

Climate Crisis and Just Transitions
Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives for South Africa and the World

Democratic Marxism Series - Volume 3
Workshop Program
31st July - 2nd August 2015

Venue: South West Engineering Building, Post-graduate Seminar Room, WITS University

Background and objectives

The first volume in the Democratic Marxism series delineated a set of themes that need to be researched to contribute to the renewal of Marxism as Democratic Marxism. This included the relationship of Marxism to democracy, commodification of nature, transnational class relations and crisis, Marxism and its relationship to critique, feminism and ecology and Marxism in Africa. The volume produced was entitled: *Marxism's in the 21st Century- Crisis, Critique and Struggle*. The second volume in the series has taken this further with a focus on capitalism's crises, class and left agency today. This volume will be published by October 2015. The third volume in the series will explore the theme of ecology as it relates to the climate crisis, the greening of socialism and democratic eco-socialist alternatives in the South African context.

Capitalism is an exploitative, patriarchal, productivist, ecologically destructive and imperial system. It is also the cause of human induced climate change which has necessitated the imperative of a transition in societies and on a planetary scale. The climate crisis is worsening with the UN even admitting we are heading for a 3.6 degree rise in planetary temperatures and an uninhabitable planet by the end of the century if we do not drastically address carbon emissions. Essentially capital as a geological force is poised to destroy a multiplicity of human and non-human life forms.

So, why has the UN process failed to achieve climate justice? What does this mean for Africa? What are the challenges and limits facing climate justice activism in this context? How do we use the crisis as a transformative moment to bring about national and a global just transition to ensure we sustain human and non-human life and go beyond capitalism?

Moreover, 20th century socialism with its modernising, patriarchal and productivist logic is not up to the task of confronting the climate crisis. Hence the feminisation and greening of socialism is imperative. How does eco-feminism understand socialism today? What are the lessons of greening socialism that can be learned from Bolivia, Ecuador and Germany?

Finally, the just transition debate has taken root in South Africa. Neoliberals in the ruling class are attempting to use the concept to advance a shallow conception of the just transition to secure a green neoliberal capitalism that will secure the interests of the wealthy in South Africa. The National Development Plan epitomises this approach and is buttressed by other policies like the New Growth Path which calls for 'green growth' and 'green jobs'. Thus this volume will seek to articulate a conception of the deep just transition and present Democratic Eco-Socialist alternatives as the content for such a deep just transition in South Africa that would ensure the interests of workers, the poor, the precariat in particular and humanity and nature in general are secured.

The objectives of the workshop:

- Climate crisis and capitalism: Is the climate crisis a crisis of capitalism and capital? How does imperialism fit into this? How should we think about agency and the 'just transition' as systemic transformative responses?;
- Greening Socialism: What are the experiences from other parts of the world in terms of greening socialism? What political economy critiques and concepts have to the fore to clarify the articulation green socialisms? What are the symbolic, strategic and policy choices being articulated? How do these green socialisms relate to the just transition?
- Democratic Eco-socialist Alternatives from South Africa: How is the left greening socialism in South Africa? What are the systemic transformative alternatives being articulated and struggled for at the grassroots to achieve this? How does this link to a deep and transformative just transition?
- Obtain activist and scholarly responses to the draft book chapters;
- Map a way forward for the completion of the third volume in the Democratic Marxism Series.
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Friday: 31st July

8-9.45: Registration

9.45 : Welcome and Objectives – Vishwas Satgar, Series Editor.

Theme 1 : The Climate Crisis Is A Crisis of Capitalism

Chairperson: Jacky Cock

9.00 – 10.00: The Limits of Capitalist Solutions to the Climate Crisis: Dorothy Grace Guerrero

10.00-11.00: Imperial Eco-cide and the Climate Crisis- Prospects for Just Transitions: Vishwas Satgar

Tea break

Theme 2: Greening Socialism

Chairperson: Vishwas Satgar

11.30-12.30: Buen Vivir and Transition in Ecuador : **Alberto Acosta and Mateo Martinez**

12.30 – 13.30: Rights of Mother Earth and Transition in Bolivia: **Pablo Salon**

Lunch

14.30 – 15.30: Green Socialism in Germany : **Mario Candeis and Tadzio Muller**

15.30 – 16.30 : The Climate Crisis and the Struggle for African Food Sovereignty: **Nnimmo Bassey**

Tea- break

17.00: End of Day 1.

Saturday : 1st August

Theme 3: Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives and the Just Transition in South Africa

Chairperson: Christelle Terreblanche

9 – 10.00: The Climate Crisis and a “Just Transition’: An Eco-Feminist-Socialist Perspective : **Jacklyn Cock**

10 – 11.00: Carbon Democracy versus Democratic Eco-Socialism: **Michelle Williams**

Tea Break

11.30 – 12.30: Degrowth and the Just Transition: **Devan Pillay**

12.30 – 13.30: Rethinking Energy Technology -Beyond Nuclear and Fracking: **David Fig**

Lunch

Chairperson: Nnimmo Bassey

14.30 – 15.30: Carbon Budget and Citizens Rights: **James Reeler and Saliem Fakir**

15.30 – 16.30: The Utopian Shimmer of a Universal Basic Income Grant: **Hein Marais**

Tea- break

17.00: End of Day 2.

Sunday : 2nd August

Theme 3 Continued: Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives and the Just Transition in South Africa

Chairperson: Jacklyn Cock

9. 10.00: Reclaiming the Water Commons: **Ebrahim Harvey**

10-11.00: The Blue Economy, Climate Change and Resistance to Ocean Commodification:
Patrick Bond

Tea-Break

11.30-12.30: Ubuntu and the Struggle for an African Ethical Alternative: **Christelle Terreblanche**

12.30-13.30: Confronting the Climate Crisis Through a Zero Waste Society: **Muna Lakhani**

Lunch

Chairperson: Vishwas Satgar

14.30-15.30: The Struggle for Food Sovereignty and the Solidarity Economy Alternative: **Andrew Bennie and Athish Satgoor**

15.30 – 16.30: Public Transport for All and Climate Jobs: **Jane Barret**

Way Forward - **Vishwas Satgar and Jacklyn Cock**

17.00: End of Workshop