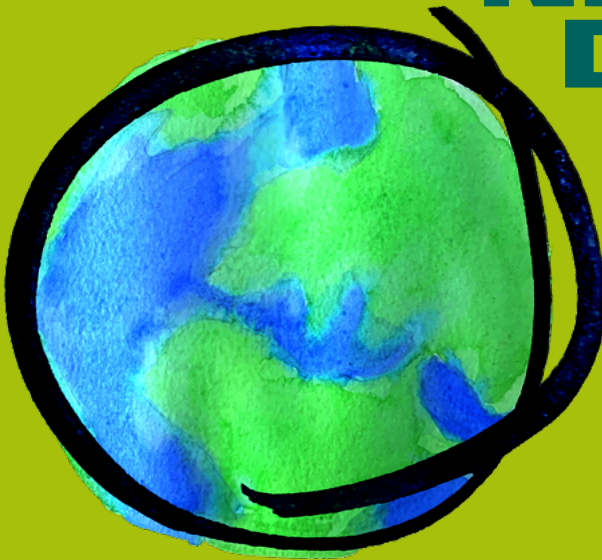


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# **GREEN NEW DEALS**



A BIG DEAL FOR FAIR CLIMATE  
PROTECTION OR JUST THE LATEST  
VERSION OF THE CAPITALIST MODEL?

AN INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION



On 10 November 2018, activists from the grassroots Sunrise Movement, established in 2017 to campaign for just climate policy, occupied the office of Nancy Pelosi, a Democratic member of the US House of Representatives. Four days earlier, her Democratic Party had regained a majority in that chamber, and she, as leader of the House Democratic Caucus, was the speaker-designate. “We have 12 years. What is your plan?” was a recurring slogan on activists’ banners and placards. The young Democratic representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who had just been elected to the House, joined the protest.

In all, 51 of the 150 or so activists were arrested, but they had achieved their goal. There was extensive media coverage of the occupation – and this was the first time that many Americans had heard what the movement was calling for: a Green New Deal, a massive investment programme designed to turn the United States into a zero-carbon economy and also tackle social inequality.

Neither the term ‘Green New Deal’ nor the proposal for such a programme were entirely new at the time. In 2007, journalist Thomas Friedman had called for this in an opinion piece in *The New York Times*. In 2007 and 2008, in the midst of the financial crisis, some initial proposals for a Green New Deal were published, in the United States and in the United Kingdom and the rest of the EU. The idea was that, just as US President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal had guided his country out of the Great Depression in the 1930s, a similar programme – but one adopting a more ecological approach – would help to overcome the economic crisis. However, these proposals vanished from sight again once the acute phase of the crisis was over.

It was not until the protests of the climate justice movements, ranging from school strikes to the occupation of coal excavators, that the Green New Deal found its way back onto the agenda – and this time its advocates managed to push it to the front and centre of policymaking. By the time the primaries for the 2020 US presidential election kicked off in late 2019, it was hard for any politician to avoid talking about the Green New Deal. Every single Democrat standing for the party’s presidential nomination had some version of the Green New Deal in their manifesto. Also in 2019, the Labour Party in the UK adopted a Green New Deal plan, while the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, presented her blueprint for a European Green Deal in December. Since then, countless

proposals for Green New Deals – initiated by a wide range of actors, from political parties and think tanks to movement networks and individual authors – have been developed and published around the world.

However, in spring 2020, the coronavirus crisis put a dampener on this euphoria. Not only that but in the United States, Bernie Sanders, the Democratic candidate with the most far-reaching demands for a Green New Deal, had to concede defeat in the primaries in April. In his place, the distinctly unradical Joe Biden became the Democrats' presidential nominee, subsequently winning the election in November 2020. Moreover, in the UK, Labour lost the general election in December 2019, and Jeremy Corbyn, from the left of the party, resigned as its leader. Meanwhile, the EU's focus is on trying to cushion the devastating economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic with rescue packages, and so the rollout of the European Green Deal is on hold.

At the time of writing in autumn 2020, the pandemic has not yet been assuaged, and the world is grappling with a second wave of infections. However, the social movements have overcome the initial shock and re-formed. Thus, the climate movement has resumed its protests, with social movements pushing for a “just recovery”. In the United States, activists are trying to move the Green New Deal forward in these changed circumstances – partly by focusing on individual aspects and other levels, and partly by trying to persuade the President-elect, through dialogue and through pressure from the streets, to include as many Green New Deal proposals as possible in his plans.

It is clear that the climate crisis will not wait – even in a pandemic, there is a need to press for solutions and actions to both limit global warming and create a sustainable society. At the same time, the coronavirus crisis has dramatically exacerbated social inequality worldwide, and the global economy is heading for a crisis that is set to be worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. It has long been clear that short-term rescue packages are not enough – regardless of whether the health crisis is over soon or drags on for longer, extensive programmes will be needed to get the economy going again. These could be used to restore the status quo or, as in previous crises, to make the rich even richer and the poor even poorer. However, they could also be used, as the Green New Deals demand, to combat both the climate crisis and the social crisis at the same time.

The proposals for a Green New Deal differ considerably from each other. And they are not the only proposals on the table: from neoliberal ideas of a green economy to post-growth utopias, there are numerous other ways of responding to the climate crisis. The Green New Deals are one building block among many, and they are made up of many different parts. Nor are the Green New Deal proposals themselves without controversy: activists from the Global South and from ‘degrowth’ and anti-capitalist movements have often expressed legitimate criticism of the proposals.

All the same, it remains the case that the Green New Deals are among the few specific proposals setting out how the transition to an environmentally friendly society could happen within a relatively short period without this transformation hitting the most vulnerable members of our society. While they do have their weaknesses and blind spots, they have succeeded in one thing: over the past two years they have managed to create a new narrative which, beyond all the warnings of disaster, preserves hope based on opportunities for action – a narrative of what a positive future that is worth living could look like, and what steps would be possible and necessary on the way there.

Today, such visions of the future and the potential they can unleash are more necessary than ever. For this reason alone, it is worth taking a closer look at the various proposals for Green New Deals, their arguments, their history, the opportunities they offer and their inherent limitations. That is the aim of this publication.

To this end, it begins by defining what is meant here by a Green New Deal. Subsequently, first, an overview is provided of the history of and background to the idea and of the different proposals in this regard that have been mooted in various parts of the world in recent years. Second, the contents of these proposals are presented. Third, practical implementation is addressed, in terms of the various political levels involved and the funding of such initiatives. Fourth, there is a discussion of the various critiques of the Green New Deal, asking how these can be taken on board and how the proposals can be further developed. Fifth, there is a specific re-examination of the question of the extent to which global justice plays a role in the proposals and what the global dimension of the Green New Deal might look like. Finally, future prospects arising from this treatment of Green



New Deals for left-wing movements and organisations are discussed: What can be learnt from these, and how can demanding or supporting such initiatives be useful? Where does this reach its limits, and what other political action areas need to be involved to ensure success? What criteria must a Green New Deal plan meet and what pitfalls must be avoided, to ensure that it can play its part as we move towards a fairer and more sustainable world?

## WHAT IS A GREEN NEW DEAL?



## DEFINITION

What is a Green New Deal? Two years after the term gained new prominence in the United States, it is being used so frequently and by such a variety of actors that it has become difficult to answer this question precisely. And even within the movements that advocate a Green New Deal, opinions differ widely about how radical such a deal should be and what priorities it should set.

Here, a progressive Green New Deal means a comprehensive state-sponsored political initiative that on the one hand aims to combat the climate crisis and social injustice at the same time, and on the other hand also has a financial and political scope that makes such a project possible at the appropriate level.

Therefore, a Green New Deal is about structural changes, not about individual behaviour. It involves changes that start at the level of production, and not at that of consumption – changes that are largely driven by state and political actors, and not by the private sector. The aim is not to mitigate the consequences of the necessary transformation for certain groups, but to actively ensure consistent climate protection and social justice. And it does not involve general demands for a transformation, but a specific, mostly time-limited plan.

In other words, a funding/support programme in a single economic sector, such as the expansion of renewable energies, is not a Green New Deal. Appealing to consumers to factor climate protection into their consumption or investment decisions is not a Green New Deal. And initiatives intended to expand the green economy by promoting green technologies without including redistributive measures – thereby perpetuating the neoliberal policies of recent decades – are not a Green New Deal either. In this light, the EU's Green Deal is in fact not a Green New Deal in the strict sense of the term, given that it fails to include any measures to reduce inequality in Europe, and some of the announced €260 billion in annual investment is to come from the private sector, while some is to be generated through budget reallocations. As a result, the actual sum is well below

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one percent of the European Union's gross domestic product (GDP). That is not enough to really undertake a radical reorganisation of the EU.<sup>1</sup>

To understand why these two criteria are appropriate, it is necessary to first examine the two interconnected crises that form the backdrop for the Green New Deal proposals.<sup>2</sup>

## CLIMATE CRISIS AND SOCIAL CRISIS

Global warming has been generally known about since the late 1980s, as has the idea that this is caused by human activities – especially the use of fossil fuels. So far this knowledge has changed precious little. In the years since the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which established the basis for global climate agreements, two binding climate-protection agreements, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris climate agreement, have been adopted. Moreover, Goal 13 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which came into force in 2016, calls for "urgent action" to combat climate change.

However, these agreements have not managed to reduce global emissions. On the contrary in fact: they have risen faster than ever before. Just between 1990 and 2017, global CO2 emissions shot up by 60 percent. The climate crisis is getting worse. The most recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

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1 See also the criticism from scientists and activists who called for a "true" Green New Deal in an open letter to the European Commission (Pettifor et al. 2019) as well as the relevant publication and demands of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), also known as The Left group, in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL 2019). Although, based on the criteria set out here, the European Commission's Green Deal cannot be considered a Green New Deal in the strict sense, it will be referred to frequently in the following because it is currently the highest-profile official climate-protection programme at EU level.

2 The text here restricts itself to the two domains that are central to the Green New Deal's approach, namely the climate crisis and increasing social inequality. Both are bound up with other complex issues: the climate crisis can be understood as one aspect of a broader ecological crisis, while inequality and social crisis are closely related to issues concerning the economic and financial system. Some proposed Green New Deals identify more than two areas of crisis that they aim to address. For instance, a proposal by the UK-based Green New Deal Group (2008) indicates that the global economy is facing a "triple crunch": the credit crisis, climate change and rising energy prices in the face of dwindling oil reserves. The authors of the Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE 2019) speak of "three overlapping crises": an economic crisis, a climate and environmental crisis and a crisis of democracy.

Change (IPCC) make it clear what this means,<sup>3</sup> namely that we are heading for a world where sea levels will rise sharply, with devastating consequences for billions of people living in coastal areas; where natural cycles will change dramatically, and heatwaves, droughts and storms will endanger human lives and the very survival of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

Avoiding this and keeping global warming under 1.5°C, in line with the Paris Agreement, will, as the IPCC states in its special report on this goal, “require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems” (IPCC 2018: 17). However, the report leaves open exactly what this will entail and what these solutions will look like.

What is clear, though, is that the instruments used so far for international climate policy have done nothing to bring about the far-reaching transformations referred to there. International climate policy originated at a time marked by the end of the Cold War and the triumph of neoliberal economic policy. Flexibility instead of fixed guidelines, more market and less state – these principles have also shaped climate policy. Both nationally and internationally, governments relied on markets and ‘flexible’ mechanisms which, it was hoped, would enable resources to be used in the best possible way and to protect the climate as effectively as possible. Neither the Kyoto Protocol nor the Paris climate agreement provided for sanctions if countries did not achieve the promised emission reductions. Instead, they allow emission allowances to be traded and emission reductions to be purchased from third countries.<sup>5</sup> This has led to the establishment of costly emissions trading schemes – the largest, the European Union emissions trading system (EU ETS), was launched in 2005 but has done nothing to cut emissions.<sup>6</sup>

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3 The IPCC is a body that brings together and publishes the latest research on climate change every few years. Thousands of scientists from around the world are involved. For more information, see <https://www.ipcc.ch/about>.

4 See e.g. IPCC (2014; 2018).

5 The Kyoto Protocol initially stipulated that only industrialised countries were required to reduce their emissions. However, instead of doing this themselves, they could also buy credits from countries in the Global South. Studies examining such ‘offsets’ show that in up to 85 percent of these projects, there is probably no reduction in emissions at all (Cames et al. 2016).

6 See Umweltbundesamt (2020a).

Nor has there been a political rethink so far, and proposals from academia and movements such as Fridays for Future often follow the same lines of argument: emissions will be reduced through the market and through individual behaviour, for example by means of an expansion and tighter control of emissions trading, through the introduction of minimum prices or of a tax on CO<sub>2</sub>. While such a tax would not allow emissions trading, it too is based on the assumption that the use of fossil fuels and other climate-damaging activities can be regulated through pricing – and therefore through the market. Since the 1990s, criticism has come from indigenous groups and environmentalists, arguing that such market-based instruments reduce nature to an economic value to the exclusion of other, non-monetary access to the non-human environment. At the same time, these approaches, as they currently stand, run the risk of exacerbating the social crisis – and, in terms of changes in behaviour, targeting the wrong people.

Moreover, it is not only the design of climate policy that has been affected by the transition to neoliberal political and economic models since the early 1980s. Developments such as the move away from the welfare state, a change in tax policy, the privatisation of state responsibilities and the promotion of competition in all areas have significantly increased levels of social inequality. In Western societies today, wealth is as unevenly distributed as it was before the First World War (Piketty 2014). This inequality is closely linked to other forms of oppression, such as discrimination based on gender, skin colour or sexual orientation, and it has far-reaching effects on people’s life chances, for example in terms of their education, life satisfaction and health.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, financialisation and unequal trade policies have increased the inequality between countries in the Global North and those in the Global South (TNI 2018). The financial and economic crisis that hit the world in 2007 and 2008 exacerbated this trend. Millions of people in the United States lost their homes, while nations in southern Europe faced harsh austerity policies. The coronavirus pandemic will have an even more dramatic impact on wealth distribution.

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7 For example, in Germany the life expectancy for men from the lowest income group is up to 11 years less than for men from the highest income group, and for women the difference is eight years – see Lampert et al. (2018).

This has three implications for the climate crisis and the policymaking to deal with it. First, to avoid increasing this inequality, climate policy measures must not unilaterally burden those who are less financially or politically strong, whether at global or national level. However, many of the measures proposed so far have (often unintentionally) precisely that effect.<sup>8</sup> Second, this makes it harder to secure majority public support for climate protection, meaning that environmental protection remains the preserve of those who can 'afford' to be preoccupied with these issues, i.e. the middle and upper classes. Third, this means that if measures to reduce emissions are to be successful, they must start with the rich. After all, as scientists have shown, there is a direct relationship between income and emissions: high earners generate higher emissions (Chancel / Piketty 2015). Just 10 percent of the world's population – the elites in both the Global North and the Global South – is responsible for around 50 percent of global emissions, while the poorest half of the world's population accounts for only 10 percent of emissions and thus hardly contribute to climate change (Oxfam 2015).<sup>9</sup> So it makes little sense to use price changes to influence the latter's behaviour. If climate policy is to change anything, it must focus on structural changes and if it is to also target individual behaviour, it must concentrate on those who are actually wealthy enough to play a part in global warming.<sup>10</sup>

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That is where the core idea behind the Green New Deal comes in. If the previous measures based on individual consumption and markets are not reducing emissions and also risk exacerbating social inequality, what other approaches can be found that can help to tackle both the climate crisis and the social crisis?

Environmental movements have been making proposals like this for many years: in Western countries since the 1980s these have focused on local projects (eco-villages, bicycle workshops, community gardens) and have predominantly been

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8 This applies, for instance, to consumption taxes such as VAT and taxes on fossil fuels. These have a disproportionately greater impact on lower income groups, as they usually spend their whole income, while the expenditure on consumer and everyday goods makes up only a fraction of the income of the well-to-do. Offsets and the outsourcing of 'dirty' industries to the Global South or to areas with low-income sections of the population also put pressure on those who have contributed the least to the problem of climate change.

9 Therefore, the carbon footprint of someone in the richest one percent of the world's population is approximately 175 times that of someone from the bottom 10 percent – see Oxfam (2015).

10 See, for example, Kenner (2019).

critical of the state. These experiments have yielded a wealth of knowledge and ideas, for example regarding possibilities for recycling, ecological agriculture and new ways of working. But even these approaches are largely individual, and some are even consumption-based. They have no influence on social inequality, and they often barely extend beyond their members or neighbourhoods.

By contrast, the Green New Deal offers a new solution that aims to combat two crises at the same time: climate change and social inequality. It thus does not simply form an alternative to the local approaches, but also, as Chapter 4 shows, builds in part on these. However, one key difference is its relationship with the state, which is seen not as something to be bypassed but rather as a central authority to be used to implement the change towards a just and sustainable world. To do this, the Green New Deal draws on some historical role models: US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and the wartime economy during the Second World War, especially in the United States and the UK.

## HISTORICAL ROLE MODELS: ROOSEVELT AND THE WARTIME ECONOMY

Almost every proposed Green New Deal refers to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, this being one of the few examples of how a society and a country can be radically transformed in a relatively short period.

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Roosevelt became US President in 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression. The US economy was on its knees: since the stock-market crash in 1929, gross domestic product had almost halved, the unemployment rate was nearly 25 percent and, despite food overproduction, millions of people were going hungry. On the day he was inaugurated, Roosevelt delivered a speech that has gone down in history. In it he proclaimed that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" – and promised Americans a new social contract.<sup>11</sup>

The term 'New Deal' was used retrospectively to describe the reform programmes Roosevelt rolled out in the years that followed. Two phases can be distinguished here. Over the first two years, Roosevelt's policy concentrated on the banking and

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11 In card games, a 'new deal' refers to new cards being issued, signalling a new start. The term only came to be used retrospectively to describe Roosevelt's reform programmes.

financial crisis, centred on state protection and tighter regulation.<sup>12</sup> The second phase of the New Deal from 1935 onwards focused, partly as a result of a wave of worker mobilisations and strikes, on social issues. This involved the establishment of a welfare-state system, the introduction of the right to unionise, a minimum wage and occupational health and safety legislation, as well as the creation and expansion of government agencies such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), which employed millions of people over the next few years, turning the US government into the country's biggest employer.<sup>13</sup>

The New Deal was a product of its time and had many weaknesses. With changes such as electrification and the development of a modern infrastructure, it contributed to the economic success of the United States after the Second World War – but also to the acceleration of global warming, which now has to be curbed. The New Deal helped millions of people to achieve greater security and prosperity – but there were big differences in who benefited from it in terms of, for example, gender and skin colour (see Chapter 4).

Despite these weaknesses, a lot can be learnt from the success of the New Deal.

First, the New Deal was not a fixed, carefully planned political project but an undogmatic bundle of measures and programmes that were a flexible response by the US government to certain demands and expressed needs. Second, it was a clever strategic ploy by Roosevelt, in that he needed to serve more than one term to ensure its success. He achieved this by acting quickly, getting a large majority

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12 Two days after his inauguration, Roosevelt closed all banks in the United States for four days. In an address to the nation, he explained the causes of the banking crisis and how he intended to combat it. During their closure, banks were audited. Only those that were still stable and still had sufficient equity were allowed to reopen. From then on, deposits up to a certain amount were underwritten by the state. The Glass–Steagall Act of 1933 was influential: it banned regular commercial banks from any risky speculation, which was made the preserve of dedicated investment banks. It was not until 1999 that it was repealed under President Bill Clinton.

13 They were mainly responsible for expanding infrastructure by building not only huge dams, power lines, roads and highways but also schools, parks, town halls and, in some states, social housing. The WPA provided jobs mainly to unemployed people without vocational training. It focused on relatively small-scale works, such as roads, town halls, squares and schools and employed around 8 million people over the period of the New Deal, who were in the direct employ of the US government. The WPA also had programmes for young people and women as well as artists. The PWA was responsible for large-scale government-funded projects such as dams, airports and irrigation systems. It did not hire the (mostly skilled) workers directly but awarded contracts to companies that carried out the projects (or parts of them).

of society behind him and turning his back on clientelism: in his first 100 days in office, he got 15 new laws and institutions off the ground – and not only that but he made sure that the initial measures of the programme particularly benefited those areas that had voted against him in the presidential election. He won the next election with a substantial majority. Finally, the psychological aspect was at least as decisive for the New Deal as the economic one: after years of social and economic depression, Roosevelt managed to give people a feeling of hope and a new beginning. Cohesion was consolidated not only by jointly working on projects but also by the accompanying documentation and by highlighting successes.<sup>14</sup>

Another point that emerges from the New Deal is how extensive such a programme must be to actually be effective. Roosevelt's New Deal ran for seven years and over that time involved expenditure of around 42 billion US dollars, equivalent to 40 percent of the United States' gross domestic product (GDP) in 1929 – in other words, on average around six percent of GDP was invested each year.

Why is this criterion of scale important? In contrast to concepts like just transition and socio-ecological transformation, which generally deal with the process of change towards a more eco-friendly economy, a Green New Deal involves a project to transform society within a certain time-limited period. “We have 12 years” was Sunrise Movement activists' response to the 2018 IPCC study warning that emissions would have to fall radically within the next decade if dangerous tipping points for the climate were to be avoided. The aim of the proposed Green New Deals from the United States and the UK is to use that period to get their economies to net zero within a decade, i.e. to ensure that greenhouse-gas emissions do not exceed what the natural world can reabsorb in that time.<sup>15</sup> To have a realistic chance of achieving this, the political project must be big enough and well enough

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14 The fact that the WPA also employed many artists was not only due to the fact that art and culture were seen as cornerstones of society. With their writings, images and films, they also helped to get majorities behind the New Deal. One of the most famous writers to receive funding from the New Deal was John Steinbeck, who went on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. The programmes were also open to journalists who, for example, documented the work as part of the New Deal. Short films from this period can be found in e.g. the Internet Archive of the Living New Deal Project at [https://archive.org/details/living\\_new\\_deal\\_project](https://archive.org/details/living_new_deal_project).

15 How radical these proposals actually are depends on how net zero is defined. This can be understood as meaning that no more is emitted than natural systems can absorb. However, now the term is mainly being used for concepts, including controversial carbon-storage technologies, which would enable higher emissions (see Chapter 2 for more details about this).



funded, and so the Green New Deal must have a scope that goes considerably beyond the usual budgets. In this light, most of the Green New Deal proposals are based on the New Deal and assume a volume of at least five percent of GDP per year. In the United States that would be equivalent to around 1 trillion dollars, in the European Union to €700 billion and in Germany to €170 billion per year.<sup>16</sup>

Roosevelt's New Deal is not the only point of reference for proponents of a radical, government-centred plan to tackle the climate crisis. Most of the US and UK Green New Deal plans also refer to the wartime economy during the Second World War. Both the United States and the UK entered the Second World War without much time to prepare. This meant that they had to turn their economies into a wartime economy within a very limited period: production was centrally controlled and organised by the state, oil and food were rationed, wages and prices were fixed, and consumption was slashed using incentives and appeals to citizens. Authors of Green New Deal proposals from the UK and the United States argue that lessons can be learnt from this for the fight against global warming, e.g. that a radical transformation of the production system is possible within a very short time, and that people are willing to go without and be subject to restrictions provided that they back the common goal – and also that such a change does not have to be at the expense of the most vulnerable. The rationing of food and goods levelled up living conditions during the war years and reduced inequality. According to studies, the situation in terms of living conditions and diet for poorer members of society was better during the war years than before.<sup>17</sup>

However, this second point of reference remains highly problematic, given that wars cannot be compared with peacetime. They are an exceptional situation asso-

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16 The scope of Bernie Sanders' proposal during the US Democratic primaries came very close to Roosevelt's New Deal, earmarking around 1 trillion dollars per year for the Green New Deal, i.e. slightly above five percent of GDP and about the size of the current US budget; the idea was that the programme should run for 15 years and would be worth 16 trillion dollars. The Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE 2019), too, demands that each year the EU should issue green bonds equivalent to five percent of GDP as a means of funding a Green New Deal. This would amount to around €700 billion annually, which would represent a huge increase on the €160 billion previously earmarked by the EU for this purpose. In Germany, for example, five percent of GDP would correspond to around €170 billion, so around half of the country's current federal budget. The extent to which these funds would be raised in addition to existing budgets or through changes to these differs from one plan to another. For further details, see Chapter 3 on funding.

17 For further details about the background and the proposals, see Silk (2020) and Green New Deal Group (2008).

ciated with high levels of economic activity and (hopefully) last for a limited time. A large part of the population accepted the restrictions because it was made clear that they would soon be a thing of the past; the scale of mobilisation would not have been sustainable over a longer period. By contrast, a transition to a more environmentally friendly lifestyle involves changes that are sustainable over the long term. Wars everywhere have been accompanied by restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, by propaganda, suffering and destruction, and by the division between friends and foes. The world sought by the Green New Deal requires exactly the opposite: cooperation and collaboration, the desire to build things up instead of destroying them. The second example mentioned in the proposed Green Deal from the UK, then, may be less prominent but significantly more revealing: very soon after the Soviet Union was dissolved, Cuba was forced back into self-sufficiency due to a lack of import and export opportunities. With the help of rationing, local cooperatives and the use of agro-ecological approaches, it managed to shore up the food supply and, despite restrictions on consumption, to improve the population's health (Green New Deal Group 2008: 29 et seq.).

## HISTORY OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL CONCEPT SINCE 2007

With the emergence of neoliberal economics, the politics of a strong state making investments and regulating the economy came under fire. Starting in the 1980s, such a role for the state came to be frowned upon and was considered obsolete; indeed, many economists continue to maintain to this day that the state should keep out of economic processes and ensure free trade and the movement of goods through as widespread a liberalisation as possible.<sup>18</sup> However, the financial and economic crisis that erupted in 2008 shook the belief that such a policy was the only game in town. While governments spent hundreds of billions bailing out ailing banks and companies, old and new ideas about how the economic crisis

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18 The neoliberal ideology's development from a marginal splinter group into the predominant doctrine of economics has been traced from various perspectives in recent years. This is important because it shows how such a paradigm shift could be brought about and implemented in a targeted manner; see, for example, the various chapters in a volume on the Mont Pèlerin Society edited by Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Mirowski / Plehwe 2009), and A Brief History of Neoliberalism by David Harvey (Harvey 2007), which more strongly emphasises the role of violence in the implementation of neoliberal policies, for example in ending the 1984-1985 miners' strike in the UK.



could be overcome and similar crises avoided in the future were discussed in various circles. The first wave of proposals for a Green New Deal originated in this period.

## GREEN NEW DEALS AS A RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Back in early 2007, US journalist Thomas Friedman was the first to link the New Deal concept to renewable energies. Writing in an opinion piece in *The New York Times*, he argued that it was not enough for individual members of the public to install solar panels. Instead, he said, to really bring about a shift to renewables would require what he called a kind of “Green New Deal”, i.e. an effort similar to the one led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s (Friedman 2007).<sup>19</sup>

When the banking and financial crisis began a few months later and further deteriorated in subsequent months, the term was used again and again for programmes that were supposed to respond to this. In the face of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, it made sense for the rhetoric at least to refer to the form of crisis management at that time,<sup>20</sup> although the crisis policy with its focus on bailing out banks and companies differed fundamentally from the approaches of the 1930s and contributed not to a reduction but to a further increase in social inequality.

Beyond these rhetorical references, the first major Green New Deal proposals emerged in the wake of the severe financial crisis. In July 2008, the Green New Deal Group – a disparate think tank of UK progressives, including Larry Elliott, Economics Editor of *The Guardian*, and economist Ann Pettifor – published their first report, *A Green New Deal*, in which they proposed a joint programme to tackle the “triple crunch” of the credit crisis, climate change and high oil prices (Green New Deal Group 2008). In it, they demand, on the one hand, the re-introduction of tighter capital controls, the restructuring of the banking system and changes in tax law, and, on the other hand, a state-sponsored investment programme to build climate-friendly infrastructure. In 2009, the Heinrich Böll Foundation – which

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19 Friedman was referring only to the shift to renewables, not a full societal programme.

20 For example, President Barack Obama called part of his stimulus programme a “Green New Deal”, and the US presidential candidate for the Greens, who never has a chance of winning the election, has run with this slogan several times.

has close ties to the German Green Party – in cooperation with the Worldwatch Institute published a strategy paper that advocates green stimulus packages (French / Renner / Gardner 2009). Similarly, a working group of the Greens group in the European Parliament gave rise to some initial reflections about a Green New Deal (The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament 2011). The concept has also been adopted by international organisations: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published a study in 2009 that proposed a framework for the economic stimulus programmes being launched around the world at that time. They should not only get the economy going again and create jobs but also reduce the dependency on fossil fuels and fight poverty, especially in the Global South (Barbier 2009).<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, the first disparate proposals for a Green New Deal were on the table at the end of the 2000s. However, initially they were only discussed in earnest by a relatively small group of interested parties, and the impact on policy remained marginal.

## GREEN NEW DEALS AS A RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE PROTESTS

This changed in 2018. Unlike 10 years earlier, in this case the Green New Deal initiative was not the product of political strategists seeking a solution to the economic crisis, but of social movements that fought for the climate crisis to finally be taken seriously and addressed. In autumn 2018, the Fridays for Future movement spread around the world, and young people took to the streets in almost every country on the planet. In November of that year, activists from the Sunrise Movement in the United States pulled off the media coup of occupying the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to draw attention to their call for a radical programme to tackle the climate emergency in the form of a Green New Deal. This time, progressive politicians in the country’s Democratic Party took up the idea. A group of young members of the House of Representatives, including the recently elected Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, worked with the climate activists

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21 This study was primarily aimed at the G20, the group of the world’s 20 leading economies, which at that time met regularly for summits. Under this proposal, they should spend around two percent of GDP on such a programme every two years, while for countries in the Global South this figure should be one percent.

on a resolution to create a Green New Deal, which they introduced in the House in February 2019 (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). The resolution alludes to both the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C published just beforehand and to the deterioration in living conditions facing large swathes of the population despite economic growth and increasing productivity. In the words of the resolution, “a new national, social, industrial, and economic mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II and the New Deal era” was “a historic opportunity [...] to provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security” for everyone in the United States and to combat “systemic injustices”.

Unsurprisingly the resolution was rejected. But the proposal for a Green New Deal was now front and centre of political debate and was taken up and further developed by various political players in the months that followed. The manifesto of every candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination included a proposal for a Green New Deal, with those of Independent Senator Bernie Sanders and leftist Democrat Elizabeth Warren in particular going far beyond what would have been conceivable in previous election campaigns.

This movement was by no means limited to the United States though. The idea of a state-sponsored green investment programme was also discussed in other countries, partly inspired by the success of the US movement, and partly because other stakeholders, from political parties to social movements, independently from each other came to the conclusion that the state must play a bigger role in the transformation to a more environmentally friendly economy.

In Canada, spring 2019 saw the establishment of a network of over 150 organisations and grassroots movements planning to mobilise for a Green New Deal (The Pact for a Green New Deal 2019). Indeed, as early as 2015, a coalition of environmental and indigenous rights movements produced the Leap Manifesto (The Leap 2015), making similar demands. In the UK, in September 2019 the party conference of the social-democratic Labour Party passed a motion proposing a Green New Deal for the United Kingdom (Labour for a Green New Deal 2019).

When European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was elected in July 2019, she, partly in response to young people’s climate protests, announced a Green Deal for the European Union. She presented details of the plan in December 2019 (European Commission 2019). As this plan largely neglected social aspects

and economic restructuring, counter-proposals and demands for a ‘real’ Green New Deal for Europe arose at the same time, for example from The Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL 2019) and from non-parliamentary movements. The Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE) movement, which emerged from the DIEM25 list, published a proposal for a European Green New Deal in September 2019, aimed at not only moving the EU away from fossil fuels but also breaking with the austerity and budget-slashing measures the EU had imposed on its Member States during the euro crisis in 2009 (GNDE 2019).

There have been further mobilisations for Green New Deals or similar programmes from late 2018 onwards in France, Finland, Spain, Australia, Austria, Japan and Switzerland, among others. The term and the concept were also adopted in the Global South, for example as part of the movement for a Pacto Ecosocial del Sur, i.e. a Social, Ecological, Economic and Intercultural Pact for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Climate Justice Charter in South Africa and Green New Deal proposals in Tunisia.<sup>22</sup> These proposals have reached various levels of maturity, from the conceptual stage to detailed programmes. At the same time, many publications on the Green New Deal have appeared since 2019, including the widely-read books *The Case for the Green New Deal* by economist Ann Pettifor (Pettifor 2019), *On Fire* by writer Naomi Klein (Klein 2019) and *A Planet to Win* penned by a collective led by Kate Aronoff and Alyssa Battistoni (Aronoff et al. 2019). Finally, within the climate justice movement and the radical left, a number of ‘climate plans’ have been drawn up over the past year, bringing together specific proposals. This serves to demonstrate how the question of what role the state can and should play in the transition to a low-emission economy has recently been taken well beyond the realm of party politics.<sup>23</sup>

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22 An overview of the various proposals and links to the corresponding programmes can be found in the appendix, along with a list of Green New Deal-related publications.

23 One example is *The Grassroots Climate Action Plan* (Gerechte1komma5 2020) with its focus on North-South justice, while other proposals have been made by groups such as *GermanZero* (GermanZero 2020). The question of the demand or support for such a programme has recently also been increasingly discussed within international climate justice and environmental movements such as *Ende Gelände* (Here And No Further!) and *Extinction Rebellion*.

# CONTENT



As set out above, the term 'Green New Deal' describes the framework for a comprehensive, time-limited programme that is intended to tackle the climate and social crises alike. The time frame varies, but for most initiatives it is between five and 15 years. The actual content of the Green New Deal and the measures forming part of the programme also differ depending on the proposal and the national and regional circumstances. However, most of the proposals share a common kernel of measures. This chapter presents the most important of these. They are grouped into content areas for the sake of clarity.

## DECARBONISATION

At the very heart of the Green New Deal proposals is the transformation towards a carbon-neutral society. The idea is that from a certain point in time, no more greenhouse gases will be emitted than can be reabsorbed by natural systems. As for when 'net zero' can be achieved, most Green New Deal proposals are based on the most recent IPCC report, the 2018 Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C, in which the scientists conclude that limiting global warming to 1.5°C is only realistic if total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decrease by at least 45 percent by 2030 and are net zero from 2050 (IPCC 2018). While the Ocasio-Cortez resolution of February 2019 refers to these calculations, it does not provide any precise information on when exactly this will be achieved in the United States. In his manifesto, Bernie Sanders heralds the complete transformation to renewable energy for electricity and transport by no later than 2030 and decarbonisation of the economy by 2050 (Sanders 2019d). Other plans are more ambitious: in the UK the Labour proposal aims to achieve net zero as early as 2030, while the Green New Deal for Europe seeks to do so by 2025.

Apart from the last two, these proposals do not go beyond the official targets of Germany and the EU, for example, which envisage a reduction of 55 percent by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. All the more crucial, then, is the question of what is actually being done to achieve these goals – because the climate targets that governments pledge to meet often only exist on paper – and what net zero actually means. In its strict sense, net zero means not causing more emissions than natural systems can absorb. Indeed, many governments are currently planning to achieve net zero through the use of controversial technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) (i.e. the removal and underground storage of

CO2), or through carbon trading across borders or the increased deployment of nuclear power, whereas the Green New Deals rule out such methods.

In most cases, the decarbonisation in the Green New Deals targets energy supply, which is to be transformed to renewables as quickly as possible – wind turbines and solar panels are emblematic of the Green New Deals and are featured on stickers, websites and posters. In the UK, the Labour proposal calls for energy consumption of buildings to be reduced sharply, for example through insulation, and a decentralised network of renewable energy generation to be developed (including making “every building a power station”), combined with the demand to nationalise the major energy generators (Labour for a Green New Deal 2019). Sanders’ manifesto envisaged, on the one hand, establishing a network of public energy generators, modelled on the Tennessee Valley Authority (a huge dam project and showcase of the New Deal), and on the other hand, local energy suppliers, similar to the municipal utilities in Germany (Sanders 2019d).

The second key area when it comes to decarbonisation is transport. Nowhere is there any direct mention of a ban on or reduction in the use of private motor vehicles. An exception here is the GNDE, which suggests the introduction of a new ‘Euro 7’ vehicle emissions standard that in the long term would prohibit the production of cars running on fossil fuels (GNDE 2019). Instead, all Green New Deal proposals anticipate a major expansion of public transport: the construction of new, and the further development of existing, high-speed rail infrastructure and a comprehensive affordable or free public transport network.<sup>24</sup>

A tax on CO2 emissions or an expansion of emissions trading, as often called for by economists, is rejected out of hand by the Green New Deal proposals that have come out of the United States and also the Global South. A carbon price, so the argument goes, would place an undue burden on lower-income groups, and emissions trading has so far not only proven ineffective, but it also encourages industries with high emission levels to avoid making some necessary radical changes. In Europe, the proposals are more varied in this regard. 2008 and 2019

24 Thus, the Green New Deal proposal from The Left group in the European Parliament addresses for example the idea of free local public transport, although the demand is rather weakly worded: “The “Green Deal” should aim for free public transport and ensure accessibility for all” (GUE/ NGL 2019: 6). For most of these demands, the focus is on passenger transport; freight transport is only addressed in a few cases.

proposals emanating from the UK provide for taxation of fossil-fuel use. They argue that this is a way to get those who caused the crisis to share in the costs (Green New Deal Group 2008). To also hit those with the highest emissions, there are various proposals involving progressive taxation, as also suggested by Chancel and Piketty (2015) in their study, with basic energy or mobility needs exempt from tax, and the tax rates rising sharply above that.<sup>25</sup> The GNDE suggests replacing the European emissions trading system with a fee-and-dividend system similar to the Swiss model, under which the revenue from a fee is evenly redistributed (GNDE 2019).

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Any Green New Deal is a programme involving mass investment by the state, which, under most of the plans, would invest billions in creating the infrastructure for an environmentally friendly economy and society. Infrastructure, whether tangible or not, is like the scaffolding of the state, having a decisive influence on how society works. The form of the infrastructure also determines forms of economic activity, mobility, social gathering or social division.

Hardly anyone disputes the fact that huge investments need to be made in the infrastructure of Western countries. Since the 1980s, industrialised countries have scaled back investment in the maintenance and construction of public infrastructure. In the United States, it has been less than half a percent of GDP over the past 10 years, while the eurozone average has even been negative, meaning that not enough was invested to even maintain the existing infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> Much of the infrastructure in Europe and North America was built in the early 20th century – railway lines, bridges, and water and sewerage pipes in cities – and now, more than 100 years on, needs to be replaced. In addition, there are new demands on infrastructure, such as the expansion of high-speed internet and of mobile-phone networks. The Green New Deal proposes taking action to address these chal-

25 There are also similar proposals for air transport, which call for frequent flyers in particular to be heavily taxed under a system of progressive taxation – see e.g. Stay Grounded (2019).

26 For instance, around half of schools in Germany need renovation, as do many bridges and public buildings. This is no different in other European countries – the collapse of the Morandi Bridge in the Italian city of Genoa in 2018 is a dramatic example of what inadequate maintenance can lead to.



lenges – and using the funds that are necessary to do so in such a way that they can also resource an environmentally friendly infrastructure.

An example of an item that is included in almost all Green New Deals is building insulation. As a result of heating, air conditioning and energy consumption, buildings account for a substantial share of emissions;<sup>27</sup> this can be drastically reduced by energy renovation work. In Germany, for example, there are already funding programmes and regulations for this. However, these often have a very anti-social effect: home owners receive funding for the renovation, but the costs of this are passed on to tenants and lead to rolling increases in rents. As a result, in cities energy renovations are often a reason for people being displaced, and they fuel gentrification (Pallaver 2019). At the same time, the considerable energy-efficiency requirements for new-build properties, though perfectly sound from an environmental perspective, make them mostly unaffordable on the free market for low-wage earners, thereby exacerbating the housing shortage in metropolises around the world.

Therefore, the Green New Deals propose a different approach: most of the proposals envisage an insulation and renovation programme for the public and private building stock that is funded and, in some cases, carried out by the state, without increasing housing costs.<sup>28</sup> Such renovations are primarily to be carried out where for example older or sick people are particularly at risk when there are heatwaves or storms. They thus form part of adaptation measures that play a major role in the US proposals in particular. It was no coincidence that Sanders presented his Green New Deal proposal in the town of Paradise, California,

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27 According to the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt), buildings account for around 30 percent of CO2 emissions and 35 percent of energy consumption – see Umweltbundesamt (2020b).

28 Thus, Sanders' Green New Deal provided for 2.18 trillion US dollars for this, mostly in the form of grants for low-wage earners, families and small-business owners, to insulate their buildings and replace oil-fired heating with clean and more modern heating systems (Sanders 2019d). At the same time, Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez introduced a proposal in Congress for a comprehensive renovation programme for public housing units in November 2019 (Cohen et al. 2019). The GNDE envisages similar subsidies, as well as the purchase of vacant apartments and greater involvement of residents in planning and construction processes. Hardly any Green New Deal makes specific proposals for the construction of new homes, something which is urgently needed in many metropolitan areas.

which was almost completely destroyed by forest fires in 2019.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, the establishment of a climate-resistant infrastructure and protection from forest fires, heatwaves, floods and storms have played a minor role in the European proposals thus far.

## WORK AND JOBS

Artists have created posters for the Green New Deals which are reminiscent of similar works from the 1930s, showing many people – both women and men, many of them people of colour – all hard at work, planting trees, harvesting sunflowers or erecting wind turbines.

Indeed, the Green New Deals are closely linked to the demand for more and better (and greener) jobs. At the heart of the US programme is the establishment of a government work programme similar to Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA), which employed millions of people in the 1930s, the principal goal at that time being to reduce the high levels of unemployment. The aim of the Green New Deal would be to create well-paid jobs and so promote redistribution – the idea is that these government jobs will primarily go to previously disadvantaged groups. Almost all Green New Deal proposals provide for a right to work or a job guarantee: anyone who wanted a job would be given one via a government agency and at the same time a higher minimum wage would be put in place. These steps are meant both to create jobs and to ensure a pool of workers to carry out the appropriate transformation measures;<sup>30</sup> they would undertake labour-intensive work relating to adaptation to climate change and ecological restoration, such as large-scale reforestation and restoration of landscapes to their natural state.

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29 The blaze that started the forest fires was due to insufficient maintenance of infrastructure by the electricity company responsible for this as it had neglected the maintenance of power lines. The company is now insolvent – see Brice-Saddler (2019).

30 The problem of the shortage of skilled workers has not yet been addressed in the proposals. Many of the Green New Deal initiatives would require skilled, not unskilled, workers. Such workers are already urgently needed in many countries and are often a reason why planned construction and environmental measures cannot be carried out or can only be implemented with a delay. Here, the programmes would have to be combined with a huge upskilling and training drive – see in this regard e.g. Nersisyan and Wray (2019).

Almost all Green New Deal proposals from other countries have adopted the idea of a government job agency for social transformation, often combined with the demand for a right to work; examples of this can be found in proposals from France, Finland and Austria (L’Affaire du siècle 2018; BIOS 2019; Sozialistische Jugend Österreich 2019). The 2008 Green New Deal proposal for the UK envisaged setting up a ‘carbon army’ of hundreds of thousands of workers to implement the planned environmental reconstruction programme (Green New Deal Group 2008). At the heart of the GNDE is the establishment of a European Green Public Works (GPW) agency, which would also carry out the proposed investment programme and guarantee a job for everyone who wanted one. Exactly how this would be implemented is left unclear, but it would take place mainly locally and regionally (GNDE 2019).

The demand for well-paid green jobs (specifically in the public sector) is also a proposal that aims to improve the relationship between climate-change movements and trade unions, which in the past has often been strained. The fear of job losses as a result of the transformation to a more environmentally friendly economy plays a decisive role here – or more precisely, the fear of well-paid jobs being lost and replaced by fewer, more precarious and lower-paid jobs. Political players well beyond left-wing movements are aware of this problem: the European Commission’s Green Deal provides for subsidies of up to €100 billion for those regions that are affected by the phasing out of coal mining (European Commission 2019), and the German federal government has promised the affected regions up to €40 billion for structural change under Germany’s Coal Phase-Out Act (BMWi 2020).

So far, however, the transformation of regions that once relied on coal mining appears to have left much to be desired: in large parts of the Ruhr Valley and also in the federal states (Bundesländer) of eastern Germany, the promised structural change has not materialised. Ever since mines, power plants and steelworks were closed there, unemployment and poverty have remained high – a situation which persists to this day. The same applies to the regions in the north-east of the United States, which became notorious as the ‘rust belt’ following the decline of industry and coal mining.

Many of the fundamental problems of this transition have still not been resolved. Renewable energies often require fewer, different or higher-skilled workers than, for example, mining or coal-fired power plants. The Red Deal, a supplementary proposal by indigenous activists in the United States, also calls for honesty when it comes to green jobs. According to this publication, many renewables projects have hitherto not created as many jobs as have been lost and local workers are rarely hired, with skilled workers from outside frequently brought in instead (Red Nation 2020b: 25 et seq.).

All Green New Deal proposals also emphasise that the workers who currently earn their living from the mining or processing of fossil fuels are not to be disadvantaged by the transformation. The idea is that funds will not, as is planned for example in the German/Polish/Czech border region of Lusatia, go to companies through subsidies or tax breaks in the hope that this will create new jobs. Instead, workers will receive securities and guarantees, such as further training and continued wages for a few years at the level of their former wages.<sup>31</sup>

There is justified criticism that this is more about maintaining the status of the higher-earning sections of the workforce – in the automotive industry or power plants, pay is often above average. However, this is also the case because these are areas in which there is a high level of unionisation and a long tradition of trade-union organisation. For example, trade-union activists have repeatedly expressed concern about losing bastions of strong trade-union organisation through the ending of fossil-fuel use and referred to the need to develop ‘just transition’ plans in collaboration with workers and unions (Sweeney / Treat 2018). After all, for those working in the renewables sector, unionisation rates are significantly lower and jobs are often much more isolated, which makes it difficult to set up trade-union organisations.<sup>32</sup>

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31 The Ocasio-Cortez resolution promises a “fair and just transition for all communities and workers” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019), while Bernie Sanders’ manifesto provided for a five-year wage guarantee and a pension guarantee, as well as payment of “a four-year college education or vocational job training with living expenses provided” (Sanders 2019d). In addition, affected workers would be prioritised for jobs in the newly created government work programmes.

32 For contributions to the debate on the current conflicts between the climate movement and trade unions in Germany, see also Grabietz (2020) and, in particular on Lusatia, Bose et al. (2020).



A more important question is whether this strong focus on jobs as a central tool of ensuring participation and security should actually be dropped rather than strengthened. While most Green New Deals suggest that collective action is to be at the centre of activity, most of them assume a classical wage-labour model that forms the basis for economic security. The fact that this model has been in crisis for years and that only a fraction of workers actually work completely on permanent contracts is ignored – as is the fact that the poorest in society, for whom redistribution is most urgently needed, are often not workers, but those who are not working (or cannot work): unemployed, sick and older people.

Some Green New Deal proposals go further here: the GNDE calls not only for a reduction in working time and the introduction of a four-day working week, but also for a care income. The demand for an unconditional basic income has also been included in some of the Green New Deal proposals, for instance in the Pacto Ecosocial del Sur in Latin America (Pacto Ecosocial del Sur 2020) and The Grassroots Climate Action Plan (Gerechte1komma5 2020). Apart from these examples, questions about the future of work have barely featured in the Green New Deals so far: for example, the question of how wage labour is to be distributed in the future in the face of digitalisation, job displacement and increasing productivity, and whether completely different concepts of work, participation and economic security are not required.

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## FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

In its first few years, Roosevelt's New Deal did not primarily deal with social aspects: its aim was initially to bring the banking system back under government control. In the previous decade, in a context of unfettered liberalisation, this had become a hotbed for speculation and bottom-up redistribution and had contributed significantly to the crash of 1929 and the serious economic crisis that followed. Roosevelt created new rules and institutions that were supposed to make it more difficult for this to happen in the future (see Chapter 1).

In European countries, too, governments adopted strict rules from the 1930s onwards to control the financial system, culminating in the nationalisation of central banks in France and the UK. After the Second World War, international economic and financial rules were also agreed through the Bretton Woods Agreement, in an effort to avoid currency speculation by ensuring fixed exchange rates.

At the same time, the Keynesian economic policy of the post-war period meant that the state had a strong regulatory function. The focus of currency policy was on full employment, with higher inflation rates and debt levels being tolerated in return.

This only changed in the 1980s, when a neoliberal economic doctrine took hold, in the wake of which markets were liberalised and state-owned companies were privatised. The existing regulations, many of them dating back to the 1930s, were dismantled, and a new wave of speculation led to an even more far-reaching financialisation of areas of life than in the 1930s – ending up in another serious financial crisis in 2007.

The initial Green New Deal proposals from the UK appeared at the height of this crisis, and so it is little wonder that one of their two pillars is reform of the financial sector to avoid similar crises in the future. Based on Roosevelt's measures in the 1930s, they demand tighter capital controls, the break-up of large banks into smaller units, more transparency in the banking sector, the separation of investment and commercial banks, as was common until 1999, and an end to 'shadow banking' and tax havens through changes in taxation law (Green New Deal Group 2008). As well as these short-term measures, they point to the goal of making long-term changes to international finance.<sup>33</sup>

These aspects hardly feature in the US proposals, or indeed in many other Green New Deal proposals – a point that comes in for the following criticism from Pettifor (2020): "The evidence from recent left-wing election campaigns in Britain and the US is disappointing. Both the Jeremy Corbyn-led general election campaign and the Bernie Sanders-led presidential campaign appeared blind to the impact

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33 Since co-authoring the 2008 proposal, Ann Pettifor (Pettifor 2019; Pettifor et al. 2019) has also argued for a reform of the banking and trade system – according to her, this is a prerequisite for any Green New Deal. Among other things, here she takes up a suggestion from John Maynard Keynes, arising from the peace negotiations after the First World War, to issue common bonds. The European Union did just that with its coronabonds for eurozone countries in May 2020, meaning that for the first time in the history of the international community, an international entity (in this case the eurozone) is jointly liable for the debts of all of its members. This decision was hard won and was certainly only possible partly because of the acute crisis caused by the pandemic, and in its present form has not had a positive impact on EU climate policy: it is currently unclear whether the rescue packages will come at the price of some downscaling or watering down of the Green Deal. However, Eurobonds are something new – and could potentially be used as a model for funding climate-protection and adaptation measures in the future (see Chapter 3 on funding).

of the international financial system on their own policies and on the lives of their voters.”

In fact, in most of the proposals, the financial sector only plays a role in terms of investment. Both the Ocasio-Cortez resolution (Ocasio-Cortez 2019) and Sanders’ proposal (Sanders 2019d) provide for financial investments to be subjected to more stringent rules, and for investments in fossil fuels to be banned or made more difficult – a demand which ties in with divestment campaigns in which activists urged public institutions such as universities to stop capital investments in stocks or funds that support fossil-fuel extraction. The GNDE envisages financial penalties for companies that continue to invest in such technologies, as well as the restructuring of the European Investment Bank (EIB), with its main future goal becoming environmental and climate protection (GNDE 2019). In this respect, the GNDE, at least in terms of its rhetoric, agrees with the Green Deal proposed by the European Commission: this, too, envisages the EIB becoming a ‘climate bank’, which, as a result of a new directive, will only be allowed to invest in fossil fuels and other projects harmful to the climate to a limited extent from 2022 onwards (European Commission 2019).<sup>34</sup>

## HEALTH AND EDUCATION

In the United States, the Green New Deal is closely linked to the demand for health-care for all.<sup>35</sup> The same is true of the plans to establish a state childcare system, which did not exist previously there, or the demand for free higher education. On the other hand, education hardly features in European proposals, although social inequality has a massive impact in this domain too. Both Sanders’ proposal and the GNDE envisaged billions of dollars/euros of investment in research into the ecological transformation – on this point, the proposals coincide with the Green Deal of the European Commission, which also plans to continue the Horizon 2020 research funding programme but within a significantly expanded framework of €100 billion (European Commission 2020b).

34 The fact that the planned Directive still leaves a lot of leeway is shown, for example, by an analysis by Counter Balance (2020).

35 This reflects the special situation in this regard in the United States, where millions of people are still uninsured if they get sick. In most European countries, health insurance for everyone or free or low-cost access to healthcare is perceived more as a matter of course than as a radical left-wing demand.

The coronavirus crisis has shown that in Europe too, much of the public healthcare sector is in a sorry state after decades of swingeing austerity. This has long been known to be the case in the care sector. One characteristic of the progressive forms of Green New Deals, such as Sanders’ programme and, to a limited extent, also the GNDE, is that they aim to create millions of new jobs in the care sector – and not in production. Jobs in the care sector, so the argument goes, are the jobs of the future and are climate and environmentally friendly and can help to make a ‘good life’ possible for many. However, so far a feature of those jobs is that they have been mostly low-paid and have gone hand in hand with a high workload and low social recognition – and, associated with this, have been predominantly held by women. To make these jobs attractive, a central goal of the Green New Deal must be not only to expand these jobs but also to remunerate them in such a way that they do indeed make a good life possible for those doing them – but it is questionable whether the proposed minimum wage of 15 US dollars would be enough to achieve this.

## REDISTRIBUTION AND JUSTICE

As was already made clear in the ‘Definition’ section, working towards more social justice is a stated objective of the Green New Deals. The explicit aim here is not to mitigate the consequences of an ecological transformation for social groups that are particularly affected, as in the case of the European Green Deal or the policy of structural change in former coal-mining regions of Germany, but rather, through policy measures, to actively bring about more justice (in terms of material equality or access to resources). The focus here is especially on disadvantaged groups and those who are particularly affected by climate change and/or the transition to a lower-carbon economy, so the “frontline and vulnerable communities”, as they are called by the February 2019 Congress resolution introduced by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). However, this policy also requires an effort to be made by those who will be asked to pay more to ensure this transition, so that the poorest do not have to do so. It is about, at least to some extent, redistribution in society.

In the case of the Green New Deal, this has three components. Firstly, as set out above, well-paid jobs will be created that will primarily go to poor and disadvantaged groups. Secondly, more (free or low-cost) state-run services will be offered that will benefit all groups, but especially financially disadvantaged households, in domains such as affordable housing, childcare and medical care, and also through the expansion of public and collective infrastructure, for example free parks, playgrounds and swimming pools. Thirdly, and lastly, higher taxes and contributions will slow down or curb the concentration of wealth that has been seen in recent decades.

There is no mention of the word ‘taxes’ in the Green New Deal Resolution, but on a number of occasions Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders have made it clear that they envisage a substantial increase in taxes for the rich.<sup>36</sup> Sanders’ manifesto included the announcement of not only a progressive wealth tax on assets above 32 million US dollars,<sup>37</sup> but also a further tax hike for large companies where the difference between top and average worker salaries exceeded a given level.<sup>38</sup> This would reverse, at least in part, the trend over the past decade that has seen increasing reductions in taxes for those in higher income brackets and tax rises for those in lower income brackets.<sup>39</sup>

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This aspect is missing from the Green New Deal proposals from Europe. That is partly due to the political structure of the European Union – the EU has no influence on Member States’ income-tax or wealth-tax levels or on their social

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36 For instance, Ocasio-Cortez in an interview speaks of a maximum tax rate of 70 percent for those earning more than 10 million dollars per year – see Levitz (2019).

37 This would rise from one percent annually at 32 million dollars to up to eight percent for assets of more than 10 billion dollars (Sanders 2019d).

38 A tax supplement of half a percent would apply if wages of CEOs and top executives were more than 50 times median worker pay, rising to five percent for over 500 times this level (Sanders 2019b).

39 After the Second World War, the United States had one of the most progressive tax systems in the world – in the post-war period, the top tax rate was at times as high as 93 percent. This changed with various neoliberal restructuring operations, and today it is below 40 percent. Similar trends can be observed in almost all industrialised countries: for instance, in Germany the top tax rate in the 1970s was 56 percent but since then it has fallen back to 45 percent. At the same time, there has been a sharp rise in consumption taxes, which place an excessive burden on low-wage earners. Property taxes have been abolished in almost all industrialised countries since the 1990s. Following the publication of Piketty (2014), in which Thomas Piketty argues that the changed tax policy has made a significant contribution to the increase in social inequality, the effects of tax policy have been increasingly discussed again in recent years.

policy. While the GNDE does call for change to the tax system, this is not primarily intended to promote redistribution but mainly to steer consumption and investment. It also seeks the creation of a care income, without however discussing further the sums and structure involved.<sup>40</sup> The Green New Deal proposals from Latin America also include a basic income for everyone (Pacto Ecosocial del Sur 2020).

Thus, this is more about a demand for protection than a call for curbs on wealth. There is no mention of who will be eligible or what conditions will be linked to a care or basic income. This points to another aspect of ‘justice’: who will (or will be entitled to) benefit from the relevant programmes? Only citizens of the country in question? Or everyone who lives there, regardless of their status? This ties in with issues of (im)migration policy. While these are largely excluded from the European Green New Deals (GNDs), the US proposals are often bound up with the call for legalisation of the status of ‘Dreamers’, young people who were born in the United States but have no secure right of residence. However, the question of whether the new jobs that are to be created are also open to non-citizens is not addressed there either.

The Green New Deal holds out no prospect of a social revolution: all in all, although it is supposed to ensure more equality and could therefore impinge on the concentration of wealth, ownership structures remain largely untouched. Breaking or splitting up companies and banks that have become overly powerful – as for instance President Theodore Roosevelt sought to do, in at least some rudimentary way, in the United States at the start of the 20th century – does not feature in any of the GND programmes.

However, they do contain some elements that go beyond purely tax- or wage-based redistribution, such as the promotion of cooperative approaches, be it in residential construction or agriculture. Also Sanders’ plan to build municipal supermarkets focused on serving the common good that will buy directly from farmers

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40 However, the corresponding paragraph of the GNDE suggests a broad interpretation of the care income and so aims by and large for a basic income, albeit not an unconditional one. Thus, section 3.3.1 of the GNDE states: “[t]his can be made available to people who are not formally employed, but are engaged on a full- or part-time basis in care – parents caring for their children, children caring for their elderly parents, and community members caring for each other and the environment” (GNDE 2019).

and secure an affordable supply of food would have at least partially addressed the power of the large retail chains in the United States, and this also applies to the development and expansion of a municipal and charitable power supply. Going further are calls for the nationalisation of energy and transport companies as well as the most vital infrastructure, as, for example, mooted by the proposal from Labour in the UK, or demanded by campaigns from those operating in the Green New Deal milieu (Gowan 2018).

## DEMOCRACY

In addition to the climate and social crisis, some of the GND proposals with their programme aim to deal with the crisis of democracy. This is largely specific to the European Green New Deal proposals, and the crisis perceived here is closely related to the structure and functioning of the European Union and its response to the 2008 euro crisis.<sup>41</sup> The authors of the GNDE fear that this democratic deficit will be exacerbated further by the European Union's current Green Deal proposal: "von der Leyen's 'Green Deal' only serves to deepen the democratic deficit at the heart of the EU.

The so-called 'Sustainable Europe Investment Plan' does not provide resources for communities, municipalities, or regions [...]. Instead, it subsidises private investors, socialising the risks of the green transition while privatising the gains. Those who live in Europe are given no control over the direction of Europe's decarbonisation." (GNDE 2019)

The GNDE also calls for a reform of the EU: in order to strengthen democracy and the connection to the European idea, the authors propose that the EU be switched to a federal system with subsidiary elements and that grassroots democratic elements be included, such as people's assemblies, which arose during the protests by the Indignados in Spain in 2011, and also used, in a slightly different form, by Extinction Rebellion.<sup>42</sup> A Green New Deal should therefore be

implemented in the most decentralised way possible. While funding goes to the European level, relevant plans and decisions will be made as locally as possible and co-determination will be increased, for example in the domains of housing and work (GNDE 2019).

In the United States, while this aspect is mentioned in passing, for example in relation to energy democracy, overall the opposite can be found there, namely the call for a strong state moving towards greater centralisation, which has the power and the opportunity to mediate between various particular and individual interests and to keep an eye on the big picture.

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<sup>41</sup> For example, the GNDE refers to surveys showing that only 42 percent of Europeans trust the EU and just 34 percent trust their national governments.

<sup>42</sup> The proposals from Spain (PSOE 2019; Gilmartin / Greene 2019) and France (L'Affaire du siècle 2018) also not only explicitly oppose the continuation of the austerity policies the EU forced on the southern Member States, but also advocate reform and realignment of the European Union. The 'enforcement' of the Green New Deal, too, is not intended to take place from the top down but from the bottom up – see the GNDE (2019) model for "a people's New Deal".

# IMPLEMENTATION



## LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Which political level do the Green New Deals relate to? A key feature of the Green New Deals is the role of the state, with all the proposals envisaging a central role for governments and state institutions, both in building an environmentally and climate-friendly economy and in organising redistribution. Although individual proposals provide for the participation of private stakeholders (often with a focus on small businesses or cooperatives), ultimate responsibility for the transformation lies with the state. It plans and initiates the relevant projects and programmes, funding, coordinating or implementing them itself. The Green New Deals are also programmes to strengthen the state, reflecting a desire to use this to push back against the market and to re-establish more scope for policy initiatives. This is the main difference from proposals that focus on strengthening the green economy. They essentially rely on private companies – encouraged by funding programmes, grants or tax breaks, or, as in the case of the EU, by price incentives or corresponding framework directives, but basically coordinated by the market – to make the transformation happen. And this is also what distinguishes it from many initiatives by social movements, in the Global North and South, which are critical of the state and state institutions and aim to develop alternatives outside the state framework.

What is meant by 'state' here? Primarily, the proposals relate to the nation state. Not only are nation states still the key political level when it comes to political decision-making power – the coronavirus crisis has made that abundantly clear – but the nation state is still the main level with tax sovereignty and therefore provides almost the only framework where larger-scale redistribution can happen.<sup>43</sup> In the case of countries with a federal system, there is also the level of the federal states – these have recently been playing a crucial role in climate protection in the United States by in some cases overriding the brakes applied by central government under President Donald Trump. In the case of the European Union, the situation is more complex in that while the EU controls economic policy and has influence in other policy areas, such as agriculture and migration, it is not responsible for the

<sup>43</sup> This applies not only to redistribution between 'the bottom' and 'the top', but also between regions within a country. For example, one reason that South African climate movements have given for why they reject decentralised solutions and why the transition to a more environmentally sustainable economy must be coordinated by central government is that this is the only way to create a balance between the country's wealthy coastal regions and its poorer areas and to stop some parts of the country getting left behind – see Bond and Schumacher (2019).



tax, labour-market or social policy of its Member States. Moreover, it has a very small budget compared with its individual Member States, and citizens only have an indirect influence on its political decision-making structures.<sup>44</sup>

This reversion to the model of a 'strong state' is not without its problems. There were also left-wing movements that fought from the 1970s onwards for the end of precisely this strong state, and against its disciplinary power and the tendency towards authoritarianism that went with it. There are still those who argue that the nation state in its current form is historically and constitutionally a result of capitalist conditions and cannot simply be used for opposing purposes. Other critics claim that, in a context of locational competition and global interdependence, the state hardly has any room to engage in progressive politics anyway.

The coronavirus crisis has convincingly demonstrated that this is not the case, and how powerful the (nation) state can continue to be, whether it be in ensuring the functionality of healthcare or making far-reaching interventions in economic activities, such as closing businesses and ordering the production of certain goods or nationalisations. During the pandemic, governments rapidly implemented previously unthinkable measures – and did so with the support of large parts of the population. This development can be viewed as both encouraging and alarming: even if, following Antonio Gramsci, we argue that the state mirrors the balance of power in society, the question remains how this currently stands or what happens if it changes. A strong state – especially when it acts in response to an 'emergency', as demanded by the Green New Deal mobilisations and other movements – may be a powerful instrument, but it is also a dangerous one, which

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44 Thus, EU citizens elect members of the European Parliament, but this still has little influence compared with national parliaments – specifically, it has no legislative competence and so it cannot bring forward any legislative proposals. It can only make decisions on new legislation in conjunction with the EU Council of Ministers, which is made up of the governments of the Member States. Only the European Commission can make legislative proposals. Its members must be confirmed by the European Parliament, but they are not elected by EU citizens. This particularity of the EU means that proposals aimed at European Union level are structured differently. Thus, on the one hand, the GNDE calls for reform and democratisation of the EU (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, to ensure the implementation of the Green New Deal, it focuses on the establishment of a new, EU-wide institution, the Green Public Works agency, which will coordinate and fund projects, and on a changed role for the European Investment Bank (EIB). The fact that the individual Member States, regions, municipalities and projects are able and expected to set their own priorities enables a more flexible approach, which, however, is also less coherent, makes redistribution more difficult and entails the risk of evasion.

is always open to abuse and the exclusion and oppression of minorities.<sup>45</sup> During the mobilisations in the United States and the UK during the Second World War, minorities, citizens of Japanese origin and supposed spies or collaborators were harshly treated, and even today the state is more of a threat than a benign actor for substantial sections of the population. It is interesting here to look at the demands set out in the Red Deal, a complementary proposal to the Green New Deals by indigenous American authors from the south-west of the United States (Red Nation 2019; 2020a; 2020b). The whole of the first part of the three-part proposal revolves around the devastating consequences of repression and discrimination by the state and around calls for the abolition of the prison system and the end of police violence – issues that initially barely featured in the Green New Deal proposals, which were drawn up predominantly by urban, white activists (see Chapter 4).

But the nation state is not the only level at which Green New Deals can and do start. The local or municipal level is a crucial pillar for the implementation of the Green New Deals. Cities, towns and municipalities are the level where people engage directly with each other and which has the most influence on their everyday lives, and stakeholder participation can be achieved more easily and directly at this level. The municipal level is where local infrastructure is provided – and so where struggles over how it should be designed may take place. Initiatives in New York are pushing for the nationalisation of the power grid. Sanders' manifesto included a proposal to build up an energy supply at municipal level, similar to the German municipal utilities (Stadtwerke), involving renewable energies in municipal hands, and not profit-oriented but committed to the common good.

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45 Organisations from the Green New Deal milieu also propose that the incoming US President should declare a climate emergency immediately after taking office and then push through the key measures to bring about a transformation of society by issuing executive orders in the first few days of the new presidency – see Climate President (2020). This was also the way, i.e. overriding Congress, that Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted most of the New Deal measures after he became President in 1933, until he won a two-thirds majority in the next elections in 1934, which also allowed him to undertake far-reaching legislative amendments and projects. Conversely, President Trump has used executive orders to enact measures going in the opposite direction, for example cutting funding for environmental agencies or releasing funds for the construction of a wall at the border with Mexico despite opposition from Congress. While such a policy approach might be highly effective, it is out of step with the established political process and excludes the elected legislatures, which are supposed to be involved in these political decisions.



However, for decades, cities have also been the focus of strong social movements that fight for participation and liveable environments, be it through resistance to gentrification or the right to the city or in the form of experimental design of urban spaces, for example with city gardens and the occupation of derelict land, as these urban centres often have a progressive population that is open to experimenting with new political approaches. So it is no wonder that visions for 'green cities' played a role in the Green New Deal discussions from the start.<sup>46</sup> The governments of many large cities also lost no time in jumping on the Green New Deal bandwagon: both New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti launched their versions of an urban Green New Deal in April 2019.<sup>47</sup> In October 2019, they integrated the approach into the global C40 network of around 100 major cities, which then also agreed on a 'Green New Deal' (C40 Cities 2019). Although this does allude to the injustices of climate change and the need for an inclusive approach, most of the specific proposals are more about supporting business and technology and tightening guidelines, for example surrounding transport and buildings, than about a programme dealing with social problems such as poverty and housing shortages.<sup>48</sup> Here, too, the problem arises that cities are not responsible for redistributive measures, such as tax changes, and that metropolises primarily compete for certain economic sectors and elites which their policies are focused on. At the same time, there are substantial differences between towns/cities: a wealthy metropolis like Barcelona or Hamburg cannot be compared with a cash-strapped municipality in Mecklenburg or Normandy, which

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46 See, for example, the 'Green New Deal City of 2030' virtual model from the UK-based think tank Common Wealth (2020).

47 The plan for New York envisages a ban on fracking, an end to controversial pipeline projects, and funding for 'green roofs', as well as, in particular, new guidelines for buildings, which must significantly reduce their emissions, but no contribution by the authorities to the cost or implementation of the measures (New York City Council 2019). Los Angeles' Green New Deal includes a rapid transition to renewables and e-mobility, but the specifics of implementation and funding remain vague (City of Los Angeles 2019).

48 Social movements have also criticised the focus on technology and the top-down policy orientation of these proposals. Movements from New York proposed a People's Climate Action Plan as a counter-model that would instead tie in with social movements' long-standing work in the city (Climate Action Lab 2019).

has little scope for action without subsidies or a financial framework beyond the local level.<sup>49</sup>

This brings us to the third level of the Green New Deals. As well as in towns and cities, the social and environmental crisis is particularly evident in rural areas. The environmental crisis refers not just to climate change, but also above all to the extinction of species, which is closely associated with industrial agriculture and current forms of land use. On the other hand, the extreme social differences that form the starting point of the Green New Deals are also a difference between town and country, not only in financial terms, but mainly with regard to the possibility of participation and co-determination, or conversely, in the widespread feeling of being 'left behind'. The dismantling of infrastructure and transport routes that has been going on for decades has played a role here, as have increasingly unequal ownership structures in agriculture and the dependence on a few branches of production, which must be redesigned as part of a Green New Deal. The question of whether a Green New Deal will command majority support or can be implemented depends largely on whether it is possible to develop future prospects for the specific needs of people in rural regions. This also applies to the role of agriculture and the question of what will follow extractivist policies in rural regions (see Chapters 4 and 5).<sup>50</sup>

## FUNDING THE GREEN NEW DEAL

One key issue surrounding the Green New Deal is that of funding. Not only because critics of the project often reject it as unaffordable, but because the question of how such a programme is funded and who has to bear the costs will determine how progressive it really is, and what interests will actually prevail in the negotiations.

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49 For the discussion about cities and the Green New Deal, see also e.g. Hilbrandt (2020), Hughes (2019) and Romsdahl (2019).

50 In addition, there are issues surrounding justice between levels: in this connection, Goh (2020) refers to the widespread problem that while major projects or large-scale redevelopments are often granted approval (for example the expansion of high-speed trains as an alternative to planes, and the construction of green social housing), when it comes to implementation, initiatives from the affected area often put up resistance to these projects. Here he suggests a stronger emphasis on the regional level and networking to be able to more effectively discuss issues surrounding the cost/benefit ratio of projects and to resolve them by adopting a consensus-based approach.

Chapter 1 showed that the Green New Deal must be on a scale that is sufficient to have an effect; based on the New Deal of the 1930s, an approximate estimate of at least five percent of GDP per year can be assumed. In the United States that would be equivalent to around 1 trillion dollars per year and at least 10 trillion dollars over a 10-year period, and in Germany to €170 billion per year, or €1.7 trillion over a decade. These sums may seem large, but they are by no means uncommon in a crisis situation, even in the neoliberal era. The Recovery Act, introducing former US President Barack Obama's stimulus programme after the financial crisis, comprised 840 billion dollars, a total which was also more than five percent of GDP at the time, and bank bailouts during the crisis amounted to up to 29 trillion dollars in the United States (Folkerson 2011). The 2008 German special bank rescue fund was made up of €80 billion, plus guarantees of up to €400 billion, i.e. far more than the annual budget.

Therefore, it is not the sum that decides how social and climate-friendly a rescue package or climate protection programme is, but rather the question of how this money is spent – and where it comes from. If, as in the case of the EU's Green Deal, the funds come from being cancelled elsewhere – i.e. if money from the previous structural fund is suddenly added to the Green New Deal – the impact will be far less than if additional funds are brought in. Moreover, if the funds are to be generated through cuts in the social sector or clawed back through long-term savings, as is currently the case with the coronavirus aid package, this will further exacerbate the social divide.<sup>51</sup> If the Green New Deal is to achieve its goal of tackling both the climate crisis and the social crisis, other forms of funding will be necessary.

The February 2019 resolution, which sparked the most recent discussion on Green New Deals, said nothing about how to fund such a programme. However, proposals and studies in this area have been produced by supporters of the Green New Deals; Sanders (2019a) made detailed funding proposals in his manifesto, and the GNDE (2019) also goes into detail about its Green New Deal's funding.

Most of the Green New Deals rely on a combination of various funding sources:

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51 German Minister of Finance Olaf Scholz has already announced that he plans to keep to the target of the 'black zero', i.e. a balanced budget, and from 2022 onwards, to wipe out the debts incurred during the coronavirus crisis. At local level, for example in Berlin districts, cuts are currently already being made in the social and youth sectors, as there is a lack of income from trade tax due to the coronavirus measures.

## REALLOCATION OF THE BUDGET

Cuts in the right places can make ecological and political sense. One of the key demands of the climate-justice movements is the abolition of fossil-fuel subsidies. According to an International Energy Agency (IEA) study, these have recently increased again, amounting to 340 billion US dollars worldwide in 2017 (OECD / IEA 2019); for Germany, Greenpeace assumes a total of €46 billion per year in a 2017 study (Zerzawy / Fiedler / Mahler 2017). There is also potential for military spending cuts: in the United States, around three quarters of the total budget, i.e. 700 billion dollars per year, goes to the military.<sup>52</sup> In his manifesto, Sanders announced that he would cut the annual military budget by 200 billion dollars and use the money for the Green New Deal – on the basis, among other things, that the abandonment of fossil fuels would mean that there would no longer be a need for the military to protect access to and transmission of oil worldwide.

## FUNDING THROUGH TAXATION

As set out in Chapter 2, the US proposals envisage an increase in taxes for the rich. Sanders' manifesto included a 'Wall Street tax' (a financial transaction tax) and a wealth tax on assets of over 32 million dollars (Sanders 2019b). The GNDE proposes the introduction of an "environmental damages tax" at European level, as well as a financial transaction tax and fines for investments in fossil fuels (GNDE 2019). The proposals from Ann Pettifor (2019) and the GNDE both also point out that governments lose billions every year through tax fraud and tax evasion in tax havens. According to them, tighter checks and legislative amendments can prevent this and ensure that the money can be used for the Green New Deal. The 2008 Green New Deal proposal from the UK also calls for the introduction of a carbon tax or levy (Green New Deal Group 2008), and this is a demand that also features in the GNDE. The US proposals reject this, as it would place a proportionally higher burden on low-wage earners than a consumption tax, could collapse sharply in the event of economic crises and could lead to evasion.

These measures will not be enough to fully fund a Green New Deal on the scale discussed here – and it is quite possible that the programme will have to be even

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52 In Germany, the defence budget as a share of the overall budget is significantly lower; in 2019 it stood at around 12 percent.

bigger to deal with the massive economic crisis in the wake of the pandemic.<sup>53</sup> The remaining sum can be generated in the two ways, apart from tax hikes, that are available to governments in order to fund additional expenses. If they have their own currency, they can increase the supply of money by printing more. Alternatively, they can increase the national debt, i.e. issue government bonds.<sup>54</sup>

### INCREASE IN MONEY SUPPLY

In theory, the first of these two options is not open to many countries, given that in most industrialised nations, central banks are independent of governments and do not operate under their instructions, instead aligning their policies, out of conviction or because this is enshrined in their constitution, to specific monetary-policy goals. For example, it is the task of the European Central Bank to keep inflation at a certain level whenever possible. In theory, 'printing money' is not allowed. However, in practice the United States, which has, in the form of the dollar, the world's reserve currency, has repeatedly resorted to this means when necessary – as was the case during the financial crisis, when money was simply printed to rescue banks.<sup>55</sup> During the euro crisis, the European Central Bank, too, did exactly that with its quantitative-easing strategy by increasing the amount of money, i.e. printing it. Therefore, the authors of the UK's Green New Deal advocate not only recognising this practice but also formalising it by placing the central banks at the service of the Green New Deal and funding it with cheap loans and, if necessary, with an increase in the money supply.

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53 This is also suggested by the experience from the 1930s. Although Roosevelt managed to put the economy on a more stable footing with his New Deal programmes and unemployment figures fell slightly, the measures were not enough to get the United States out of the recession or to reduce unemployment significantly. In fact, even at the height of the New Deal, the unemployment rate was still around 15 percent. Critics attributed this in part to the fact that Roosevelt did not pursue a classically Keynesian policy and tried to avoid a higher level of national debt. He abandoned this goal only when the United States entered the Second World War in 1941. The country then took on spiralling levels of debt – in 1943, the debt stood at 120 percent of GDP – and unemployment soon fell to almost zero. Looking back, it is unclear whether this was ultimately due to the more generous funding or the war.

54 This could also take the form of special 'green bonds' or happen at local as well as national level, as proposed by, for example, the UK-based Green New Deal Group (2008).

55 The then Chair of the US Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, for example, publicly stated this in a video interview in 2019 (CBS News 2009).

Thus, the decision to undertake a Green New Deal is always a decision to adopt a changed economic and monetary policy. That is exactly what most proponents of the Green New Deal are aiming at: after decades of neoliberal policies, they feel that governments should revert to the economic and monetary policies practised in many Western economies between the 1930s and 1970s. Originating with the British economist John Maynard Keynes, this economic-policy approach envisages a much more active role for the state than the neoliberal approaches that have dominated economic policy and economics in general since the 1980s. Since the financial crisis, Keynesian approaches have attracted renewed attention. The Green New Deal proposals address two key aspects of Keynes' theory. This theory assumes that the state must make an active intervention in an economic crisis and revitalise the economy with increased expenditure, because in a crisis, tax revenues fall and the state has to cut the budget, further exacerbating the crisis. In order to break this vicious circle, the state must take out loans and increase the national debt in the short term, and pump the additional money into the economy through investments in infrastructure, for example. If this policy results in the crisis being overcome, tax revenues will rise again and the national debt will fall.<sup>56</sup>

A key difference from the current rescue packages is that the incurred debt is not to be offset by budget cuts but by overcoming the crisis, stimulating economic growth and thereby boosting tax revenue. Since the late 1990s, Modern Monetary Theory (MMT), originating in the United States, has emerged as a post-Keynesian trend that aggressively advocates higher national debt.<sup>57</sup> Some supporters of MMT even go so far as to argue that the state can borrow virtually unlimited amounts of its own currency without becoming insolvent.<sup>58</sup> The US Green New

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56 The strong government investments and an increase in the available money supply can sometimes lead to inflation at the beginning. According to Keynes, this can be countered with incentives to reduce or postpone consumption, and if necessary, also with increased taxes and price and wage controls and rationing, as witnessed during the Second World War. A detailed explanation of Keynesian proposals and their application to a possible Green New Deal can be found in a working paper by the Levy Institute (Nersisyan / Wray 2019). That source also provides a detailed listing of different estimates of the costs of the various components of the Green New Deal.

57 For an overview of the main features of MMT and other links, see OXI (2019).

58 This goes beyond classical Keynesian policy, which envisaged an anti-cyclical model: higher government spending in a weakening economy, and lower spending once the economy has overcome the crisis.

Deal proposals in particular are heavily influenced by MMT. Stephanie Kelton, a leading proponent of MMT, was an advisor to Sanders' campaign.

### NEW BORROWING AND ISSUING (GREEN) SOVEREIGN BONDS

However, even those proponents of a Green New Deal who do not follow MMT's argumentation in the relatively narrow sense or who are even critical of some of that theory's assumptions, advocate moving away from a 'black zero' policy and having a higher national debt. The European proposals in particular are based on issuing sovereign bonds to fund the Green New Deal, for example in the form of 'green bonds'. In fact, issuing sovereign bonds has long been seen as a vital contributor to economic development, because it both enables investments and offers investors safe investments that, for example, pension funds or life insurance companies can rely on. If interest rates on sovereign bonds are below the rate of inflation, as is the case at the time of writing, only part of the original amount has to be repaid when long-term bonds are issued. As the financial sector is currently suffering from a lack of safe investments, the interest rates for attractive countries such as Germany and the United States are now actually negative, meaning that these countries pay no interest on borrowed money, and even receive money for free. "There has never been a smarter time in history for the government to borrow to invest" is how Powell, Krebel and van Lerven (2019: 4) frame this.

Therefore, for countries like Germany or the United States it would be no problem to fund a Green New Deal by issuing additional sovereign bonds and thus increasing new debt. Unlike loans for short-term consumption, such investments – whether in education, research and development, or modern infrastructure – would pay off in the long term, as the resolutions from the United States and the Green New Deals from the UK both make clear.

The situation is different for countries considered by rating agencies and investors to be less safe bets. Italy, for example, could hardly borrow money during the coronavirus crisis, and when it could, it had to do so at very high interest rates. The situation there was only stabilised when the European Union decided, for the first time in its history, to issue European sovereign bonds for which all EU Member States will be jointly liable. The GNDE proposes issuing such bonds at European level to fund the Green New Deal too (GNDE 2019).

However, the possibility of funding additional investments by issuing sovereign bonds has been increasingly restricted in recent decades. Maintaining budgetary discipline and minimising national debt, along with ensuring low inflation, are key goals of neoliberal economic policy, and so the argument goes that no more should be spent than is earned through taxes.<sup>59</sup> The EU treaties and the German 'debt brake' have enshrined this principle in law at various legislative levels. In the past, this was often cited as a reason why a large-scale, debt-financed investment programme was not possible. Breaking with this dogma and creating more leeway for active government policy in the face of the various crises has been a central concern of Green New Deal proponents in recent years. "We can afford what we can do" is the opening sentence of the book on the Green New Deal by Ann Pettifor (Pettifor 2019). Even more so than the financial crisis, the coronavirus crisis has shown that the unaffordability argument is nothing more than a political expedient. In the face of the pandemic, almost every government around the world suddenly discarded its self-imposed rules and substantially increased new borrowing. And what works for the coronavirus crisis also works for the climate crisis: if politicians have the will to act, funding will follow.

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<sup>59</sup> For this purpose, the situation of an individual household is often used for comparative purposes, with reference being made in the German context to the thrifty 'Swabian housewife'. This comparison does not work, given that spending on consumption cannot be compared with investments that subsequently generate higher income, nor can a household or Swabian housewife contribute to economic growth through additional expenditure and therefore expect more tax revenues.



# DISCUSSIONS AND CRITICISM



The Green New Deal has sparked a broad debate, especially in the United States. It has elicited enthusiasm but also severe criticism and, subsequently, suggestions as to how the initiative could be refined.

This chapter addresses four aspects of these discussions: how the Green New Deal relates to the capitalist growth model; what contributions the proposals make to the discussion from a feminist perspective; what their input is from an anti-capitalist perspective; and finally, whether and how a Green New Deal can avoid reproducing the racist and colonial structures of the New Deal.

## GREEN GROWTH OR DEGROWTH?

Starting in Europe, a broad movement for less growth has emerged in recent decades. This degrowth or post-growth movement is diverse, and the various actors that consider themselves part of it are involved in projects with very different focuses. What unites them is the belief that long-term (economic) growth, a requirement of capitalism, is incompatible with an environmentally sustainable way of life.<sup>60</sup> The Green New Deal, critics from some parts of this movement argue, does not break the growth paradigm but rather perpetuates it – just in at least what appears to be a slightly more eco-friendly way. The contradictions of the Green New Deal, argues Rufus Jordana, in an article on the openDemocracy website, are embodied in the “lie of infinite growth”; he asserts that creating millions of well-paid jobs will require strong economic growth, which in turn, he believes, rules out environmental and climate protection: “A growing capitalist economy means environmental destruction. There is no such thing as ‘green growth’” (Jordana 2019).

This criticism is not unjustified. The New Deal of the 1930s and the post-war policies that followed on from it led to a sharp rise in consumption (of resources and by private individuals) and traffic; during the course of the New Deal, average economic growth was almost eight percent. Green New Deal supporters’ allusions to these ‘good old days’ are almost made through rose-tinted spectacles as they conceal the fact that the New Deal had only one goal at the time: to get the economy going again. In contrast, the aim of a Green New Deal is to combat the

<sup>60</sup> For an overview of concepts of degrowth and post-growth, see, for example, D’Alisa, Demaria and Kallis (2015) and Kallis (2018). Further information can be found, for example, at [www.degrowth.info](http://www.degrowth.info).

climate crisis. The New Deal's approach of pumping money into the system to increase demand is not a solution this time round.

However, some of the supporters of such agendas are hoping that the Green New Deal will lead to strong growth – whether to achieve full employment or to recoup the amounts needed to fund it. Until now, economic growth has almost always led to an increase in emissions, and it is open to question whether this link can be broken.<sup>61</sup> In addition, it will scarcely be possible to stop climate change if the Green New Deal is not accompanied by a clear move away from fossil fuels. One of the main weaknesses of the Ocasio-Cortez resolution (Ocasio-Cortez 2019) is that it, like the Paris Agreement, never mentions the term fossil fuels. This is also criticised by those who support the Green New Deal in principle<sup>62</sup>

Many of the Green New Deal proposals also rely relatively uncritically on new and old technologies that are supposed to enable the transition to a low-carbon economy, from smart grids and solar panels to utopias of maglev trains in vacuum tubes and, in extreme cases, the massive expansion of nuclear power (Phillips 2019). The question is very much whether such an eco-modernist approach is enough to stop ecological crises, or would actually create new crises.<sup>63</sup>

However, there is a broad spectrum of possible Green New Deal proposals, and although only a few of them openly call for a reduction in the consumption of resources, most of them contain measures that move in that direction. As indicated in Chapter 2, the more radical proposals' demands extend to the state

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61 Studies reach different conclusions about this. While some find that decoupling has never really succeeded so far (see e.g. Burke / Shahiduzzaman / Stern (2015)), there are others listing counter-examples (see e.g. Aden (2016)).

62 As a statement by the Indigenous Environmental Network (2019) says, “while we are grateful to see this support by the Representative and Senator, we remain concerned that unless some changes are made to the resolution, the Green New Deal will leave incentives by industries and governments to continue causing harm to Indigenous communities. Furthermore, as our communities who live on the frontline of the climate crisis have been saying for generations, the most impactful and direct way to address the problem is to keep fossil fuels in the ground.”

63 Opinions differ even when it comes to the question of whether renewable energies can completely cover current levels of energy consumption in Europe or the United States: the land requirements would be enormous, and large quantities of commodities, imported from the Global South, would be necessary. While some offer quite optimistic forecasts (Prentiss 2015), others conclude that a complete transition to renewable energy is virtually impossible with current consumption levels, whether due to the problem of land requirements (Capellán-Pérez / de Castro / Arto 2017), the high demand for rare commodities (de Castro et al. 2013) or the lack of storage options (Casey 2018).

rationing fossil fuels and energy. Ann Pettifor, also a co-author of the 2008 Green New Deal proposal for the UK, argues in her more recent proposals (Pettifor 2019) for a “steady-state economy”, i.e. an economy that does not grow but remains stable within defined ecological limits. Less radical approaches focus on replacing private consumption and individual, resource-intensive activities with more ecological and communal activities: well-developed, low-cost or free public transport instead of individual transport; local production and regional marketing instead of food imports; increased promotion of activities in the care sector instead of the development of new technologies.

Giorgio Kallis, one of the masterminds behind the degrowth movement, does not see why a Green New Deal must be linked to growth – at least not if its funding is not based on the assumption of future growth, as is the case in some of the proposals. He argues that the New Deal was designed to stimulate growth. However, a new Green New Deal does not have to be like the old New Deal:

“To stop climate change, we not only need to clean production, but also *to reduce and transform consumption*. We need free public transport, new diets, denser modes of living, affordable housing close to where the jobs are, food grown closer to where it is consumed, reduction of working time and commuting, low-energy ways of living and finding satisfaction, curbs on excessive incomes and on ostentatious consumption. It is not as though the Green New Deal is an agenda designed to fight climate change alone – it is a green Left agenda that we should pursue even if there were no climate change. And we have to pursue it independently of whether or not it is “good for the economy,” because we put people before the economy.” (Kallis 2019)

According to Kallis, the Ocasio-Cortez resolution addresses many of these aspects – he says it “goes in the right direction” (ibid.).



Political theorist Gareth Dale (2019) argues that in many ways the leftist currents within the degrowth and Green New Deal movements overlap: they rely on self-organisation and feminist economies, care aspects and the ‘good life’ for everyone, and they stress that their policies will above all benefit the losers in the current system.<sup>64</sup> Another link between the two approaches could therefore be the inequality of emissions. As shown in Chapter 1, emissions depend on income, and excessive consumption and energy consumption are associated with inequalities in wealth distribution. The advocates of degrowth also make it clear that there are many who need not less but more: “For the rich, much much less, while for the billions who lack the basics: more good food, better housing, abundant clean water, efficient sanitation, excellent public transport, quality public amenities available freely to all” (ibid.).

This is precisely what should be a core aspect of the Green New Deal – and conversely, a degree of honesty would serve it well. This means, for example, being up front about the fact that for the richest one to 10 percent, including many supporters of the Green New Deal, a successful GND would entail some material sacrifices – even if this only meant flying less. It also applies to the fact that deliberations on the Green New Deal should include questions that have so far barely been touched on, even if it does not claim to have an answer to all of them: What role can and should digitalisation play, and how will its resource-intensive infrastructure be dealt with? What position does a Green New Deal approach take vis-à-vis artificial intelligence, and how does it handle data and algorithms? Is technological progress being promoted unconditionally, or are there limits? Are carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies and nuclear power regarded as ‘green energies’? And what about genetically modified plants, geoengineering and medical research?

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64 This last point – i.e. the connection with poor and precarious workers – is, as Dale observes, much less pronounced among degrowth activists – see Dale (2019).

## FEMINIST AND INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Networks of feminist groups got involved early on in the mobilisation for a Green Deal, with a view to highlighting the blind spots of the initial Green New Deal proposals and introducing feminist positions into the debate. In July 2019, feminist and other groups from the climate-justice movement came together to discuss the Green New Deal proposals. Then, in September 2019, they published the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal (Feminist Green New Deal 2019).<sup>65</sup> This is based on 10 principles that are meant to guide the design and implementation of the Green New Deal, and many of which substantially overlap with the degrowth approaches. They include intersectional gender analysis of all planned actions, which takes account of the differing extents to which various groups are affected by climate change and climate policy; gender-equality policies such as putting an end to gender pay inequality; developing a welfare system, along with introducing parental leave and free childcare; and confronting institutional racism. In addition, indigenous groups are to play a central role in the Green New Deal, including the recognition of indigenous land rights, the enforcement of the principle of free, prior and informed consent<sup>66</sup> and the recognition of the “Rights of Nature”. One focus of the agendas will be on measures that are controlled and implemented by local communities and will include existing local mobilisations, especially in the domains of energy, housing and education. In addition, the Feminist Agenda explicitly rejects “false ‘solutions’” that enable the drivers of climate change to persist regardless while perpetuating oppressions. It specifically mentions emissions trading, nuclear power, natural-gas extraction, carbon capture and storage technologies and other “techno “fixes”” such as mega-dams, geoengineering and bioenergy.

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65 This document states, among other things, that the Green New Deal in the United States “has sparked an important, overdue national conversation” and “offers a foundation for movement-building, education, strategic advocacy, and immediate action”. It goes on to say that at a time when “the climate crisis has broken onto the national stage, critical feminist and climate justice voices have stepped up to offer an intersectional and feminist perspective to the policy discussion” (Feminist Green New Deal 2019).

66 Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a principle of international law that gives indigenous communities wide-ranging rights to have a say in projects on their land, including the right to withhold consent – unlike most principles currently applied, which only require affected groups to be ‘consulted’. The FPIC concept forms part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169.

These demands are very general and do not always set out a clear position, for example with regard to their relationship to capitalism or the question of whether and how care work is to be recognised or remunerated. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the role and importance of care work has increasingly shifted to the front and centre of public discourse, at least for the time being. In an open letter to governments, anti-capitalist feminist groups renewed their calls for a care income, given the unequal impact of the pandemic and bailouts (Global Women's Strike 2020).<sup>67</sup> They also refer there to the Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE) proposal. Stefania Barca writes that this "represents a historic opportunity for an eco/feminist economic revolution" that shifts the focus of the economy "from industrial production to social and ecological reproduction, i.e. the maintenance, recycling, repair and restoration of environmental, infrastructural and social resources, in short, to the work of care – both for people and for the environment" (Barca 2020). In this case, care work is defined very broadly and goes beyond caring for children, the sick or older people to caring for urban and rural environments, communal spaces, soil, water, forests or biodiversity.

The more radical – and often avowedly feminist – part of the Green New Deal movement in the United States sees a clear contrast between 'life-making' activities and the pursuit of profit that is intrinsic to capitalism. Thus, Tithi Bhattacharya (2019) argues for a social system in which survival no longer depends on the survival of capitalism. She writes: "As a political vision, the GND prioritizes the growth and flourishing of living beings, human and nonhuman, rather than the growth and flourishing of dead things like the "economy" and "commodity production."" She cites the example of socialist Alexandra Kollontai, who fought for communal laundries and kitchens – a vision where society helps with the work of reproduction instead of leaving it to individual families. Alyssa Battistoni (2017), also a pioneer of the US Green New Deal, sees the GND as part of a transition to an economy centred on social reproduction. However, she also points out that transitioning to that type of economy will "require a real reckoning with the ways that the work of serving others has been shaped by gender and race" over

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67 They call for recognition for unpaid or low-paid care work, which is mostly done by women and marginalised groups, as "a necessary and ineliminable social function, but at the same time invisible and ignored by anti-crisis measures – even when the pandemic and quarantine result in an unprecedented burden on such work" (Barca 2020).

centuries, and the development of new forms of recognition and corresponding remuneration for such activities.<sup>68</sup>

It will therefore point the way for the primary direction in which the Green New Deal will move, namely towards production or reproduction – and to what extent it is successful in this regard not only in promising a change to the level of recognition in these domains but also in dealing with the much more difficult task of ensuring that this is followed by action. What would a care income that not only ensures survival actually mean? How would social priorities shift if, as part of a Green New Deal or due to long-term transformations, nurses or educators actually received the same salary as engineers or senior managers?

## ANTI-CAPITALIST CRITIQUE

As the two preceding sections have shown, Green New Deal approaches can reach out beyond capitalist social paradigms. There are those on the left who are sceptical of proposals for a Green New Deal because they fear that these would end up being nothing more than a support programme for green economies, or a bailout package of a moderate social-democratic nature with a slightly green coating. Others who aggressively advocate a society beyond capitalism have actively participated in mobilisations in this regard. They argue that there is scope for, and that it is worth adopting, the concept and pushing towards more radical blueprints. Leah Temper and Sam Bliss write in an article: "The GND can serve as a vehicle for dreaming up a desirable future, inspired by degrowth, environmental justice, and other visionary ideas about radically different societies than our own" (Temper / Bliss 2019). Green New Deals, so the argument goes, have the potential to initiate a radical transformation of the system.

However, they do not have to do so. "Will A Green New Deal Save the Climate, or Save Capitalism?", asks the title of an article on the left-wing website Counterpunch (Cooke 2019). The question is legitimate because the New Deal, to which the Green New Deal refers, was not primarily intended to eliminate social inequality or to overcome capitalism but to save that very system. Schlesinger, the chronicler of the New Deal years, describes the United States in the months

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68 Not every man who previously worked in coal mining or production will suddenly be ready to make beds and care for older people, Battistoni writes, and new types of recognition and better pay will be necessary to change that (Battistoni 2017).

before Roosevelt's election as a country in which a radical break with the system seems possible at any moment:

"On the countryside unrest had already flared into violence. Farmers stopped milk trucks along Iowa roads and poured the milk into the ditch. Mobs halted mortgage sales, ran the men from the banks and insurance companies out of town, intimidated courts and judges, demanded a moratorium on debts. When a sales company in Nebraska invaded a farm and seized two trucks, the farmers in the Newman Grove district organized a posse, called it the "Red Army," and took the trucks back. [...] In January, Edward A. O'Neal, an Alabama planter, head of the Farm Bureau Federation, bluntly warned a Senate committee, "Unless something is done for the American farmer we will have revolution in the countryside within less than twelve months." [...] William Green, the ordinarily benign president of the ordinarily conservative American Federation of Labor, told a third committee that if Congress did not enact a thirty-hour law, labor would compel employers to grant it "by universal strike." [...] Over champagne and cigars, at the Everglades in Palm Beach, a banker declared the country on the verge of revolution; another guest, breaking the startled silence, advised the company to "step without the territorial boundaries of the United States of America with as much cash as you can carry just as soon as it is feasible for you to get away." "There'll be a revolution, sure," a Los Angeles banker said on a transcontinental train. "The farmers will rise up. So will labor. The Reds will run the country – or maybe the Fascists. Unless, of course, Roosevelt does something." (Schlesinger 1957: 3 et seq.)

Looking back today, we cannot be sure whether such a revolution would have materialised or how this would have turned out. Roosevelt was elected, and he did do something. The measures in his First New Deal stabilised the banking system and got the economy going again. However, this did not put an end to the protests and strikes, which continued to grow. Roosevelt responded by launching programmes aimed at bringing about redistribution and improving the standard of living, and by establishing the United States' first social security system. According to one interpretation that persists to this day, these social aspects of the New Deal were due to the strength of the workers' movement at that time – and the fear of the propertied classes that without workers' consent to these measures the revolution they so feared would become a reality.

Most activists from the Green New Deal milieu know that just winning majorities in parliaments will not be enough to ensure the implementation of a far-reaching climate-protection programme. Temper and Bliss (2019) write: "The GND must be accompanied by a revolutionary movement focused on the spirit as well as the details of a policy package that the ruling class will try to water down anyway. This means making big demands and taking to the streets, along with Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, and environmental justice activists around the world, rather than simply designing an "optimal" GND."

However, there is no sign at the moment of the left mobilising on a similar scale to that seen in the 1930s. Although there were isolated mobilisations and uprisings after the 2007/2008 crisis, these, at least in Western countries, did not come anywhere near shaking the system.<sup>69</sup> Anyone looking at the specific demands of the Green New Deals can see that while many of them might be radical for the United States, they hardly go beyond what is already standard practice in European countries with a social-democratic tradition. "Every single American's health insurance would be sponsored by the government" is what Tara Golshan wrote in April 2020 (Golshan 2020) about the United States envisaged by Bernie Sanders' manifesto. "Prescription costs would be limited to \$200 a year. Having a baby would come with six months of paid parental leave, guaranteed. Public

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<sup>69</sup> Right-wing movements in particular have been on the rise in recent years. Youth movements advocating greater climate action may have reached sizeable proportions, but most of their adherents come from the middle classes and, so far at least, they have been tentative in making demands that go beyond the status quo.

day care, public preschool and public colleges and universities would all be tuition-free. Every public school teacher would make at least \$60,000 a year. [...] The minimum wage would be \$15 an hour. Your boss couldn't just fire you for no reason [...]. Twenty percent of the country's labor force would be in a union [...]"

Other aspects of the Green New Deal would be more progressive: the regularisation of millions of young people previously living in the United States without a secure residency status, cuts to the military budget and tax rises for the rich and for businesses. All of this is still a far cry from a radical anti-capitalist agenda. That said, these measures would still represent a huge improvement in the living conditions of millions of people in the United States. The same would apply to people in Europe if a genuine Green New Deal heralded the end of European austerity policies. Therefore, it is a strategic decision whether, given the worsening climate crisis, it makes sense to embark on such a process in order to push for the furthest-reaching measures possible (e.g. for changes to ownership structures), as long as the balance of power and circumstances allow this. The GNDE proposes special funding for cooperatives, and the (re)nationalisation of infrastructure or energy companies is a demand accompanying many of the Green New Deal proposals – see, for example, Aronoff et al. (2019).<sup>70</sup>

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In the UK, the Labour motion in 2019 envisaged the renationalisation of public transport and the six largest energy companies. What at that time was considered outrageous in some conservative circles has become an accepted policy tool in the face of the coronavirus crisis: In Spain, President Pedro Sánchez has unceremoniously forced private hospitals to create capacity for COVID-19 patients, while Italy has taken over the former state airline Alitalia. Meanwhile, in the United States, Kate Aronoff has suggested taking this opportunity to nationalise the oil industry (Aronoff 2020). While this has not yet happened, the examples given here show how quickly seemingly unthinkable measures can become the new 'normal'.

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70 While the focus is mostly on infrastructure and large energy companies, the GND milieu has also made calls for land reform (Van Sant 2019). Thus, Jan Rehmann (2019) for example argues that the Green New Deal being discussed in the United States coincides with what Mario Candeias has called "green socialism", aimed at socialising energy generation, remunicipalising infrastructure and expanding participatory aspects of politics.

In any case, it is to be expected that new climate protection measures will be taken over the next few years, and also that the forthcoming economic stimulus packages will include such measures. It will be up to the left to fight for the furthest-reaching changes possible, for example with regard to the (re)socialisation and democratic control of infrastructure and institutions, or, where the current balance of power does not allow this, at least to ensure that the transformations do not again come about at the expense of the most vulnerable in society and that they happen in a manner that leaves the way open for more radical changes in the future.

## THE COLONIAL AND RACIST LEGACY OF THE NEW DEAL

Global (climate) justice issues hardly got a look in when the debate about a Green New Deal first started (see Chapter 5), as the initial proposals were so geared to the national debate in the United States. However, an item that was part of the discussions from the outset was how to deal with the colonial legacy of the New Deal and its racist elements – and the question of whether and how such errors could be avoided when implementing a Green New Deal. The Black Lives Matter movement's mass protests against racial discrimination and police violence following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 – demonstrations which spread from the United States to other countries – have emphatically shown how important these aspects are for any supposedly progressive policy.

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Economic inequality (and not just in the United States) is closely intertwined with systemic racism. In the United States, the average household income of a white family is 70 percent higher than that of a black family. In 2016, white Americans' median assets came to \$147,000, while those of black Americans amounted to around \$3,500. The coronavirus crisis that emerged in early 2020 has increased this inequality enormously (Rushe 2020).

As black activists have made clear, this inequality is in part a legacy of the New Deal, which improved the standard of living and the security of millions of – white – people. Roosevelt secured the approval of Democrats in the south of the country through the structural racism that was inherent in this programme. The newly established social systems systematically excluded blacks, given, for example, the ineligibility of those carrying out farm work or doing domestic jobs,

i.e. the very occupations held predominantly by black people. Moreover, cheap loans were virtually out of the question for black war veterans because decisions on these were left to often racist local administrative bodies. The possibility of obtaining cheap mortgages through New Deal-era programmes depended on the authorities confirming the creditworthiness of the areas where the applicants lived or wanted to build. As, based on the eligibility rules, areas with a high proportion of black residents were 'redlined'<sup>71</sup> and therefore classified as critical, blacks were ineligible for these programmes, instead being forced onto the private mortgage and housing market, which took advantage of their need for such loans by charging high interest rates and rents and engaging in illegal practices – see Coates (2014) for more details.

However, the New Deal was not only based on the systematic exclusion of blacks and People of Colour (PoC) from programmes to build up the middle class. Many of the achievements of the New Deal came at the expense of indigenous and black communities. Newly built highways cut through and destroyed existing Black residential areas, and thousands of indigenous families were displaced for major projects such as the Tennessee Valley Project dams (Estes 2019). The proposals from the United States and Canada in particular reference this history. In the words of the Ocasio-Cortez resolution, "the Federal Government-led mobilizations during World War II and the New Deal created the greatest middle class that the United States has ever seen, but many members of frontline and vulnerable communities were excluded from many of the economic and societal benefits of those mobilizations".

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71 'Redlining' refers to the practice of "selectively granting loans and insisting that any property [...] insured be covered by a restrictive covenant – a clause in [a] deed forbidding the sale of the property to anyone other than whites" (Coates 2014).

The authors of the resolution pledge that the Green New Deal will not repeat these mistakes, given that, according to this resolution, it will have as a goal:

"to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth" (Ocasio-Cortez 2019).

Indigenous groups in particular have got involved in the Green New Deal process, with calls for the GND to be decolonised or with their own proposals, such as the Red Deal from the left-wing indigenous organisation Red Nation (Red Nation 2019; 2020a; 2020b).

In contrast, there were initially fewer points of contact between the Green New Deal movement and black movements. The mass protests against racism and police violence that spread across the United States and beyond after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 made even clearer not only the urgent need for action to be taken in this area but also the full extent of the mistrust that black communities feel, justifiably, towards the US government and its programmes. The Sunrise Movement called for people to support Black Lives Matter and the protests and to view them as "essential" for a Green New Deal to come about (Sunrise Movement 2020).

Conversely, the protesters scarcely made reference to the Green New Deal. However, the movements' demands overlap in many ways. Without explicitly mentioning the Green New Deal, the Movement for Black Lives (2020) lists the demands a post-COVID-19 recovery programme should meet, and – as in the case of the Red Deal – access to healthcare plays a central role here, as does resistance to gentrification and the possibility of decent housing, the end of the prison system and the reallocation of funds from militarisation and the police to local communities.<sup>72</sup>

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72 Activists have also pointed out that adaptation measures play a key role, especially for black communities and PoC, as they often live in areas that are particularly at risk from heat, flooding or storms, and where the infrastructure that is meant to provide protection from these hazards is particularly poorly developed (Starr 2019).



If the Green New Deal really wants to include these groups, it must take these needs seriously and prospectively incorporate some of these demands such as the abolition of the police, the end of the prison system and the reallocation of funds. As highlighted by indigenous and black activists alike, there must be no “sacrifice zones”, i.e. no places or communities which have to lose out to ensure the nation’s prosperity. Not only must communities be involved but there is a need for “community-defined projects and strategies”, i.e. decided by the communities themselves (Ford 2019). The fact that both the Ocasio-Cortez resolution and Sanders’ manifesto referred to the principle of free, prior and informed consent is a first step in this direction.

This New Deal is also an opportunity to redress the historical injustice of both Roosevelt’s New Deal and other programmes. Black and indigenous communities have been calling for restorative measures and reparations for many decades now. This could involve restoring indigenous sovereignty and land rights, as demanded by the Red Deal, or compensation for those “on whose labor and exclusion the country was built”, which could take the form of financial support to level out disparities in wealth, individually or on a community basis, or of programmes and restructuring to reduce the chance of such disparities becoming entrenched in the future (Coates 2014). Ocasio-Cortez, like presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren, has repeatedly spoken out in favour of reparations, and indeed commentators have pointed out that the relevant passage in the Green New Deal Resolution – the call to make amends for historical repression and exploitation – can be interpreted as a basis for these (Coleman 2019; Ford 2019).

Discussions about racist elements in (Green) New Deals and proposals for overcoming them have so far been restricted to the United States. European proposals have not addressed racism and the question of at whose expense past or future development projects were/will be carried out.<sup>73</sup> This blind spot is astonishing from two points of view: first, because many European countries have a colonial history going back centuries that has shaped the continent to this day; and second, because the question of migration and the rights of refugees in Europe has played an important political role in recent years. How is migration specifically

dealt with by a Green New Deal? Who has access to the jobs created in the jobs programmes – and who does not? On what exploitative conditions in the past and the present is European countries’ prosperity based and how does a Green New Deal relate to this? Only careful engagement with and transparent consideration of these questions can ultimately avoid compromises once again being made in political negotiations at the expense of those who are least able to defend themselves. In *On Fire*, Naomi Klein warns emphatically against a form of eco-fascism, as represented by the assassin in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand. And in Europe there is ample reason for concern that white-majority society’s approval for ‘green’ programmes will ultimately be bought off with racist concessions and isolation, with the coalition government of conservatives and Greens in Austria potentially serving as a model for similar alliances in other countries.

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73 Racism and colonialism are not discussed in the GNDE either. Only the issue of migration emerges, but just in relation to the call for the establishment of an Environmental Justice Commission to collect data on climate migration, among other things.

# GREEN NEW DEALS AND GLOBAL JUSTICE



As the preceding sections have made clear, the Green New Deal is in most cases a project aimed at the level of the nation state or, in the case of the EU, a confederation of Member States. And in most cases it is a project that has been developed in industrialised countries and tailored to their specific problems and needs. However, the responsibilities and the extent to which they are affected by the climate crisis differ considerably between the countries of the Global North and South: while industrialised countries have been, and still are, responsible for a substantial proportion of emissions, the consequences of climate change are already most serious for those regions of the world that have contributed least to this problem. At the same time, activists from the Global South have repeatedly pointed out that the prosperity and wealth of many countries in the North is in large part due to centuries of exploitation of people and resources from the South.

Therefore, early on in the debate about a Green New Deal, there was criticism that a Green New Deal with its national focus would perpetuate precisely this pattern and that the global dimension of responsibility and justice would largely be ignored in the programmes.<sup>74</sup> The Green New Deal, so the argument goes, would not only leave the logic of growth and capitalist structures intact, but would also maintain colonial and imperialist traditions. The production of solar panels or batteries for electric cars also requires raw materials that countries of the Global North do not have enough of. As they have hitherto used military and economic power to secure the supply of fossil fuels, the worry is that in the future the rich industrialised countries will secure access to the raw materials they need for their 'green' economy at the expense of countries of the Global South. Author and researcher Max Aji (2018) warns that if the idea is incorrectly implemented, we will end up with "green social democracy at home and militarized maritime and terrestrial borders, and beyond them, resource extraction for domestic clean-tech".

So in many ways the issues here are similar to those discussed with regard to racism and colonialism within individual countries in the preceding chapter. What is the relationship between the Green New Deal proposals on colonialism and post-colonialism, what patterns do they perpetuate and what patterns do they break with? Who benefits and at whose expense?

74 See, for example, Táiwò (2019), Gebrial (2019) and Kolinjivadi and Kothari (2020a; 2020b; 2020c).

## THE FAIR SHARE AND EQUITABLE PRODUCTION CHAINS

The fact that responsibility for climate change is unevenly distributed is referenced in all Green New Deal proposals. In most proposals, however, the global level plays a subordinate role. Suggestions on how to ensure that the Green New Deal does not disadvantage countries in the Global South or individual groups there often refer to domestic emission reductions, the existing international climate policy institutions and the supply chains for goods that are required for the Green New Deal.

One idea that is often found in US positions is the fair share. According to the Green New Deal Resolution, the United States has historically been responsible for a much higher level of emissions than other countries and is also a nation with a high technological capacity (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). Consequently, it should cut its emissions more sharply than other countries and even more than provided for by existing arrangements such as the Paris Agreement.<sup>75</sup> Sanders, too, argued in his manifesto (Sanders 2019d) that the United States had “for over a century spewed carbon pollution emissions into the atmosphere in order to gain economic standing in the world” and so had a responsibility to take on its “fair share” of emission reductions.

Sanders had announced a significant increase in payments to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) if he was elected President. Similar suggestions can also be found in other Green New Deal proposals, aimed at transferring funds for climate protection and adaptation to countries of the Global South via the existing international climate-policy institutions. The proposal for the UK put forward by the Green New Deal Group (2008) calls for free technology transfer for countries of the Global South, while the GNDE suggests the establishment of an environmental justice commission to ensure that all Green New Deal measures are taken “along the dimensions of international, intersectional and intergenerational justice”. A similar plea is made by the authors of the book *A Planet to Win* (Aronoff et al. 2019) when

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75 There are various ways to calculate what a ‘fair’ share is, and the results differ greatly depending on the point in time from which the emissions are calculated or how each country’s capacities are weighted. The best known is the Climate Action Tracker (<https://climateactiontracker.org>), but the basis for its calculations is not given. The tool from EcoEquity and the Stockholm Environment Institute (<https://calculator.climateequityreference.org>) enables highly differentiated and transparent calculations of a fair share.

they call for a new internationalism and cooperation with initiatives along supply chains in the Global South to ensure “supply-chain justice”.<sup>76</sup>

In addition, a change in the economic and security policy of countries like the United States would have a far-reaching impact on the Global South. The United States remains the main stakeholder and financial backer of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Since the 1980s, it has forced countries of the Global South to implement neoliberal policy measures such as privatisations, reductions in expenditure, and liberalisation through the structural adjustment programmes that these nations had to implement in return for loans; and the EU has done the same with Southern Europe, making countries like Spain, Italy and Greece implement tough austerity policies after the euro crisis. A change in the basic attitude of the countries dominating these institutions could facilitate a different policy – or at least prevent the economic crisis that the coronavirus pandemic has also caused in the Global South from being used for similar measures. In addition, Sanders announced in his election manifesto that if he won, a large part of the Green New Deal would be funded through cuts to the military budget. The call for demilitarisation of the United States both inside and outside that country is not only a key demand of many indigenous and black groups there but also of activists from the Global South.

## GREEN NEW DEALS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Some of these points – such as the demand for global demilitarisation – coincide with demands made by initiatives from the Global South calling for the decolonisation of the Green New Deal (Táiwò 2019; Kolinjivadi 2019). Despite the criticism mentioned above, the idea of a Green New Deal has also been taken up in the Global South and various emerging economies. For instance, proposals and ideas have been put forward for a Pacto Ecosocial del Sur (2020), i.e. a Social, Ecological, Economic and Intercultural Pact for Latin America and the Caribbean, and there has been some initial brainstorming on such a ‘pact’ for Argentina (Svampa / Viale 2020) and on Green New Deals in Tunisia (OSAE 2020) and Malaysia (Lim 2020).

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76 In Canada, the Leap Manifesto (2015) goes further, demanding that all extractive projects be stopped, as do feminist contributions (Feminist Green New Deal 2019) calling for a move away from mining, fossil fuels and the agriculture industry.

South Africa's Climate Justice Charter (Climate Justice Charter Movement 2020) too goes in a similar direction.<sup>77</sup>

Some aspects of these proposals are similar to those from the Global North, for example calls for the expansion of renewable energies, combined with the establishment of a comprehensive and cost-effective energy supply. In fact, many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia have long traditions of strong government intervention and infrastructure programmes. While some have vastly improved people's living conditions, some have also had devastating ecological and social consequences, such as the mega-dams constructed to generate electricity. The proposals for Green New Deals have mostly been developed by grassroots movements building on these experiences, meaning that they draw clear lines in the sand as to what a Green New Deal should not be like.<sup>78</sup> Indigenous self-determination is a key demand in many of these proposals, as are a binding commitment to take into account the decision-making authority of affected communities and a complete phase-out of fossil fuels. These demands are directed both at the countries of the Global North and at their own governments.

72 / Many environmental movements in the Global South – like incidentally the early environmental justice movements in the United States – also associate environmental protection much more closely with health than is the case in the North. This is something, especially in the period of the coronavirus crisis, that we can learn from and an aspect that can be more strongly emphasised in relation to climate change too. The proposal from Malaysia also explicitly points to a problem that is widespread in the Global South but is also playing an increasing role in the North. A substantial proportion of workers in Malaysia are employed in the informal sector; in a system that links access to social security systems to traditional wage labour, this means that a large chunk of the population falls through the social safety net. As well as creating new jobs through government programmes, the main challenge is to decouple social security from wage labour. This challenge

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77 The Climate Justice Charter was drawn up in a six-year process involving various social movements. This makes it older than the Green New Deal proposals, but it does touch on similar issues.

78 As many groups from the Global South were involved in developing the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal, there are substantial overlaps between these proposals – see also Muchhala (2020) in this regard.

also faces the Global North due to the growing erosion of the traditional wage labour relationship, and is all the more urgent given that most Green New Deals put the 'worker' centre stage of their policy.

Finally, agriculture (in particular, agricultural smallholdings) and food sovereignty play a major role in the proposals from the Global South, covering demands for a move away from industrial agriculture and for freedom of access to seeds, land rights and land reforms.<sup>79</sup> Many of the proposals from the Global North could be expanded in this domain, given that although there, unlike in the Global South, only a fraction of the population works in agriculture, nutrition is instrumental to everyone's daily life, being closely related to issues of social justice as well as infrastructure, health, gender roles and identities. Agriculture and land use largely shape urban and rural landscapes; together they account for around 23 percent of greenhouse gases worldwide, and they also play a decisive role in terms of biodiversity.

While publications relating to the US Green New Deals refer to examples such as the Victory Gardens and citizen and city gardens, which met much of the demand for vegetables during the Second World War, suggestions for the social and ecological restructuring of the agricultural and food system are usually relegated to the background in the plans themselves.<sup>80</sup> This is particularly striking at EU level, as agriculture is one of the few areas where the European Union does in fact have a direct and far-reaching influence on local practices. As part of the European Commission's Green Deal, the Farm to Fork initiative was adopted in spring 2020. This is supposed to make agriculture more eco-friendly through new limits and regulations (European Commission 2020a). However, details of its funding and how it will actually be implemented remain unclear. Aside from this new initiative, in October 2020 the Council of Agriculture Ministers adopted the EU's Common Agricultural Policy for the years up to 2028. Under this policy, subsidy payments will continue to be tied to environmental protection requirements only in certain

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79 This applies, for example, to the proposals from Tunisia, which explicitly refer to rural areas (OSAE 2020). Many of the suggestions in this area are based on the demands of the smallholder organisation La Via Campesina – see also Wilt and Aji (2020).

80 In the case of Sanders' manifesto, agriculture is not included in the Green New Deal, and instead is dealt with in a specific Revitalizing Rural America plan which focuses on breaking up seed, food-processing and food-distribution monopolies (Sanders 2019c).

cases.<sup>81</sup> In general, the EU is continuing with its controversial policy of area payments, which not only causes ecological damage but also leads to massive land concentration, the displacement of smallholders and land speculation. So far, no restrictions have been envisaged for factory farming either (Busse / Ribbe 2020).

At the same time, EU and US subsidy practices are having a devastating impact on the Global South, where subsidised exports are destroying markets for smallholders in these countries and increasing poverty. Agriculture thus provides a textbook example of the importance of considering the global impact of our own countries' practices – and the same applies to many areas, including industry and energy generation. Whether economic compartmentalisation through import and export tariffs and thus a stronger orientation towards domestic markets, as suggested by Pettifor (2019), for example, can prevent this is questionable. Although greater regionalisation, for instance in terms of food production, makes sense for ecological reasons among others, a return to the protectionist nation state cannot be a solution to the climate crisis, because this is, by its very nature, a global problem that can only be solved with a global approach. The Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal (2019) states that "there is no such thing as domestic climate policy".

Instead of withdrawing into their national 'shell', it is up to wealthy countries to live up to their responsibilities and work towards a fair global solution. Central to this are a number of demands regarding North-South relations that are mentioned in the proposals from the Global South, and also as part of the calls to decolonise the Green New Deal.

This involves first and foremost the demand for far-reaching debt relief, being put forward for example by South America (Svampa / Viale 2020). Since the debt crisis of the 1980s, debt has been a defining feature of North-South relations and one that prevents development and increases inequalities between the Global North and South. Plans for far-reaching debt relief are currently under discussion as a result of COVID-19, including by the UN development aid organisation UNCTAD (UNCTAD 2020) and movements from the South (Global Action for Debt Cancel-

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81 Critics argue that this is not enough to achieve a reduction in emissions in the agriculture sector – see, for example, the relevant study by the Öko-Institut (Scheffler / Wiegmann 2020).

lation 2020). Second, as called for by the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal, there is a need for recognition of climate refugees. Third and finally, the recognition of climate debt and payment of the appropriate reparations, like the reparations demanded by indigenous and black communities in the United States, are crucial to dealing with climate change fairly.

Not that long ago, such reparations might have sounded like pie in the sky, but a lot has changed in this regard in recent years. Around the world, lawsuits relating to the damage induced by climate change have now been admitted by many courts. Within the framework of the United Nations, climate debt-related issues started being negotiated under the umbrella term 'loss and damage' as part of the Warsaw Process from 2005 onwards, and in 2015 the concept of loss and damage was included in the Paris Agreement.<sup>82</sup> Although the negotiations in this regard have dragged on and progress is hard won, these developments have meant that the recognition of climate debt – and, in the long run, the question of how this can be offset – is a key demand of climate justice movements from the Global South: "it's just a basic demand that should be the departure point for building a different world system" (Wilt / Ajl 2020).

Developing a new political and economic system of this type, particularly as far as North-South relations are concerned, must be the real goal of calls for debt relief and the settlement of climate debt. There must be no talk of cancelling debts being some great act of altruism or because their repayment is unlikely anyway – instead, it must be made clear that these debts were illegitimate from the start. Nor is this a case of remedying past environmental wrongs with a one-off payment, but linking this payment to the establishment of a fairer system that prevents the inequalities that have existed until now from continuing and that gives non-Western countries the scope and opportunity to determine their own development.

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82 See Schumacher (2018).



## A GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEAL?

There is a need to conceive of the Green New Deal beyond the national framework and in relation to systemic changes because even a national Green New Deal cannot be implemented without a change in global economic structures – or at least a change in the way they are dealt with. The trading and financial system as it currently stands would not allow the Green New Deal-related measures to be put in place or would undermine their effects. Many economists fear that raising the level of taxation on financial transactions or wealth would lead to companies and the wealthy withdrawing their capital from the country in question – see e.g. Pettifor (2019). Many of the measures planned within the Green New Deal are considered, in the context of applicable free trade agreements, to constitute trade barriers or to distort competition, which would enable investors to claim compensation or sue the respective governments – see also Tucker (2020). While powerful countries like the United States could potentially disregard such regulations or refuse to make payments, this would not be possible for other nations.

If a Green New Deal policy is to actually be successful and cut global emissions quickly, the global level must therefore play a far greater role in GND proposals than has been the case up to now.<sup>83</sup> A Green New Deal should not only ensure that it does not perpetuate colonial patterns of behaviour and again ‘sacrifice’ individual groups and territories to secure environmental progress, but also work towards changes in the global trade and economic system – and build networks of cooperating governments and institutions that support each other in developing the respective Green New Deal programmes, in a spirit of solidarity.

Thus, Pettifor (2019) strongly advocates reform of the global financial system – something which she sees as a prerequisite for a Green New Deal. Sanders’ election manifesto and the GNDE both demand the termination or renegotiation of existing free trade agreements. Specific proposals as to how this can be implemented and what forms of cooperation and trade should then take the place of

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83 For example, there is a deafening silence surrounding the role of China in all the Green New Deal proposals – nowhere is there any discussion of how the relevant Green New Deal plans to deal with that country, which is now the world’s number-one emitter. In September 2020, China announced that it planned to achieve climate neutrality before 2060. Given the close economic ties between countries around the world and China and the fact that the latter plays a leading role in many areas (such as battery or solar production), the Green New Deal proposals must clarify how China can or will be dealt with, and how cooperation can or will take place, in this regard.

these agreements have not yet materialised. However, there is no question that international trade policy and institutions are powerful tools that can be used to prevent climate protection and a more social policy or, conversely, to enable them, and so must form a centrepiece of campaigns to set the agenda.

Back in 2008, following the initial Green New Deal proposals, there were calls for a Global Green New Deal. In view of the coronavirus crisis, which affects all countries around the world and has plunged the entire global economy into a deep crisis, leading advocates have renewed this call (The Leap / War on Want 2020). So far, however, there have been few specific ideas. There are occasional calls, as part of national Green New Deals, for a ‘Marshall Plan’ for countries of the Global South to help them to rebuild their economies in a climate-friendly way, along the lines of the plan of that name that the United States used to fund the reconstruction of Western Europe after the Second World War. The 2009 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on the Global Green New Deal called for a larger proportion of rescue packages after the financial and economic crisis to be used for ecological measures and for the development of emissions trading systems and markets for ecosystem services, with all of this constituting a ‘Global Green New Deal’ which would be coordinated by the informal Group of 20 (G20) (UNEP 2009). The People’s Policy Project think tank is calling for a Global Green New Deal in which the United States and other countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) pay large sums of money to the countries of the Global South through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) (Fawcett 2019). However, both of these proposals concentrate on ecological aspects and are tied to a (neo)liberal economic policy but are missing aspects of greater social justice or a reform of the international economic system.

What forms of global cooperation are conceivable within the framework of an actual Green New Deal that goes beyond such ‘green economy’ approaches?

First, there is the possibility of expanding or remoulding the existing climate-policy institutions. For instance, many of the Green New Deal proposals mentioned above suggest that, as part of a Global Green New Deal, higher sums could be paid to the GCF, which will then distribute them to countries in the Global South. This approach has the advantage that it can build on existing institutions and tie in with ongoing debates, and that the UN institutions have a high level of name

recognition. The disadvantages are that the processes are often lengthy and bureaucratic and that institutions such as the GCF, which works closely with the World Bank, have little room for manoeuvre in their current form and have scarcely any possibility of changing the status quo. Pushing through a truly global plan via these institutions would fail because there are no bodies that could enforce such a plan or monitor compliance.

A second, more realistic, option put forward, for example, by Pettifor (2019) is mutual cooperation of different countries, confederations and regions with similar goals, supporting each other in implementing their Green New Deals and also recognising that these, depending on the relevant parties' needs and particularities, could take different forms. In an article in *The Guardian* (Varoufakis / Adler 2019), Yanis Varoufakis and David Adler suggest formalising this type of cooperation as an 'International Green New Deal', for example by establishing an institution like the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which was used as a vehicle for funding and coordinating the reconstruction in Western Europe as part of the Marshall Plan after the Second World War. Drawing on this, they propose that a new institution – called, for example, the Organisation for Emergency Environmental Cooperation (thereby sharing the same acronym, OEEC, as the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation of yesteryear) – be established, which would be funded through taxation and issuing green bonds, to organise the transformation to a sustainable economy in the participating countries.<sup>84</sup>

However, real mutual collaboration as part of a global Green New Deal should go beyond this national framework in terms of cooperation and enable other forms of cross-border collaboration at various levels, be it through partner cities, cooperating regions, direct exchanges and collaboration between projects, and individuals and groups from different parts of the world. Further proposals on what forms such collaboration could take, and whether and how it could be institutionalised as part of a Green New Deal, are still lacking.

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84 Varoufakis and Adler (2019) cite three reasons for the international reach of the Green New Deal: the fact that renewable energies can only provide enough power if they are exchanged between countries; the need for joint, publicly funded and freely accessible research; and the obligation to make reparations for the damage that has been caused, especially in countries in the Global South, for example in the form of taking in climate refugees or providing resources for countries in the South to adapt to climate change.

## FINAL DISCUSSION



As has been shown here, the idea of a Green New Deal was initially conceived of as a potential reaction to the financial and economic crisis from 2007 onwards, being developed further over the next 10 years, with global climate movements making it clear in that time that a consistent response to the climate crisis had yet to be found. The political project of a Green New Deal quickly gained momentum, especially in the United States, and 2019 was largely characterised by euphoria. With Bernie Sanders, the 2020 presidential election seemed to have a candidate who was committed to implementing these ambitious plans for climate protection in the United States. In the UK, the Labour Party decided, 10 years after such an idea was first proposed, to fight the 2019 election campaign with a proposal for a socialist Green Deal. Inspired by the successes in the United States, proposals for similar programmes emerged around the world. The 2019 video providing an artistic accompaniment for the Green New Deal in the United States at the time, showed a rosy, green future (Crabapple 2019). In this, an aged Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is seen travelling on a clean express train through a green America with wind turbines, solar panels and comprehensive social security. Looking back, she tells the story of the socio-ecological transformation of the United States: an election victory, the adoption of a Green New Deal, a population supporting the programme, and the smooth implementation by the political institutions.

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Today, a year and the outbreak of a pandemic later, the world looks different. Sanders conceded defeat in the primaries in April 2020. The Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden brought him into his team, but distanced himself from a far-reaching Green New Deal during the first televised presidential debate in October. After winning the election in November, he announced climate action that seemed a breath of fresh air compared with the policies of his predecessor, but it remains unclear to what extent they incorporate the innovative and social aspects of the Green New Deal proposals. In the UK, the country's withdrawal from the European Union dominated the election campaign, and Labour lost the election, forcing Jeremy Corbyn to resign as party leader. In the EU, the new European Commission President filled the Green New Deal space with her own Green Deal project in late 2019, which however just perpetuates the neoliberal climate policy of recent decades while making it difficult for other stakeholders to take up a position themselves with an alternative Green New Deal. A good plan and a number of progressive politicians who support it are not enough on their

own to end neoliberal economic and crisis policies in one fell swoop, as activists in the United States and elsewhere have learnt by painful experience. The Green New Deal and the proposals that have arisen around it are not the end, but only one step in the lengthy and complex fight for an end to the neoliberal, and perhaps one day the capitalist, system.

And despite the setbacks, they represent a big step. While neither Sanders nor Corbyn won their respective elections, the proposals they put forward were far more progressive than anything that has appeared possible in the past 20 years and show how far the movements have shifted politics. Neoliberalism has been in a deep crisis for over a decade and is now dead as a concept and a promise, but lives on in the structures that have been created. The coronavirus pandemic has further exacerbated this contradiction. Even before the crisis, opinion polls showed a high level of public support for a Green New Deal, reaching far beyond the respective electoral base of left-wing parties. The Green New Deal project has managed to forge new, broad coalitions in which various groups and currents from the radical left, feminists and environmentalists through to party politicians, work together, providing their own specific input. Last but not least, the Green New Deal has transformed the vague demands for a different policy into specific demands and programmes with all the contradictions that this entails – and it has, perhaps most importantly, given rise to the hope that the transition to other ways of living is both possible and feasible.

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A lot can be taken from this, and vital lessons can be learnt from the intense debates that have accompanied and further fleshed out the previous Green New Deal proposals, for the development and implementation of similar programmes. For example, such a programme must be flexible and pragmatic enough to be able to react to changing needs and unpredictable events. It must cover more than one level and include mechanisms that prevent the nation-state level from being overly strengthened and thereby avoid the risk of abuse and authoritarian politics. The funding and the question of who pays for the programme essentially determine to what extent the project actually serves the purpose of making societies more equal and fairer again. The project cannot be transplanted 'as is' to other countries, but must be adapted to the respective political and economic circumstances of a region and a country: for instance, demands from the United States for general health insurance make no sense in Europe, conversely, the special political struc-

ture of the EU requires different proposals for funding and implementation from the same project in a nation state. Conversely, while in the United States there is a long tradition of environmental justice movements that address issues of social justice and racism alongside environmental problems, in Germany, for example, environmental protection has long been an issue for educated and well-paid members of society, and this is also reflected in the party landscape and poses different challenges in terms of political coalition building.

Finally, it teaches us what pitfalls of earlier programmes need to be avoided if the Green New Deal is to be perceived as an emancipatory project: a left-wing Green New Deal must not uncritically rely on economic growth and technical solutions, but must work towards an economic system that is ecologically sustainable and socially just in the long term; it must place care work and people's needs centre stage, not just on paper but in the form of specific policy measures; and it must go beyond concentrating on the figure of the worker, which is currently shaping many Green New Deal proposals. It must not focus one-sidedly on climate protection, but must take the complexity of the various ecological crises seriously and look for comprehensive solutions; it must be sensitive about not reproducing existing and historical injustices, but working on and remedying them. Finally, a Green New Deal that aspires to be successful must not stop at the borders of a country; instead, even if it is designed for an individual country, it must be a project that does justice to the global dimension of the social and ecological crisis and target the transformation of existing institutions and the establishment of new ones through mutual cooperation at various levels with a view to global justice and the protection of the planet as a whole.

These lessons and experiences from the Green New Deal mobilisations up to now will be valuable as distribution-related struggles intensify in the years ahead in light of the severe economic crisis into which the world is currently sliding and as governments propose and issue further rescue packages to tackle this crisis. The Green New Deal proposals to date also offer a wealth of ideas and a toolbox of measures for incorporating people's own suggestions into these debates.

Ideas and political projects need time to mature – it is impossible to predict whether they will be implemented one day or whether they will only have an effect as a 'possibility'. The artists who created the video on the Green New Deal

in 2019 posted a second video in October 2020. While similar in style to the first, and while, like the first, it tells a story from the future, the story is completely different this time. It is no longer the story of the Green New Deal, but of the "years of repair" (Crabapple / Tometi / Lewis 2020) – a story that has more protagonists and authors, no longer just from the United States but from different parts of the world. It does not feature politicians but ordinary people, workers, indigenous communities, grassroots movements. They are not fighting for a Green New Deal, for a completed plan, but engaging in many struggles: against neoliberal exploitation and ecological damage, for the end of the prison system and for a health system for all, for reparations for injustices suffered in various parts of the world. It is not, as in the first video, the story of a smooth path to success, but involves more struggles, setbacks, deaths, and resistance from the powerful and those who have something to lose through this policy.

This is a story that is far more riddled with contradictions and less hopeful than the first – and probably much more realistic. And one that frames the Green New Deal as what, in the long run, it truly is: not a panacea for every problem but one piece of the jigsaw in the long and varied struggles for a better world.



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## APPENDIX



# I/ A NON-EXHAUSTIVE OVERVIEW OF GREEN NEW DEAL AND SIMILAR PROPOSALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## EUROPE

Austria, Sozialistische Jugend Österreich (SJÖ), 2019: Green New Deal:  
[https://issuu.com/sjoe.at/docs/green-new-deal\\_final](https://issuu.com/sjoe.at/docs/green-new-deal_final) (in German)

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France, L'Affaire du siècle, 2018:  
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[https://gruene.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/pos\\_090612\\_grundlagenpapier\\_green\\_new\\_deal\\_d.pdf](https://gruene.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/pos_090612_grundlagenpapier_green_new_deal_d.pdf) (in German)

United Kingdom, Green New Deal Group proposal from 2008:  
[https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/8f737ea195fe56db2f\\_xbm6ihwb1.pdf](https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/8f737ea195fe56db2f_xbm6ihwb1.pdf)

102 / United Kingdom, Labour for a Green New Deal:  
<https://www.labourgnd.uk>

European Green Deal of 2019 from the European Commission:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/european-green-deal-call>

Response from the The Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL):  
Towards a Green & Social New Deal for Europe:  
[https://www.guengl.eu/content/uploads/2019/12/New-Deal-for-Europe\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.guengl.eu/content/uploads/2019/12/New-Deal-for-Europe_FINAL.pdf)

Green New Deal for Europe:  
<https://www.gndforeurope.com>

The Grassroots Climate Action Plan:  
[https://klimaplanvonunten.de/pdf/GrassrootsClimatePlan\\_Edition\\_1.pdf](https://klimaplanvonunten.de/pdf/GrassrootsClimatePlan_Edition_1.pdf)

## CANADA

The Leap Manifesto:  
<https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto>

The Pact for a Green New Deal:  
<https://greennewdealcanada.ca>

## UNITED STATES

Resolution of the House of Representatives of February 2019:  
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Bernie Sanders, Manifesto for the 2020 presidential election, Green New Deal:  
<https://berniesanders.com/issues/green-new-deal>

Elizabeth Warren, Manifesto for the 2020 presidential election, Green New Deal:  
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Red Nation, The Red Deal. Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth:

Part I – [http://therednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Red-Deal\\_Part-I\\_End-The-Occupation-1.pdf](http://therednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Red-Deal_Part-I_End-The-Occupation-1.pdf)

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South Korea, Korean New Deal:

<https://english.moef.go.kr/pc/selectTbPressCenterDtl.do?boardCd=N0001&seq=4948>

Australia, Towards a Green New Deal, Australian Greens:

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## AFRICA

South Africa, Climate Justice Charter:

[https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-Climate-Justice-Charter\\_EN\\_August2020.pdf](https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-Climate-Justice-Charter_EN_August2020.pdf)

Tunisia, Tunisian Agrarian Green New Deal, OSAE:

<https://osae-marsad.org/2020/03/07/nouveau-deal-vert-agricole-tunisien/#tunisian-agrarian-green-new-deal>

## LATIN AMERICA

Latin America, Pacto Ecosocial del Sur (Social, Ecological, Economic and Intercultural Pact for Latin America and the Caribbean):

<https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com/#1592362596334-8e141cec-613c> (in Spanish)

Argentina, A View of the Green New Deal From Argentina, 2020:

<https://jacobinmag.com/2020/06/green-new-deal-argentina-gran-pacto>

## URBAN GREEN NEW DEALS

Los Angeles, L.A.'s Green New Deal:

<https://plan.lamayor.org>

New York, Climate Mobilization Act, New York City Council:

<https://council.nyc.gov/data/green>

Alternative blueprint in this regard, A People's Climate Action Plan for New York:

<https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/programming/a-peoples-climate-action-plan-for-new-york-1>

Green New Deal City of 2030, Common Wealth, UK:

<https://www.common-wealth.co.uk/interactive-digital-projects/green-new-deal-city>

## GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEALS

A Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal:

<http://feministgreennewdeal.com>

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## ART

A Message From the Future (video):

<https://theintercept.com/2019/04/17/green-new-deal-short-film-alexandria-ocasio-cortez>

A Message From the Future II: The Years of Repair (video):

<https://theintercept.com/2020/10/01/naomi-klein-message-from-future-covid>

Art of the Green New Deal:

<https://artofthegreennewdeal.net>

The Art of the Green New Deal, Medium:

<https://medium.com/the-art-of-the-green-new-deal/the-art-of-the-green-new-deal-a-next-generation-journal-of-creative-culture-shift-d0a3608a65f9>

Green New Deal Arts, 350.org:

<http://art.350.org/kits/green-new-deal-arts>

## II/ CHECKLIST: SOME QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED ABOUT A PROGRESSIVE GREEN NEW DEAL

- > What are the goals of the Green New Deal? Is it just about the 'green economy' or does it also include measures to increase social justice?
- > By when does the programme aim to achieve carbon neutrality? How is this defined? Are 'negative emissions' included?
- > Is there carbon pricing? If so, is it progressive? What measures are planned to ensure that lower-income groups are not unduly burdened and that carbon pricing is also effective for high-income groups?
- > Does the programme focus primarily on consumers or is it geared towards (far-reaching) changes in production?
- > Who are the key players driving the programme? The state, social groups, private companies?
- > Does the Green New Deal subsidise private companies? What is required of them in return?
- > Does the Green New Deal include clear plans to phase out fossil-fuel extraction? How will these be enforced?
- > Is agriculture included in the programme? Is land ownership also addressed? Is the aim to eliminate industrial agriculture or just to 'green' it?
- > Does the GND include post-growth aspects or content aimed at decoupling growth and well-being?
- > What is the Green New Deal's position on major projects such as dams? What about controversial technologies such as genetic engineering and geoengineering?
- > How are community aspects strengthened, beyond private consumption?

- > How are the losers of the transformation dealt with, for example workers in the oil industry? What guarantees will they be given and what benefits will they receive, and for how long?
- > Does the Green New Deal include plans for job creation? Where will those jobs be created (in the private sector, via government programmes, etc.)? Who will have access to them?
- > Does the GND include redistribution measures? How will they work? What instruments will be used (taxation, etc.)?
- > Are ownership structures affected? Are there plans to nationalise or socialise branches of production (e.g. energy, transport)? Are there plans for land reforms?
- > What is the scale of the Green New Deal? How big is it in relation to GDP? How long will it run? What will happen afterwards?
- > How will the GND be funded? Who will bear the costs in the long term?
- > How will precarity be prevented and economic security increased?
- > How will it ensure good housing for everyone? Who will undertake the maintenance and construction work? Who will bear the costs for (ecological) renovations?
- > What forms of mobility does the Green New Deal seek to promote?
- > How will it be ensured that a strengthening of the state does not lead to abuse or discrimination against minorities? Does the Green New Deal recognise the principle of free, prior and informed consent and the right to say no – not only in one's own country, but also elsewhere?
- > Does the GND seek to enhance the status of and expand care work? How does it define care work? How will the role of care work be strengthened?
- > In what areas are new jobs planned (production, care work, etc.)?
- > Who will have access to Green New Deal privileges, such as jobs? Only nationals of the country concerned? Foreign workers?
- > Does the proposal include reparations for environmental and climate damage?

- > How does the Green New Deal deal with refugees, especially climate refugees?
- > Does the GND go beyond human actors when it comes to questions of justice? Are animal rights and the rights of other non-human beings – the 'rights of nature' – recognised or at least addressed?
- > What measures will be taken to combat species extinction? How does the GND ensure that there is not a one-sided focus on climate protection, but that other environmental problem areas are addressed as well?
- > Does the Green New Deal also provide for global-warming adaptation and protection measures, especially for particularly vulnerable groups (older people, the sick, etc.)?
- > Does the Green New Deal go beyond the national framework? Do the plans provide for other levels (local or regional governments and associations) to help shape the programme?
- > What global aspects does the Green New Deal encompass? How will it ensure that it also contributes to global justice, rather than being limited to national redistribution?
- > How will it ensure that it does not perpetuate colonial patterns of exploitation? Where will raw materials come from?
- > What plans does the Green New Deal contain for changing the global financial and trade system? How should the economic system be changed (in the long term)?

NOTES

NOTES

# ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is an internationally operating, left-wing non-profit organisation providing civic education. It is affiliated with Germany's 'Die Linke' (Left Party). Active since 1990, the foundation has been committed to the analysis of social and political processes and developments worldwide. The Stiftung works in the context of the growing multiple crises facing our current political and economic system.

In cooperation with other progressive organisations around the globe, the Stiftung focuses on democratic and social participation, the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and alternative economic and social development. The Stiftung's international activities aim to provide civic education by means of academic analyses, public programmes, and projects conducted together with partner institutions.

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung works towards a more just world and a system based on international solidarity.

[www.rosalux.eu](http://www.rosalux.eu)

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The Green New Deals are among the few specific proposals setting out how the transition to an environmentally friendly society could happen within a relatively short period without this transformation hitting the most vulnerable members of our society.

While they do have their weaknesses and blind spots, they have succeeded in one thing: over the past two years they have managed to create a new narrative which, beyond all the warnings of disaster, preserves hope based on opportunities for action – a narrative of what a positive future that is worth living could look like, and what steps would be possible and necessary on the way there.

Today, such visions of the future and the potential they can unleash are more necessary than ever. For this reason alone, it is worth taking a closer look at the various proposals for Green New Deals, their arguments, their history, the opportunities they offer and their inherent limitations. That is the aim of this publication.