a conceptual map was formed including diverse perspectives from the most institutional and hegemonic narratives to alternatives to the official rhetoric.

In his book *A People's Green New Deal* (2021), Max Aji highlighted the necessity to take a step back in the process of categorising green deals. He attempted to characterise green deal proposals through a critical analysis of their principal advocates, their ideological foundations, the mechanisms they propose and the limitations they incorporate. Based on this analysis, Aji (2021a) proposed the use of four ideology -and narrative- based camps which frame, detail and develop solutions to the socioecological crisis.

1. **Extreme right, green nationalism and fossil fuel racism**



The first camp is ideologically situated within the extreme right and green nationalism and is based on **deepening imperial integration and opening up new areas for capitalist accumulation**. Therefore, in this camp we find projects and proposals which first and foremost promote a **deep connection between the State and corporate powers** using rhetoric which favours public-private partnerships (PPPs),⁶ hypertechnological futures, the financialisation of nature and the gutting of the sovereignty of countries in the Global South. Secondly, **they give the question of national security centre stage** (accelerating national securitisation⁷ and border controls and closures), promote Malthusian agendas and mainstream the assumption that some lives and parts of nature are more worth preserving than others.

Fossil fuel racism (or environmental racism) describes the colonial and racial discrimination which exists in environmental policies. This discrimination can be seen to be intentional when we consider the countries **in which polluting industries are located**, where toxic waste is left, where resource extraction impacts are generated and which bodies live in these global and national sacrifice zones, **which bodies work in these industries and**

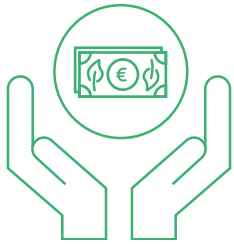
⁵ Mastini, R., Kallis, G., i Hickel, J. (2021). «A Green New Deal without Growth?» *Ecological Economics*, 179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106832>.

⁶ PPPs are contractual frameworks which allow the private sector to build and manage goods and services which are traditionally public (including hospitals, schools, roads, railways, water, sewerage, energy and other key services) whilst enjoying public guarantees which shift all the risk to the public sector: if the project works, the profits are private, and if it fails, the losses are public. For more information see: <https://odg.cat/es/colaboraciones-concesiones-publico-privadas-cpp/> [in Spanish].

⁷ Securitisation processes are actions originating in politics, security or the hegemonic narrative which come about through historical narratives, social and political contexts, images, the media, institutions and protests which attempt to demonstrate a persistent and existential threat to a group or idea which necessitates an urgent response to enable its survival. The function of national securitisation processes is to preserve the nation's identity. Therefore, the response to the threat involves immigration and asylum policy, actions at borders, fossil fuel racism, the militarisation of security services and the construction of the citizen subject etc.

which communities put their health at risk. These are peripheral, indebted territories with colonial histories, racialised bodies and non-white, subordinated communities.⁸

2. Liberal green policies in the Global North



The second (liberal) camp is based on an **attempt to contain anti-establishment politics** by proposing pacts which promote green imperial integration combined with a **certain degree of redistribution and a certain expansion of renewable energy infrastructure in the Global South** (underpinned by a substitutional philosophy). Pacts following this model are corporatist and lack class content, focused on maintaining *business as usual*⁹ through the replacement of energy sources (both in the core and on the periphery) whilst preserving structures enabling private property and promoting green technologies and knowledge transfer. They are pacts which come from the **desire to become a green global power**, to be a leader of the green transition.

⁸ For more information, see «Fossil Fuel Racism. How Phasing Out Oil, Gas, and Coal Can Protect Communities» (US Greenpeace, 2021) and «White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascism» (Malm & Zetkin Collective, 2021).

⁹ “Business as usual” (BAU) scenarios are future scenarios which assume a smooth continuation of the historic and systemic dynamics of economic growth and development, without considering the possibility of a real ecological transition.

3. Green welfare states



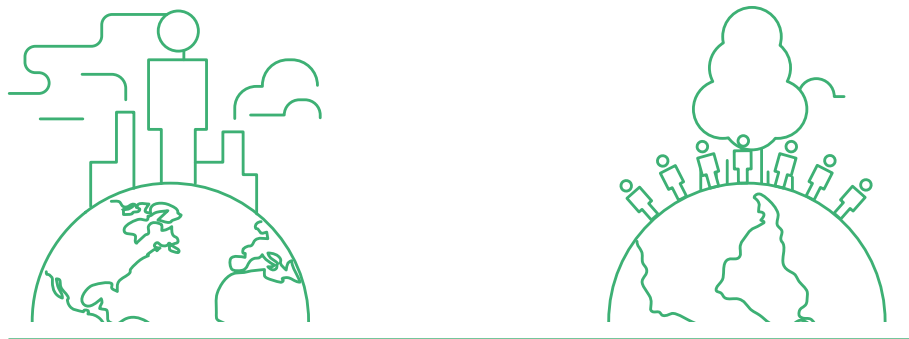
The third camp houses social-democratic solutions which, according to Ajl (2021a), **demand a deep internal redistribution** of resources, work and wealth, based on action both in parliament and on the streets, and propose a type of “**Green Marshall Plan**” for the **Global South**. These transition proposals involve changing internal dynamics based on infinite growth and implementing new national-level economic and social transformation policies whilst remaining blind to global interconnections and interdependencies. They are characterised by a nationally-focused perspective, with a vague commitment to internationalism which sometimes **supports green capitalism and opposes calls for decommercialisation, depatriarchalisation and decolonisation**.

4. Radical policies to transform the world from the ground up



Lastly, Ajl named the fourth camp *revolutionary*. The projects, pacts and proposals located here aim to bring about a **paradigm shift** by means of a **collective awakening to the limits, dependencies and vulnerabilities** of body-territories. These are pacts based on understanding the finite nature of materials and resources, on the **need to provide global welfare** in a non-commercial way, on ensuring the **creation and sustainability of life in decent conditions**, and on **recognising a triple debt** (social, embodied and ecological) **to the global periphery** for which reparations should be made. Here, we are dealing with grassroots processes which aim to recover sovereignty and rights and which extend beyond national borders, setting out a programme on an international scale.

Each of these camps of green deals conjures up a different set of future scenarios, demonstrating the complexity of the challenge and the number of converging interests at stake. Therefore, it is vital to recognise that **green deal proposals**, despite appearances, do not only affect the territories where they are created and implemented: **they are projects with important implications for lives, resources and ecosystems all over the world.** According to Kolinjivadi & Kothari (2020), **if we forget about the global nature of the economy, green deal proposals will recreate imperialist dynamics in the form of the appropriation of land, resources, nature and cheap labour.** This would imply the nth externalisation and transfer of costs from the Global North to the Global South, accompanied by worsening living conditions and increased vulnerability to the impacts of the socioecological crisis.



PUTTING DEBT CENTRE-STAGE WITHIN A GLOBAL PROPOSAL

How can we put together a global, revolutionary proposal? We cannot offer any magic recipes or shortcuts, but a first step would be **to accept that we live in a system which uses debt to function and progress.** Today, this is a fact which shapes the development of lives and territories and which global green deal proposals cannot ignore. **Recognising and tackling implicit and explicit debts¹⁰ in the system should be form the backbone of each pact**, to ensure the coherence of the deep transformations emerging from them and contextualise challenges in an international, social and solidarity-based way.

We use “debts” in the plural as we are not only referring to the economic burden of sovereign debt, but also seek to include the socio-historic dimension of implicit debts as discussed by Salleh (2009), recognising social debt in exploitative labour, embodied debt in reproductive work and ecological debt in the damage done to the world’s natural metabolism (amongst other examples). Therefore, green deals should include actions to remedy and reverse the dynamics which have perpetuated these debts.

¹⁰We use the terms “implicit debt” and “explicit debt” in the way proposed by Ariel Salleh in *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology* (2009) to illustrate that some debts are visible to the hegemonic economy and others are invisible. Explicit debts include sovereign debt, government debt and private debt. In contrast, implicit debts include all the domination and exploitation processes which sustain the global economic and financial structure.

The assumption of *implicit debts* goes hand-in-hand with **highlighting the violent and unequal structures which have encouraged their generation**. It is these debts which enable us to denounce the origins of sovereign debt and question who is in debt to who.

What are the implicit debts we are referring to?¹¹

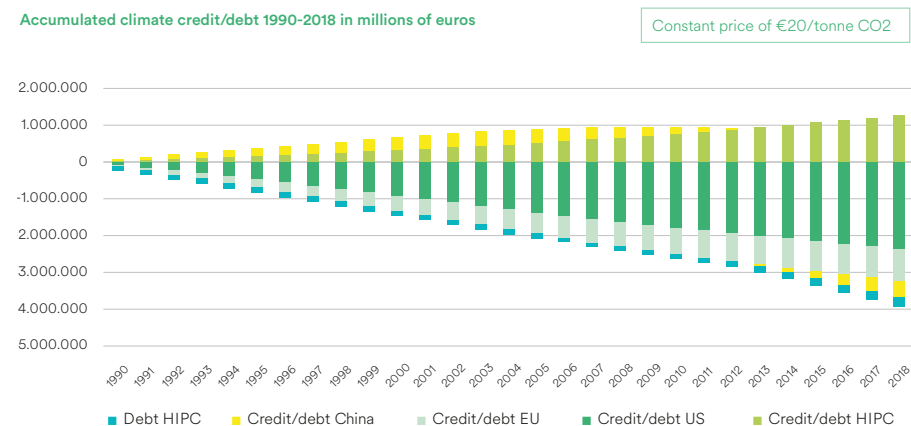
- × **Social debt:** Debt owed by capitalist actors due to the extraction of value from the bodies and minds of people subjected to slavery or those who work in the industrial sector or the precarious service sector.
- × **Ecological and climate debt:** Debt owed by countries in the Global North to countries in the Global South due to historical and current natural resource extraction, offshoring of environmental impacts and the formation of environmental sacrifice zones.
- × **Embodied or care debt:** Debt owed by the Global North to the Global South due to the work of those who cyclically sustain, care for and produce life day in, day out in conditions of invisibility and violence in accordance with a sexual and transnational division of labour.

Sovereign debt involves internal and external debts, which are successively generated to meet the public funding needs of countries with depleted productive and fiscal capacities. What does this mean? It means that in a context of economic recession and in the absence of the possibility or political will to develop a fair tax system, debt has become the default option for financing public investments in development projects (basic infrastructure, water and sanitation, roads etc.), public services (health, education) and mitigating the impacts of natural, health and climate disasters. This debt is internal if the State owes it to creditors within its own borders; in contrast, it is external if the State owes it to multilateral creditors (institutions like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund), bilateral creditors (other states) or private creditors (private banks, private bondholders and other private financial institutions). When considering external debt, it is impor-

¹¹ For more information on ecological debt see: *Deuda ecológica: ¿quién debe a quién?* (Russi, Puig, Ramos, Ortega & Ungar, 2003): <https://ent.cat/el-deute-ecologic-qui-deu-a-qui/?lang=es>; and *Mega-infrastructure as a mechanism of indebtedness* (Scherer, Pérez & Panadori, 2017): <https://odg.cat/en/publication/infrastructure-indebtedness/>. For a more in-depth look at care debt see: *Care debt: patriarchy and capital on the offensive, feminist economics as a proposal* (Bayas, 2017): <https://odg.cat/en/publication/care-debt/>.

tant to be aware that, in general, the foreign creditors are from the Global North, generating a constant flow of debt servicing payments (interest) and ultimately a money transfer from the Global South to the Global North.

FIGURA 2. ¿Qué pasaría si aplicáramos las leyes y los precios de mercado al histórico de emisiones?



Source: created by Alfons Pérez (ODG, 2021) using World Bank data.

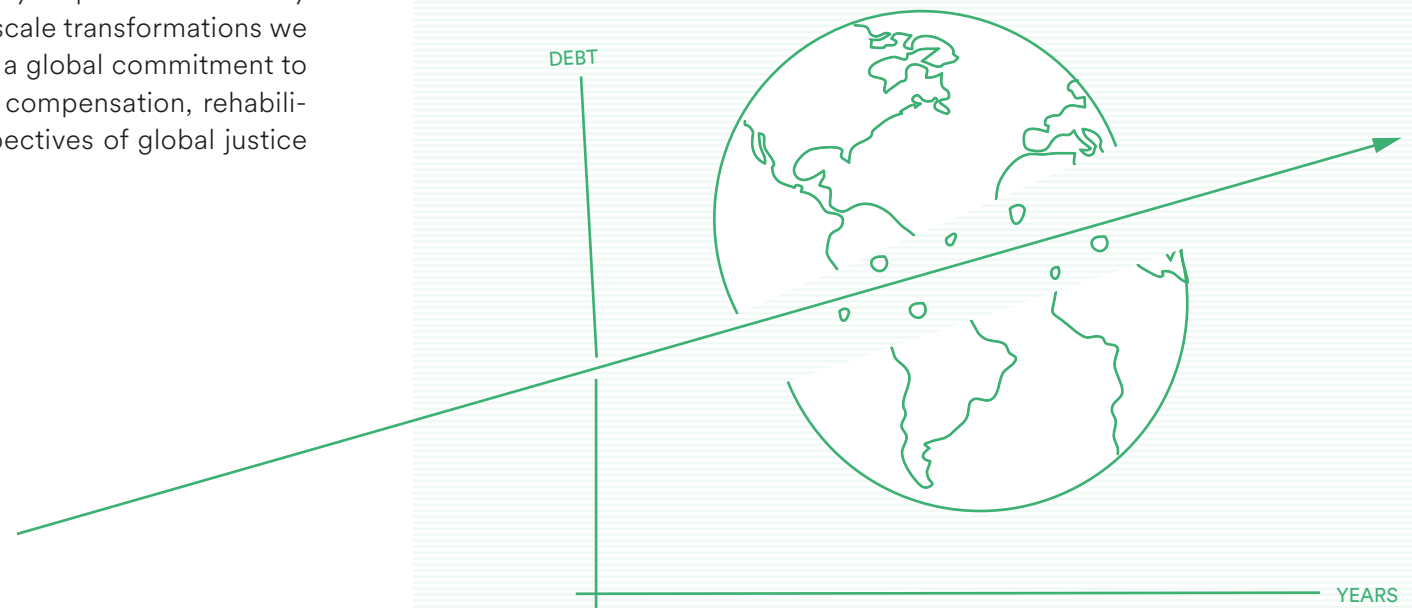
Fixing the price of CO2 emissions at €20/tonne CO2 for the 1990-2018 period and taking the global average emissions level as zero, we can see that the countries emitting the most can be considered debtors and those emitting least, creditors. This exercise shows that, if we apply market mechanisms to emissions, the debts accumulated over this period were €2,400 billion by the USA, €860 billion by the EU and €450 billion by China (despite starting out as a creditor). In contrast, the group of highly indebted countries (HIPC), which **currently owe €260 billion in debt, could pay off their debt and still be practically €1,000 billion in credit. Again, we ask ourselves: who is really in debt to who?**

From the feminist, de-colonial and ecological viewpoints, these debts express **dynamics of accumulation through historical, illegal, illegitimate and unsustainable** dispossession and lead to an exterior financial dependency which exerts **control over public political action**. In this way, debt conditions the way states respond to the socioecological crisis, to the point that the territories on the frontline of the crisis are those which must dedicate the most resources to paying their debts (Fresnillo, 2020).

Demands for the abolition of debt, the suspension of payments and unconditional cancellation of external debt, the complete restructuring of the ways in which sovereign debt is lent, paid and relieved and the creation of multilateral debt renegotiation mechanisms must be fundamental elements of any global green deal. It is not a question of grand promises or making financial transfers which never reach the Global South but of liberating highly indebted territories from debt: territories which find themselves ever more exposed to the socioecological crisis.

The **centrality of debt** in the pacts should involve the will to make holistic reparations. Reparation is not simply a question of money (although this is fundamental for the large-scale transformations we are proposing) but should also incorporate a global commitment to the principles of no repetition, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and satisfaction, based on the perspectives of global justice and historic memory.

GLOBAL PACTS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES



In this context of dispossession and the advancement of counter-geographies, putting forward global green deals means swimming against the tide to present internationalist, intersectional and intergenerational proposals stemming from a basic, fundamental and yet enormous idea: to defend the right to life. The challenge is to give space to the demands of the majority of the Earth's inhabitants, recognise common but differentiated responsibilities and revive a wide range of struggles, from the eradication of debt to the de-commercialisation of everything required to live a decent life. We are talking about pacts which challenge power from the margins, looking to dismantle its networks and put a stop to its impunity, supported by grassroots, feminist, anti-racist, decolonial and global agendas.

Some examples of this are proposals such as the [Southern Ecosocial Pact \(Pacto Ecosocial del Sur\)](#) (2020), the [Red Nation Deal](#) (2020) and the [Red, Black, and Green New Deal](#) (2021) coming from post-extractive, decolonial and anti-fossil fuel racism perspectives; projects such as [A Feminist Agenda for the People and Planet](#) (2021) and [A Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal](#) (2021) promoted by international feminist and women's platforms; and finally, we can also include Max Ajl's proposal in the form of his book, [A People's Green New Deal](#) (2021).

Each one of these proposals **emerged in response to the systematic exclusions** dominating subordinated bodies and territories that, with the dawn of a new cycle of capitalist appropriation under the "green" banner, will be redefined, reproduced and strengthened. This leads to the insistence that it is vital to construct common global climate agendas which leave no-one behind and prioritise dignity, well-being and safety for marginalised communities, vulnerabilised people and the territories which sustain life day-to-day.

These agendas put forward broad lines of action articulated by various key elements such as land, common goods, work, the economy, democracy and knowledge. Tackling each of these elements involves **breaking away from the current models of colonial production and capitalist private property** and bringing about new forms of relationship by:

- 1 Recognising biophysical, material and embodied limits;** caring for and valuing the cycles which produce life, reorganising work and matching supplies to global needs in a way which enables living, and not just surviving.
- 2 Ending economic monoculture and the processes of hyperspecialisation,** breaking down extractive supply chains and collectively reassigning value based on the sustainability of life. Progressing towards a living, community-based, public, resilient, decentralised and distributive economy.
- 3 Highlighting the historical, colonial, illegal, illegitimate, hateful and unsustainable burdens of debt,** as discussed in the previous chapter, to demand the non-payment and unconditional cancellation of debt. Demanding accountability and liberating the highly indebted countries on the frontline of the socio-ecological crisis from debt.
- 4 Celebrating the plurality of ways of life,** from the protection of rights and diversity to the genealogies of knowledge, both traditional and everyday. Making knowledge open access, common, public and universal, so it can become a tool for regaining sovereignties.

The lines of action springing from these new forms of relationship are proposals **to learn to live in a new way**, without forgetting where we came from nor the structural violence which has characterised the development of a combined and uneven world-system. Therefore, we insist that green deals cannot be a mere transaction or one more market mechanism used to maintain the status quo: we need to "hack" the concept, using it tactically and contesting the future from Ajl's revolutionary camp. This is why **debt is a key element in the construction of globally and eco-socially just futures.**

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