

THE NEW ECONOMICS ZINE

PEOPLE. PLANET. POWER.

ISSUE 1
AUTUMN 2019

CHANGE THE RULES:
BUILDING AN ECONOMY
THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

*with articles by: Christine Berry & Joe Guinan,
Miatta Fahnbulleh, Guppi Bola, Frances Ryan,
Jamie Margolin & Ann Pettifor, Sahil Dutta,
Laurie Macfarlane, Grace Blakeley, Alice
Martin, Maya Goodfellow, and many more*



LET'S CHANGE THE RULES



CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	4
NEW ECONOMICS ARE THE METHOD: THE GOAL IS TO CHANGE THE WORLD	LAURIE MACFARLANE 6
WHERE NEXT FOR THE BRITISH ECONOMY?	GRACE BLAKELEY 8
THE EXPLAINER: RECESSIONS	SARAH ARNOLD 9
MOVING BEYOND BREXIT: AN AGENDA FOR NATIONAL RENEWAL	MIATTA FAHNBULLEH 10
TURNING THE TIDE ON COASTAL COMMUNITIES	FERNANDA BALATA 13
IT'S TIME TO DECIDE OUR CLIMATE FUTURES	MARGARET WELSH 14
TWO GENERATIONS SWAP NOTES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CLIMATE CRISIS:	16
> CATHEDRAL THINKING: BUILDING THE GREEN NEW DEAL FROM THE GROUND UP	ANN PETTIFOR 16
> BE YOUR OWN SUPERHERO	JAMIE MARGOLIN 17
WHY WE MUST DECOLONISE ECONOMICS	GUPPI BOLA 22
DISABLED PARENTS LIVING UNDER AUSTERITY	FRANCES RYAN 24
WHO OWNS THE ECONOMY?	MATHEW LAWRENCE 25
WORK, WOMEN - AND REAL CHOICE	ALICE MARTIN 26
THE FUTURE IS OURS	CARYS ROBERTS 28
THE BLAME GAME	MAYA GOODFELLOW 29
PEOPLE GET READY!	CHRISTINE BERRY & JOE GUINAN 30
THE PRACTICALITIES OF POWER	SAHIL DUTTA 33
HOW TO MAKE CHANGE	REBECCA WINSON 34
THE REVIEW: BE THE CHANGE	SOFIE JENKINSON 36

EDITORS: SOFIE JENKINSON AND MARGARET WELSH

ILLUSTRATION: CHARLOT KRISTENSEN (COVER & PG 10, 22 AND 34) & TAMARA-JADE KAZ (PG 18-19)

PRODUCTION: SOFIE JENKINSON

THANKS TO: CLIFFORD SINGER, BECKY MALONE AND FERFAL O'DWYER

PUBLISHED BY NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION

10 SALAMANCA PLACE, LONDON SE1 7HB

WEB: NEWECONOMICS.ORG

EMAIL: INFO@NEWECONOMICS.ORG

TWITTER: @NEF

NEW
ECONOMICS
FOUNDATION

HELLO THERE!

These days it seems like all we're capable of thinking and talking about is Brexit and elections. But behind the scenes, there are people thinking hard about how we can change the rules of the economy so it works better for everyone.

Our economic model is failing us. Between flatlining wages, precarious work and the threat of environmental and climate breakdown, it's clear that the way the economy is being run is serving only a few people at the top, and leaving the rest of us and the places where we live in its wake.

For the last 40 years, the economy has been run according to a misplaced faith in free markets and competition. When neoliberalism took hold, it was because of concerted effort from thinktanks, economists and businesses to argue for an economy where the market is king. After four decades, it's time for a change.

The way the economy works isn't inevitable. It's run according to a set of rules that determine what its outcomes are. These rules are not naturally occurring things – we can change them. By changing the rules that govern the economy, we can reprogramme it to give it a new purpose. We can build a new economy that doesn't just follow the markets – one which is purpose-driven and creates human and environmental flourishing.

This is the thinking behind this brand new zine from the New Economics Foundation. We wanted to use our bumper debut issue to showcase new ideas and platform voices outside of orthodox economics.

This issue is stuffed full of pieces from writers who are able to diagnose where our economy went wrong. Grace Blakeley identifies the beginnings of our current economic problems in the process of financialisation that began in the 1980s, which shifted power from workers to shareholders and creditors. Looking back further, Guppi Bola argues that we need to understand the colonial roots of our current economic system in the 17th and 18th centuries if we want to know how to dismantle it. Back in the present day, in an extract from her new book, Frances Ryan describes the effects of austerity on disabled parents, and the increasing numbers of children taken into care. Fernanda Balata examines the geographical dimension of our economy, in a look at how coastal communities are impacted by

economic and environmental challenges.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Looking ahead, we've got pieces from writers who are rewriting the economic rulebook.

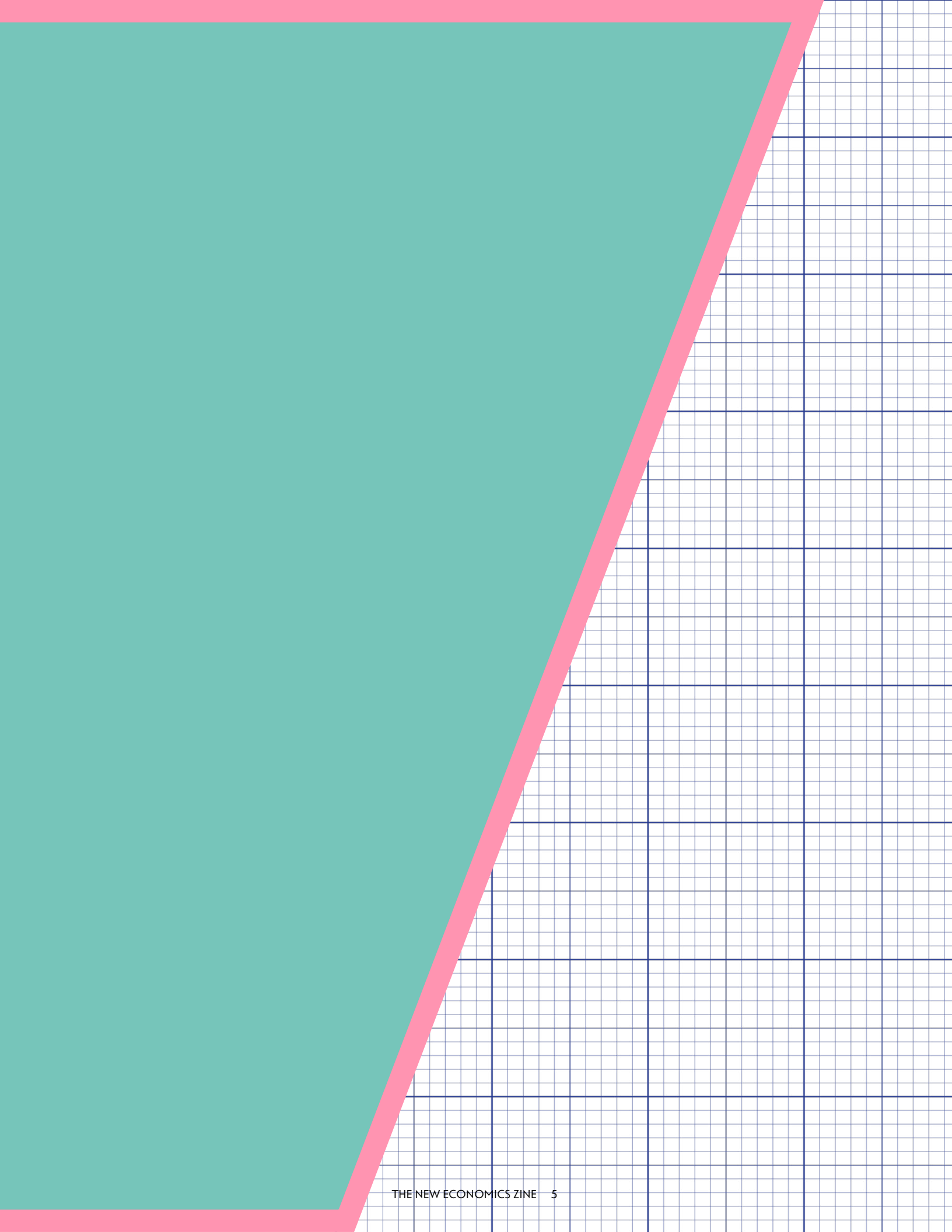
Miatta Fahnbulleh sets out a vision for the UK's post-Brexit economy – one that doesn't allow the domestic agenda to be eclipsed by Brexit infighting. Mathew Lawrence imagines an economy which we all have ownership of. Facing down the climate crisis, members of two different generations, Ann Pettifor and Jamie Margolin, discuss how avoiding climate breakdown means fighting to replace our economic system. But creating this change can often be frustrating, slow, unglamorous work. So Rebecca Winson has written a guide based on her years of organising experience to show that creating change isn't easy, but it is possible if you build power and use it.

We see the word 'change' everywhere these days, so much so that it's in danger of losing all meaning. So it's important that we use this moment of upheaval to define the kind of change we want and how we want to win it. As you read through the pieces in the issue it becomes clear that change is possible, change is hard work and change is coming. So it's time for us to use education, organisation and action to build momentum, strengthen links across movements and challenge the status quo. –

This zine isn't designed to be the usual thinktank academic journal but something for everyone that everyone feels they could write for. Even if you haven't had much writing experience we would still love you to pitch something to us – we are happy to help and support you to contribute. We won't be able to publish everything we are sent in print but we will also be publishing things online. There are more details about how to submit ideas at the back of the zine. Our next issue will be focused on mental health and look at how we can build an economy that factors in wellbeing and your life rather than just your job. We want to dive into this issue properly in the next issue of the zine – so would love for people to share their experiences, their advice, their views and their frustrations. This zine is for you, and for the movement, so we hope you enjoy!

Thank you for reading!

Sofie Jenkinson & Margaret Welsh, Editors



NEW ECONOMICS ARE THE METHOD: THE GOAL IS TO CHANGE THE WORLD



*The set of economic ideas that have dominated politics for the past 40 years are rapidly losing legitimacy in the face of multiple crises, and the idea of economics as a 'value free' science is starting to fade. So, do we need an economic revolution? NEF Fellow and economist **Laurie Macfarlane** looks back at the past 40 years and explores how we can change the rules and put power at the heart of economics*

John Maynard Keynes famously said: "Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."

For the past 40 years, we have all been the slaves of a not-yet-defunct set of economic ideas. These ideas have shaped the way that people think about the economy, and had a powerful effect on politics and government policy.

The Global Financial Crisis of 2007/08 provided a much-needed wake up call. But despite some limited progress, our lives, our classrooms and our politics remain gripped by a set of ideas and orthodoxies that are well past their sell-by date.

Ideology masquerading as science

How the production of goods and services should be organised is one of the most basic questions of economics. According to modern economic theory, goods and services are most efficiently produced by private firms operating in a competitive market. Businesses are hailed as the 'wealth creators' that drive innovation and technological progress. Because the state has neither the knowledge nor the expertise to allocate resources better than the market, it should avoid pursuing policies that try to 'pick winners' or 'distort' market competition. Instead, the state should only act to 'level the playing field' or to correct certain identifiable 'market failures'.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist regimes only served to confirm the supremacy of markets over economic planning. Wherever governments have tried to plan the allocation of resources, the result has been disastrous. In contrast, wherever governments have got out of the way, stopped intervening everywhere and let markets run their natural course, people have flourished. Or so the story goes.

There are many problems with this narrative, but one that is often overlooked is the extent to which capitalist economies are also planned. Despite their pervasiveness, markets are not spontaneous laws of nature; they are, to a large extent, creatures of the state. Throughout history, capitalist markets have been created and sustained through mass, often violent, state intervention. As Karl Polanyi put it: "The road to the free market was opened and kept open by an enormous increase in continuous, centrally organized and controlled interventionism."

Markets are underpinned by property rights, which are defined and enforced by the state. They are further shaped by company law, intellectual property law, employment law, taxation, regulation, the decisions of central banks and so on – and are administered through the use of courts, regulators and various other public bodies. The outcomes we observe in market economies, from the prices of goods and services to the distribution of income and wealth, are a direct product of how this institutional apparatus is constructed. In other words, the invisible hand of the market is directed by an iron fist.

Given that markets themselves are government interventions, there can never be a 'level playing field' in any meaningful sense. The institutional apparatus underpinning markets always favours certain outcomes over others, and ensures that social arrangements stay within set parameters.

The presentation of market institutional arrangements as a natural order that shouldn't be 'intervened in' unless strict criteria are met has been a remarkably powerful rhetorical tool. But in reality it is little more than ideology masquerading as science. The rules matter, and the choices around these rules are inherently political.

At a time when governments around the world are facing major social and environmental challenges, simply trying to 'level the playing

field' will only lock us into our current trajectories. If we are to overcome the key challenges of the 21st century, we need to abandon the myth of the level playing field and instead 'tilt' the playing field towards an ambitious set of collective goals: transitioning to an environmentally sustainable economy, eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, improving health and education outcomes, etc. This means using every tool available – legislation, regulation, taxation, property rights, corporate governance, finance – to re-write the rules of the economy to serve different ends.

Markets may well be the best way of organising human affairs in some circumstances. Where this is the case, they should be treated not as self-regulating forces, but as outcomes that can be created, shaped and actively steered towards desired ends. Where markets do not serve any clear public purpose, they should be dismantled. The decisions to abolish the market for slaves and child labour were not made on the basis of some economic law – they were moral decisions. Today we need the same boldness from leaders on everything from fossil fuel companies to the array of socially useless financial instruments.

But markets cannot resolve all the dilemmas faced by modern economies. Throughout history, many of humanity's greatest achievements have arisen not from profit-oriented competition, but from collective action – whether it is landing on the moon or achieving universal healthcare. And when it comes to the major technological breakthroughs of the past century, most of the heavy lifting has in fact been done by the state. Many of humanity's boldest advances – from the internet and microchips to biotechnology and nanotechnology – were only made possible by early stage public sector investment. In each of these areas the private sector only entered much later, piggybacking on the technological

advances made possible by long-term, high-risk public investment.

But after four decades of neoliberalism, the public sector's capacity has been drastically hollowed out. Key public functions have been delegated to management consultants and parasitic outsourcing companies, while the application of private sector management techniques to the public sphere has placed civil servants in an administrative straightjacket. If we are to transform our economy on the scale that is required we must urgently rebuild public sector institutions, and increase their capacity to think and act big.

Who gets what and why

How should the wealth created in an economy be distributed among the population? This question has been the subject of considerable debate among economists throughout history. In 1817, the economist David Ricardo described this as "the principal problem in political economy".

In recent decades, however, this debate has attracted much less attention. That's because modern economic theory developed an answer to this problem, called 'marginal productivity theory'. This theory, developed at the end of the 19th century by the American economist John Bates Clark, states that each factor of production is rewarded in line with its contribution to production. Marginal productivity theory describes a world where, so long as there is sufficient competition and free markets, all will receive their just rewards in relation to their true contribution to society. There is, in Milton Friedman's famous terms, "no such thing as a free lunch".

The aim was to develop a theory of distribution that was based on scientific 'natural laws', free from political or ethical considerations. As Bates Clark wrote in his seminal book, *The Distribution of Wealth*:

"[i]t is the purpose of this work to show that the distribution of income to society is controlled by a natural law, and that this law, if it worked without friction, would give to every agent of production the amount of wealth which that agent creates".

Marginal productivity theory states that each factor of production will be rewarded in line with its true contribution to production. But although presented as an objective theory of distribution, marginal productivity theory has a strong normative element. It says nothing about the rules and laws that govern the ownership and use of the factors of production, which are essentially political variables.

For example, rules that favour capitalists and landlords over workers and tenants, such as repressive trade union legislation and weak tenants' rights, increase returns on capital and land at the expense of labour. In contrast, rules that favour workers and tenants, such as minimum wage laws and rent controls, reduce returns on

capital and land to the benefit of labour.

In reality, the distribution of wealth has little to do with contribution or productivity, and everything to do with politics and power. This is particularly true when viewed in a global context.

Today the main factor determining someone's standard of living in the world is not what they do, but where they were born. A worker in Malawi will get paid a fraction of a worker in London, even if they perform roughly the same type of labour. Why? Because the worker in London is lucky enough to be born in a powerful country with a legacy of imperialism that has rigged rules of the global economy its favour. In the age of the 'self-made' millionaire, the truth is that the lottery of birth is more important than ever.

For economists who see their discipline as a 'value free' science governed by laws which are separate from politics, this is uncomfortable territory. But if the aim is to understand the global economy as it really exists, and to change it for the better, we need to put power at the heart of economics. Among other things, this means grappling with the power dynamics that underpin ownership, trade and property relations, as well as those that drive inequalities between different countries, social groups and identities.

Political economic paradigms do not last forever. In the past century, Western political economy has experienced two major shifts from one paradigm to another: firstly from *laissez-faire* to the post-war consensus after the Great Depression of the 1930s, and secondly from the post-war consensus to neoliberalism in the 1980s.

Today the set of economic ideas that have dominated politics for the past 40 years are rapidly losing legitimacy in the face of multiple crises: stagnant or falling living standards, sharply rising inequality of income and wealth, financial fragility and environmental breakdown. The need for a new economics has never been more urgent.

Margaret Thatcher famously said that "economics are the method: the object is to change the soul". That was in 1981. Today we need a similar revolution. But this time, new economics are the method: the object is to change the world.

Laurie Macfarlane is Economics Editor at openDemocracy and Head of Patient Finance at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. He is also a Fellow at the New Economics Foundation and a Trustee of the Finance Innovation Lab. He is the co-author of the critically acclaimed book Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing

WHERE NEXT FOR THE BRITISH ECONOMY?

*As we sit between the death of the old economy and the birth of the new, **Grace Blakeley** looks back at the problems with the current system, the reasons for the last financial crisis and what must come next*

The 10 years since the financial crisis have been a lost decade for British capitalism. Productivity and wages have both stagnated for the longest time since the 19th century. Business investment has been low, consumer debt has boomed, the current account deficit has ballooned and the government has refused to spend. As a result, there is a chronic shortage of demand in the British economy, even in the context of extremely low interest rates and the unprecedented monetary experiment that is quantitative easing.

What growth there has been has not been equally shared. Income inequality is high and rising, and wealth inequality is doubly as high as income inequality. The labour share of national income has been falling continuously for nearly 40 years, and the UK is the most regionally unequal country in the European Union. Child poverty is on the rise, life expectancy has stagnated and homelessness has become an epidemic.

It is easy to reduce these problems to the political mistakes that have been made since 2008. Labour nationalised the banks without requiring them to increase their lending. The coalition's austerity programme pulled the rug out from under the British economy before it had had time to recover. And the government's complete failure to negotiate a Brexit agreement has left a pervasive sense of uncertainty hanging over the country.

It is true that these missteps have all contributed to our current malaise, but they did not cause it. In my book *Stolen: How to save the world from financialisation*, I argue that the roots of the current crisis go much deeper. The economic stagnation we are experiencing today can be traced back to the financialisation of the British economy, which began in earnest in the 1980s.

Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, in the wake of a decade of crisis that undermined the legitimacy of the post-war social democratic consensus. Right-wing thinkers who had spent decades attempting to undermine the "wave of

Marxist and Keynesian planning sweeping the globe" latched on to her candidacy to implement their extreme free-market agenda. Thatcher removed restrictions on capital mobility, deregulated banks and financial markets, privatised state industries, cut taxes and went to war with the UK's union movement.

The newly-deregulated, and increasingly internationalised, financial system centred in the City of London experienced an unprecedented boom. The ideology of shareholder value came to dominate the City. Activist investors encouraged firms to disgorge cash flow to shareholders, even if it meant cutting investment and reducing wages. Corporate raiders used cheap loans to buy up shares in British business, before pressuring these corporations to sell off assets on the cheap in order to hand out cash to shareholders and creditors.

The rise of shareholder value led to a massive internal redistribution from workers to shareholders and creditors in most firms, facilitated by Thatcher's war against the labour movement. As the 1980s progressed, the amount of national income accruing to workers in the form of wages began to fall and income inequality increased markedly. But the mounting class divisions that had come to mark British society by the 1990s were elided by the avalanche of cheap credit created by newly-deregulated commercial banks – much of it used to purchase housing through right-to-buy.

Just as in the US, British banks took these mortgages and packed them up into financial securities, which could be sold on international capital markets, freeing up cash to allow them to make yet loans. As the amount of credit directed into housing rose, and with few new houses being built, prices rose substantially. Owners benefitted from capital gains – many released the equity from their homes to finance new asset purchases, or even day-to-day consumption.

The state, meanwhile, was nowhere to be seen. New Labour did not seek to contain the fi-

nancial boom that was then gripping the country. The 'light touch' approach to financial regulation pursued in the 1990s and 2000s meant that regulators had absolutely no idea of, and no interest in, the huge risks being taken in the City at the time. Blair even took financialisation one step further than Thatcher by attempting to introduce the discipline of the market into the state through the disastrous private financing initiatives.

The catalyst for the global financial crisis was US sub-prime mortgage lending, but its origins lie in the financialised growth model pursued in the US, the UK, and many other states around the world in the run up to 2008. All the morbid symptoms seen since then – falling investment, stagnant wages, low productivity in the real economy – can be traced back to the logic of finance-led growth.

Small policy tweaks will not be enough to fix this extractive, exploitative, rent-seeking model. What is needed is a fundamental rebalancing of power in British society away from capital and towards labour. Achieving this task requires completely transforming our economic institutions. In *Stolen*, I argue for the re-imposition of capital controls, the introduction of public banking, and the creation of a 'people's asset manager' that would invest in British corporations to steadily socialise ownership throughout the economy.

2008 was the beginning of the end for finance-led growth. Today we live in the interregnum between the death of the old and the birth of the new. Grasping the gravity of this moment, and using it to build a prosperous, just and sustainable economy, is the central task of the left today.

Grace Blakeley is the economics commentator at the New Statesman, a research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, and author of 'Stolen: How to save the world from financialisation', which is out now on Repeater Books

RECESSIONS

Last quarter, quarterly output (goods and services produced in the economy as measured by GDP) fell for the first time in six and a half years, leading economic analysts to start spouting gloomy predictions. By technical definition an economy is in recession if output falls for two consecutive quarters, and it is looking increasingly likely that the UK is at risk of a recession at some point in the relatively near future. If the next quarterly figures show a further drop in output, we will officially be in recession.

The recession of a decade ago looms very large in our collective memory. And we are still living with the impacts: living standards have not fully recovered and wages are still lower on average than they would have been without the recession. But what actually causes a recession, and what can we say about the impacts of another one?

The story of the last recession — triggered by the US subprime mortgage market collapsing and subsequent financial crisis — is well known. But recessions are not all the same, differing from each other in their causes (from banking crises to oil price fluctuations) and their impacts. The commonality is that recessions are usually triggered by ‘shocks’ to the economy — which is what economists call random, unpredicted events. By definition, this is something the markets did not predict. So we cannot predict exactly when a recession might occur, but we can monitor the risks of a recession and study economic indicators such as business and consumer confidence data, employment and hours worked data, and interest rates to let us know when one might be about to occur.

These shocks to the economy cause a recession if they lead to a reduction in output. So, why does output fall? There are a range of reasons, but ultimately output falls due to a fall in spending and/or a fall in investment. Economists say that recessions happen due to a lack of aggregate demand for goods or services or investment in future production. This can be influenced by all sorts of things: in the last recession the financial crash led to a decline in bank lending — therefore lower firm investment and consumption by families. High interest rates, or sharp increases to interest rates can also reduce borrowing and investment.

But a particular concern with the next recession is consumer and business confidence. Consumers may be concerned about the state of the economy — or the state of the future economy, given the uncertainty over Brexit. Consumers may delay spending, or save for a time when they will need the cash. This is exacerbated as the amount firms produce depend on consumer demand in the economy, and what they choose to invest determines future production plans i.e. firm production depends on what level of goods and services do consumers want to purchase now, and how much will they want to purchase in the future. Reduced consumer confidence may reduce business confidence.

So when facing a lack of demand, firms have two options. They can respond by producing less stuff. And the less stuff that needs to be produced, the less people they need to employ. Or they may respond by reducing the costs of production, either by cutting wages directly (or at least holding them down), or by cutting working hours. It may also be a

combination of both, with firms laying off some workers and holding down wages of the rest.

The fall in output that we are seeing at the moment is likely due to artificially inflated figures in the previous quarters: the economy performed better than expected during 2018 and the first three months of 2019 due to firms stockpiling as a result of Brexit. Worried firms purchasing goods have driven up economic activity. But this appears to be declining and will not be sustained. As uncertainty over Brexit continues, consumers may save more for upcoming economic hardship, ironically decreasing demand and increasing the likelihood of a recession as described above.

The most recent recession in the UK (in 2008) was characterised by relatively low unemployment compared to what could have been expected given its severity — this was likely due to the fact that it was swiftly followed by a fall in the value of the pound. This caused inflation — price rises. But firms did not pass the price increases from selling their goods and services back to the workers. So wages stagnated while prices rose. Because this reduced costs for firms, it limited the number of workers that were laid off. But in an upcoming recession, there is no guarantee that prices will rise in the same way — unemployment may be much higher.

Government policy can mitigate or worsen the impacts of a recession. When people aren’t spending as much, the government can step in and drive demand through its own spending: investing in infrastructure projects for example. In addition, welfare policies can provide a safety net for those who lose jobs or who are on low incomes — giving people more cash to spend on essentials means keeping the economy moving. It is vital for a well-functioning economy that everyone has money, particularly poorer people who are more likely to spend their cash than sit on it.

Unfortunately, austerity policies following the last recession had the opposite effect, curbing government spending and putting a cap on welfare for the poorest. How the government responds to the next recession will be crucial in determining its impacts. And there are two clear priorities for the government when it happens. Firstly, investing significantly in the green energy infrastructure we need. And secondly, improving welfare to boost the money in people’s pockets — for example our Weekly National Allowance policy, which redistributes gains from the tax free personal allowance more equitably, to provide weekly cash payment for everyone.

BY NEF’S SENIOR ECONOMIST SARAH ARNOLD

FURTHER READING

From the Institute of Fiscal Studies: 10 years on — have we recovered from the financial crisis? <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13302>

New NEF analysis on GDP: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/09/when-adjusted-for-the-lived-experience-of-inflation-gdp-per-head-today-is-still-128-below-2008-levels>

From Resolution Foundation: A problem shared? What can we learn from past recessions about the impact of the next across the income distribution? <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/a-problem-shared/>

From NEF: Nothing Personal: Replacing the personal tax allowance with a Weekly National Allowance <https://neweconomics.org/2019/03/nothing-personal>

MOVING BEYOND BREXIT: AN AGENDA FOR NATIONAL RENEWAL

*The vote to leave the EU should have been a wakeup call. Instead, we're three years on and little has changed. Brexit is making it harder to deal with our economic and environmental challenges. **Miatta Fahnbulleh** presents a post-Brexit agenda, where national renewal is driven by a Green New Deal, a new social contract, a democratic economy and a social purpose for business*



Brexit has dominated the political agenda for almost three years with no clear way out of the impasse. As Boris Johnson's government plays a reckless game of chess with a parliament determined to prevent a 'no deal' Brexit, the political infighting of the last few years looks set to intensify over the next.

In all this squabbling over how to leave the European Union, the message sent by voters in that historic referendum has been lost. Yes, the vote was about Europe. But it was about much more than Europe. It was a rejection of the status quo and a clear demand for something better than an economy that does not work and a system that feels rigged against people. The referendum should have been a wake-up call – a pivotal moment for change.

But three years on and very little has changed. The urgency of the domestic agenda has been completely eclipsed by the political fight over Brexit. And for those communities held back, things have got worse not better. 14 million people now live in poverty¹ as families that have seen a decade of wage stagnation struggle to make ends meet. 1 in 3 children now live in poverty – 67% of whom live in working households.² Precarious work is on the rise, with 5 million people estimated to be working in insecure jobs.³ The housing crisis continues unabated. Cuts to public services continue to bite, hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. Meanwhile, wealth has continued to concentrate at the top, with the richest 10% now owning 45% of the country's wealth, while the poorest half of households own just 9%.⁴

Yet Brexit is making it harder to deal with these challenges. All the economic indicators point to the fact that the uncertainty around Brexit is already hitting our economy. The Office for Budget Responsibility's own assessment is that GDP growth has slowed since the referendum as the UK has moved from being close to the top of the G7 GDP growth range in 2016 to close to the bottom in 2018.⁵ And when we do leave, all credible forecasts suggest that this will hurt our economy further – though the scale of the impact will depend on the version of Brexit we choose. Communities already under pressure will struggle to cope with the fallout. The rancour and discontent that erupted in the referendum will

become more entrenched.

These formidable economic challenges are coinciding with environmental collapse and a climate emergency that will require rapid change over the next decade. Last year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that the world must halve carbon emissions in a little over a decade to have a chance of limiting temperature rises to 1.5°C. This year, the UN warned that nature is declining globally at rates “unprecedented in human history”. A million species are now at risk of extinction and we are depleting our natural resources 1.5 times faster than the planet’s ability to regenerate them.⁶ These are epoch-defining challenges, and responding to them will require far more ambitious action from governments that will touch on every aspect of our daily lives.

Whether we leave the European Union or not, these challenges will not go away unless there is a deliberate effort to confront them head on. In this time of fundamental shift, there is a huge moment of opportunity to refocus our politics away from Brexit and back onto the big issues that matter.

An agenda for national renewal

We desperately need an agenda for national renewal that can transform the economy, calm the rancour and knit the country back together. To be transformative, this agenda must have four key elements – each representing a pillar of a new social settlement that could come out of Brexit.

The first is a Green New Deal in response to the climate emergency: an unprecedented mobilisation of resources – at a scale we have never achieved in peacetime – to decarbonise the economy at pace whilst creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and lifting living standards across the country. The Green New Deal must be ambitious with a stretch target for meeting net zero by 2040 at the very latest. To achieve this, the government must make a just green transition its core mission and commit a minimum of 2% of GDP, ramping up to 5% over the next 5 years, to large scale investment in green infrastructure, technology and skills alongside a package of incentives and regulation to bend markets that have been slow to act in response to the climate imperative. Fiscal policy should

work hand in glove with monetary policy, with the Bank of England playing a critical role in guiding finance in support of a Green New Deal through caps and quotas for dirty and clean investment as well as a deliberate policy of directing newly created money into green finance. Through this investment programme, we can create better jobs to replace the ones that will be lost from ending our use of fossil fuels; give people a stake in the green economy that will emerge through common ownership of green assets and co-operative ways of organising the new industries that will spring up; and transform the very nature of our economy in its wake.

Second, we need a new social contract to replace the one that has broken. The promise that if you work hard and play by the rules, you will get ahead and that your children will do better than you, no longer holds for huge swathes of our society. To renew it, we must start with a better deal for workers to tackle sluggish wages and the power imbalance in the job market. This will mean actively using the levers of the state – corporation tax, regulation, subsidies – to incentivise businesses to reward their workers fairly.



At the same time this will strengthen the power of workers to protect their interests through automatic union recognition and stronger collective bargaining in the workplace. A fairer share of the rewards from their labour should not just come in the form of higher wages but in reductions in working time. The post-war trend of reductions in working hours was halted in the 1980s with the free market deregulation agenda that began under Thatcher and was sustained by successive governments for over 40 years. We must reverse this trend through national policy – including a Working Time Commission that would increase statutory holidays in response to gains in the economy – and industrial campaigns led by unions in their workplace.⁷

Critically, this social contract must seek to give workers greater ownership of the organisations in which they work. Employee Ownership Funds, which would see a share of profits each year transferred to workers as equity into a worker or stakeholder trust, is a potential catalyst for this change.⁸ Shares would come with voting rights, enabling employees over time to become the dominant shareholder, with the power to shape the direction of their business. Finally, a new social contract must extend beyond the workplace to the creation of a wellbeing state which enshrines and guarantees everyone the basics for a decent quality of life. This would include a minimum income floor below which no one can fall irrespective of whether they are in work or not, delivered in part through a weekly national allowance.⁹ This should be combined with universal basic services – guaranteed access to social housing, health, social care, education, childcare and public transport for all – funded and provided collectively.

Third, any programme of national renewal must seek to push power down to people and communities in order to give them a real stake in the economy. This will mean a rapid and radical devolution of power to regional and local government. Devolution of certain taxes could be combined with devolved funding and new powers over education, skills, employment support, immigration, energy, housing, planning and local transport. And to ensure that further investment flows into local areas, the government should renationalise RBS and turn it into a network of 130 local co-operative banks, owned by communities with a clear environmental and social mission.¹⁰

To be meaningful, devolution must come with the creation of strong local institutions, tasked with driving economic change in different places. The creation of city and county regional authorities would create the institutional architecture to drive change from the local level upwards. These authorities should work alongside reformed local enterprise partnerships that would bring together civic leaders, representatives from local business and trade unions in a social partnership focused on transforming their economy.

Local leaders, in turn, must seek to use the procurement and investment power of the local state to boost jobs, shift ownership and green their local economy. This could be achieved through municipal corporations owned by and accountable to local people providing everyday essentials such as renewable energy, housing and transport. But it could also be achieved by pump priming workers co-operatives through their supply chain.

Finally, any agenda for national renewal must have at its heart a new deal with businesses that

enables corporations to regain social purpose and build social and environmental responsibility into their business model – with social value taking primacy over shareholder value. This will mean using legislation, regulation and taxation to incentivise all businesses to operate in ways that the best businesses already do. It will also mean local defaults, with local authorities setting out their expectations of businesses in return for the license to operate in their area; as well as businesses actively setting new norms and industry standards.

The scope for an ambitious agenda for national renewal is clear. Our politicians must lift their heads above the Brexit fog to rise to this challenge. But this will only happen if a growing social movement of people who believe change can and must happen are willing to come together to demand it. We have a window of opportunity to change the rules of the economy – we must act to seize it.

FURTHER READING

1 From the UN: UN Rapporteur report on poverty in the UK (2019) <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1>

2 From the Department for Work and Pensions: *Households Below Average Income*, An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2016/17, Tables 4a and 4b.

3 From NEF: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/06/insecure-work-are-we-at-tipping-point>

4 From the Office of National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/was/wealth-in-great-britain-wave-4/2012-2014/index.html>

5 From the Office of Budget Responsibility: <https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/the-economy-forecast/brexit-analysis/>

6 From the World Wide Fund for Nature: *Living Planet* (2012) https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge-hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_time-line/lpr_2012/

And from the UN: *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (2019) <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>

7 From NEF: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/08/fix-productivity-crisis-by-giving-workers-more-paid-holiday-and-higher-wages>; <https://neweconomics.org/2019/09/the-time-were-owed>

8 From NEF: <https://neweconomics.org/2018/07/co-operatives-unleased>

9 From NEF: https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/WeeklyNationalAllowance_NEF.pdf

10 From NEF: <https://neweconomics.org/2015/02/reforming-rbs/>

“In this time of fundamental shift, there is a huge moment of opportunity to refocus our politics away from Brexit and back onto the big issues that matter”

TURNING THE TIDE

ON COASTAL COMMUNITIES

*For decades, coastal communities have been some of the most deprived places in the country. They are also some of the most affected by our rapidly changing climate. **Fernanda Balata** argues that restoring coastal communities' ecological health can make them more resilient to shocks – both economic and environmental*



ur economy has not been working for the UK coast for decades.

For many years now, coastal areas have been some of the most deprived places in the country. Transport routes and services, which are needed for a well-functioning and well-connected economy, are unevenly distributed across the UK, mostly to the benefit of London. Coastal communities are literally on the edge of the country – some of the most remote or difficult places to reach.

Just like the vast ocean at their doorstep, coastal communities seem to suffer from being 'out of sight, out of mind' to the UK economy. This geography of exclusion has trapped coastal communities in a cycle of disadvantage. Many places have never truly recovered from the loss or decline of traditional industries and jobs, like fishing, mining or shipbuilding, since the 1970s. As a result, they were hit hardest by the last decade of austerity policies.

Our economy has been (mis)managed in such a way that wealth has accumulated in just a few areas of the country. Sadly, areas that are most in need of investment – like coastal ones – become the least attractive for it. That means that businesses struggle to thrive; economies lack diversity, making them more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks; and there are little or no opportunities for the good and well-paid jobs that incentivise young people to stay in their communities.

Coastal residents are also the most affected by our rapidly changing climate and coastline. More frequent, increasingly extreme weather affects coastal infrastructure, such as local energy supplies; adds greater costs to already fragile economies; and poses challenges to isolated areas and those with older populations.

As climate breakdown becomes more severe, frequent flooding is likely to bring down house prices, affect tourist attractions, discourage further investment, and impact people's wellbeing. Rising sea levels are forcing many people to make difficult decisions, such as having to leave their homes and communities, as they

battle with coastal erosion.

The current rules of the economy leave the fate of vast areas of our country to the invisible hand of the market, while visible hands of government choose to invest in a few already wealthy areas. The good news is that we have not got here by accident. And that means we can change things.

For several years, the New Economics Foundation has been working with a vast network of people and institutions to identify and drive solutions that deliver better jobs, increased wellbeing and a fairer economy for coastal communities. Like communities themselves, solutions vary from place to place. But all along the coast, there is a common understanding that the starting point for a sustainable coastal economy must be healthier coastal and marine ecosystems.

In 2016, NEF launched the UK-wide Blue New Deal vision and action plan. Co-developed with hundreds of people on the coast, the first

to flourish once again on our coast, as opposed to hard structures that can no longer contain the strength of the tides? And what if we can then work with these strong tides to generate renewable energy to power our homes?

This is all possible. There are people and organisations working right now to deliver this vision. But those on the coast already supporting a better, cleaner, greener and bluer economy are struggling. What policies still have not been able to address is that the problem for many coastal communities is that they lack the power and resources to address their complex challenges.

Ultimately, coastal communities alone can't build cross-country railways or raise the level of money needed to restore coastal habitats. Public investment must be available and directed to build the capability of places, people and communities on the coast.

Earlier this year, the government called a climate emergency. Now it's time to act. We must urgently design and implement a national plan

“All along the coast, there is a common understanding that the starting point for a sustainable coastal economy must be healthier coastal and marine ecosystems”

priority of the plan is to put coastal communities in control of defining what matters to them and what kind of place they want to live in.

What comes next must be exciting and hopeful. What if we can inject new investment and jobs into the areas most in need by supporting and helping to restore the health of ecological systems: supporting local fishers that have a lower impact on the ocean, new leisure and tourism businesses that invest in and help protect nature, and bringing new opportunities and skills so that local people can work to diversify the types of services and businesses they need? What if we can make coastal areas more resilient to sea-level rise by allowing nature

to decarbonise our economy and way of life in a fair and sustainable way: a Green New Deal. And that national transition must be accompanied by a positive vision and an industrial strategy that builds and shapes a new, better and sustainable economy.

Fernanda Balata is Senior Programme Manager at the New Economics Foundation. She leads NEF's work on coastal economies, which is aimed at reconciling social and economic prosperity for coastal communities with marine conservation

IT'S TIME TO DECIDE OUR CLIMATE FUTURES

*Over the last year people have started to take the climate crisis seriously – the science is finally winning the argument. But listening to the science doesn't automatically provide us with solutions. There is a spectrum of climate futures open to us, from collectively decarbonising the economy to ecofascism and climate apartheid. It's up to us to shape them. Here, **Margaret Welsh** looks at where we should start*



In 2012, Superstorm Sandy hit New York, destroying hundreds of thousands of homes and other buildings. Low income and African American residents were hit hardest and stranded without access to healthcare. Large parts of the city were without power for several days. But not the headquarters of Goldman Sachs. While the storm raged across the city, Goldman Sachs was protected by 25,000 sandbags and drew power from its own generator. UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty Philip Alston in a report this year warned that the difference between the storm's impact on the wealthy multinational company and the poorer residents of New York could be a sign of things to come.

Mainstream environmental talk about climate change has often presented us with two futures: one where we do nothing and create climate chaos (bad), and one where we fully decarbonise and stop it in its tracks (good). But the greenhouse effect isn't binary – there is a spectrum of climate futures lying in wait. And now that climate crisis seems to have mainstream attention, it's clear that not all of the responses to it will be positive. It's time for the climate movement to go beyond just talking about 'the science', as if the science presents us with an objective set of solutions. We can't be technocratic – there

are political and moral decisions that will shape our climate future, and decide whether it will be equitable, fair and just.

There are good reasons why the mainstream climate movement ended up in this position. When it's an uphill battle to even get people to believe you, it's easy to fall back on asking people to just do something – anything! The general reluctance of people in power to really understand the scale of the problem has meant that for years climate campaigners have just spent time fighting for scraps of any attention. And the climate denialism funded by fossil fuel interests has meant that campaigners have leaned heavily on hard science to back up their points. But they have also replicated the mistakes of the broader environmental movement, which really got going in the 1960s but detached itself from the social justice movements of the time. Instead of thinking about environmental racism, or the impacts of pollution on people's everyday lives, the movement focused on broad concepts like 'wilderness' or 'the planet'. And the climate movement emerged from this – think how the polar bear on an iceberg became the ubiquitous symbol of climate change. Its dominance suggested that climate change was a story of 'us' against 'the planet', rather than a story where the people who contributed the most to the

climate crisis will not feel its effects.

It's now shorthand to speak casually about climate chaos in apocalyptic terms. The root of the word 'apocalypse' means 'uncovering' in Ancient Greek. In our post-apocalyptic stories, a cataclysmic event removes the trappings of wealth, privilege or power from our societies, and reveals our basic human selves. And it feels like there's a sense of this in some climate work – a nihilistic appeal to the idea that the climate emergency is going to a great leveller that affects us all – rich and poor – alike, and then those polluting billionaires will really know what hit them.

But the UN report that described the effects of Superstorm Sandy says that if we rely too much on the private sector, "We risk a 'climate apartheid' scenario where the wealthy pay to escape overheating, hunger and conflict while the rest of the world is left to suffer." Like Sandy in New York, the impacts of increasingly extreme weather have not been distributed evenly. When wildfires raged across California at the end of 2018, Kim Kardashian-West and Kanye West's \$50 million mansion was successfully defended by private hire firefighters. These private fire-fighting services are operated by insurance companies, and often are only eligible for properties worth at least \$1 million. In Miami, the threat of rising sea levels has caused wealthier homeowners

ers to abandon their beachfront properties in favour of those further inland, in areas historically occupied by low-income communities of colour. This process has been dubbed 'climate gentrification'. Silicon Valley CEOs are buying and building bunkers, often in New Zealand where they hope that the islands' location and terrain will shield it from some of the effects of climate catastrophe and subsequent social unrest. This is climate adaptation, but only for the rich.

Beyond the threat of 'climate apartheid', we face a possible future where the far-right gains increasing amounts of power at the same time as climate catastrophe hits. Historically far-right forces have been climate deniers, but this is beginning to change. European far-right movements are beginning to identify borders as "the environment's greatest ally", and proposing a one-child policy for developing countries in order to tackle 'overpopulation'. The shooter who carried out an attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand this year called himself an "ethno-nationalist eco-fascist" in his manifesto. Eco-fascism often sees migrants as a threat to the 'preservation' of local ecosystems. In tandem, it regards the climate-driven movement of people as something to defend against with ever more violent border regimes. It's been remarked that, far from not having a climate policy, the wall on the Mexico border is Trump's climate policy.

Climate writer Kate Aronoff says that "The horror of climate change isn't in the intrinsic violence of hurricanes or heat waves, but in the

ways societies choose to deal with and prepare for them." Articulating a problem won't make a just solution inevitably follow – we have to shape the parameters of the solutions ourselves. This means transitioning to a zero-carbon economy in a way that doesn't create sacrifice zones, where the wealthy can't buy their way out while the rest of us suffer, and where the transition is just. Donald Trump's declaration of his wish to buy Greenland was met with bafflement and mockery – but as the melting ice across the Arctic makes fossils fuels and rare earth minerals more accessible, we should resist the colonial disaster capitalism that will swoop in to exploit it.

But we won't get there by repeating the mistakes of the past. The way we articulate the problem and the way forward matters. Extinction Rebellion describes its demands as "beyond politics" – but presenting your analysis as politically neutral will only support the hegemonic view of the powerful. Groups like the Wretched of the Earth and Reclaim the Power connect the climate crisis to indigenous and migrant struggles. The Out of the Woods collective have documented the risks of ecofascism and its parallels with mainstream environmentalism. We should listen to those who have been working to explain climate change as a relationship of power, and warning against environmental racism.

Margaret Welsh is a Communications Officer at the New Economics Foundation. She is interested in communicating the complex dynamics of climate politics.

FURTHER READING

From the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (2019): Climate change and poverty. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/A_HRC_41_39.pdf

From the New Yorker: Doomsday prep for the super-rich by Evan Osnos (2017). <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/30/doomsday-prep-for-the-super-rich>

From Dissent Magazine: The European Far Right's Environmental Turn by Kate Aronoff. (2019) https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/the-european-far-rights-environmental-turn

From Libcom's Out of the Wood blog: <https://libcom.org/outofthewoods>

TWO GENERATIONS SWAP NOTES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CLIMATE CRISIS

*The climate crisis has been forced back on to the front pages by Greta Thunberg and the climate school strikers. Here, **Jamie Margolin**, a teenage climate activist, and **Ann Pettifor**, a seasoned economist and member of the original Green New Deal group, share their motivations for fighting climate chaos and their visions for a zero carbon economy. Overleaf, Jamie and Ann interview each other with illustrations by **Tamara-Jade Kaz***

CATHEDRAL THINKING

*In 2008, **Ann Pettifor** was part of the Green New Deal group that called for a government intervention to tackle both the climate crisis and the financial crisis. Now, with the Green New Deal making waves in the UK and the US, she describes how we must escape from the control of the financial universe if we want to create a system based on economic and ecological justice*



Avoiding climate breakdown will require cathedral thinking. We must lay the foundation while we may not know how to build the ceiling." So said Greta Thunberg in a speech to the British Parliament in April of this year.

The Green New Deal is cathedral thinking. It is an ambitious plan. One that demands major system change: both economic and ecological. It is a plan that requires structural changes to the globalised economy, not just behavioural, community or technological change. The Green New Deal calls for system change: radical change across sectors and at a global and national level; change that involves state action.

The Green New Deal was developed in Britain in 2008 by a group of environmentalists and economists of which I was proud to be a member. It was written on the understanding that finance, the economy and the ecosystem are all tightly bound together. The Green New Deal group, argued that protecting and restoring the ecosystem to balance cannot be undertaken effectively without the transformation of the other sectors. Joined-up policies are needed. Financing the hugely costly overhaul of the economy away from its dependence on fossil fuels cannot be achieved without the subordination of the globalised finance sector to the interests of society and the planet.

We can – and to survive, we must – transform

and even end within the next 10 years the failed system of capitalism that now threatens to collapse earth's life support systems and with it, human civilisation. We must replace that economic system with one that respects boundaries; one that, as George Monbiot argues, nurtures "soils, aquifers, rainfall, ice, the pattern of winds and currents, pollinators, biological abundance and diversity" – with a system that delivers social and economic justice.

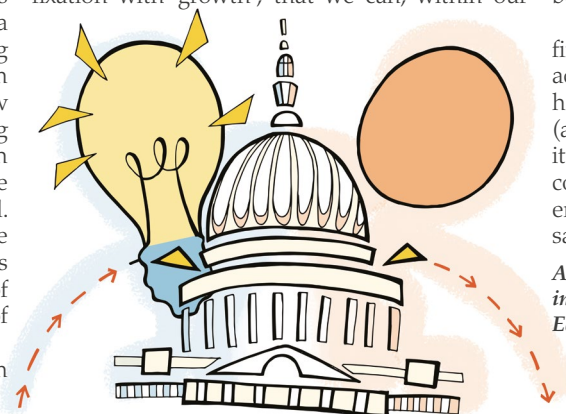
By escaping from the control of the financial universe, we will find that we can afford to create a new, more balanced system of international economic and ecological justice. We will discover that we can afford to end the globalised economy's addiction to fossil fuels; that we can afford to transform our economy away from its fixation with 'growth'; that we can, within our

own finite physical and intellectual limits, begin to restore our damaged ecosystem to health; that we can work together, collectively, to protect ourselves, our families and communities and the environments in which we survive, grow, create and develop.

There is hope. And it rests not on a utopian vision of humanity, but on our knowledge of human genius, ingenuity, empathy, integrity and courage. The growing youth climate movement is a demonstration of this courage. We know that it is possible to transform the globalised financial system because we have done it before – and in the relatively recent past. In the 1930s, US President Roosevelt created the 'New Deal', a massive programme of public investment in response to the Great Depression. That is the theme of my book, *The Case for the Green New Deal*.

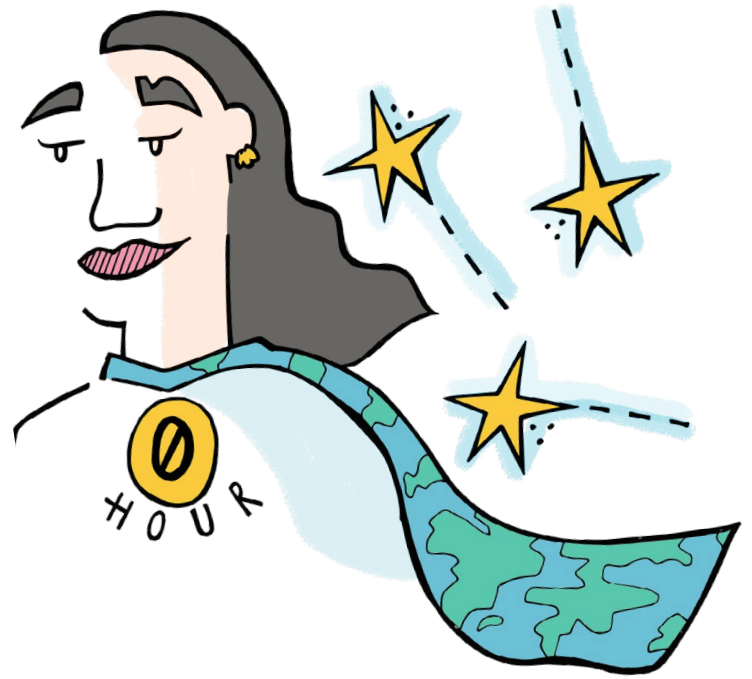
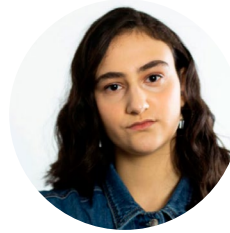
To transform the current economic and financial system we must ignore defeatists from across the political spectrum. We must understand how and why the system was transformed before (almost overnight), in order to be confident that it can be transformed again. That knowledge, that confidence, that cathedral thinking can and will empower millions of people, and drive action to save the planet.

Ann Pettifor is Director of PRIME: Policy Research in Macroeconomics and a fellow of the New Economics Foundation



BE YOUR OWN SUPERHERO

Like many climate strikers
Jamie Margolin, founder of the youth climate organisation *Zero Hour*, was driven to action by the idea that the world would be ending when her life was just beginning. Here she talks about the massive economic transformation that must take place to tackle this crisis



I fight for climate justice because my generation's life depends on it. I fight for climate justice because I have no other option. If you were watching a movie, and all of the characters in it knew there were only 10 years left to save the world, but they continued going on with their lives as if nothing was happening you would yell at the screen, right? I would.

We on planet earth are living out that movie. Climate change and environmental destruction are quite literally ending the world – and the United Nations has made it crystal clear through years of extensive scientific research that we have a maximum of 10 years left in order to turn the tides on the climate crisis and save humanity and every creature we share this once-blue earth with.

I'm 17 years old, a senior in high school, and I am growing up in a world whose life systems are unravelling. In 10 years, I'll be 28. My life will just be beginning when the world is ending.

It is not fair to my entire generation that we are inheriting this monstrosity of a problem. It's hard enough trying to grow up and live your life, let alone inherit this crisis that makes it so your future will be full of chaos and disaster.

That's why I, along with 12 other young people and the help of the non-profit Our Children's Trust, recently sued the state of Washington. Why? Because the whole state government is screwing over my generation.

Washington state's elected officials love to talk about solving the climate crisis, but then turn around and issue permits for fossil fuel plants that poison communities, and destroy ecosystems, water, air and land that my generation and future generations need to survive.

What's even crazier? The lack of necessity. They are destroying our life support systems with a fossil fuel energy system that is wholly unnecessary to provide for our basic energy needs. Experts across the planet say that we don't need to power our planet with dirty life-threatening fuels. Our lives and futures are on the line and we need to be rapidly moving away from fossil fuels, Washington is locking in decades more of

fossil fuel usage and destruction that our planet can't afford.

And keep in mind that this Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) plant is being built without the consent of the indigenous people of this land. The Puyallup tribe, that has already been through so much at the hands of our colonial government system, is fighting tooth and nail against the LNG plant and all new fossil fuel infrastructure because they know what's at stake. I can't risk not fighting. My future is on the line.

The most terrifying aspect of the climate crisis for me is not the environmental impacts of the climate change, but what people do to each other in times of desperation. If you look at periods of history where dictatorships, genocide, tyranny, and mass crimes against humanity and violence took place, it was always in times of desperation. The climate crisis creates an environment of desperation that is a breeding ground for horrific violence against each other that we are already starting to see.

To make matters worse, the argument against mitigating and preventing this violence is 'but the economy', as if humans work to uphold the economy versus the economy working to uphold us. Our leaders and businesses must understand that there is no booming economy, no business, no money to be made on an unliveable planet wracked with violence and destruction.

So how does this massive economic transformation happen? I have a few ideas.

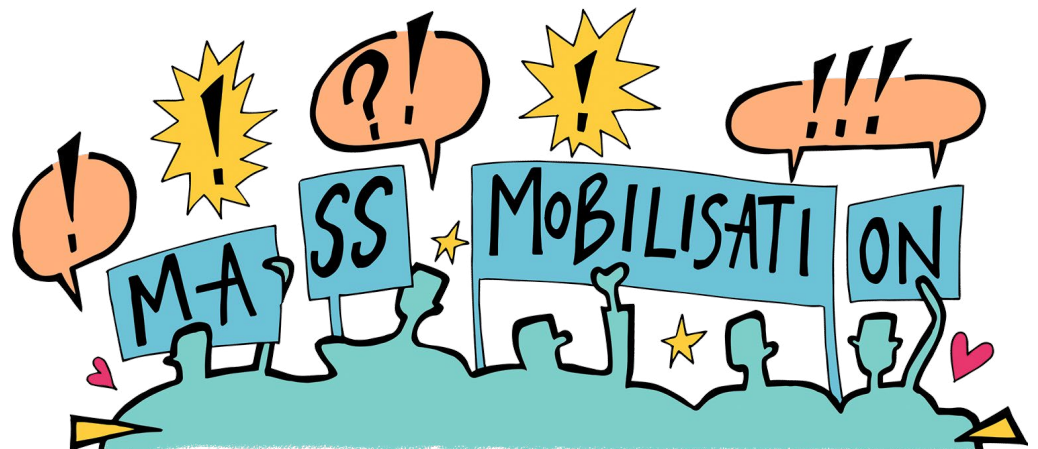
We need to stop the exploitation of workers. The way corporations are exploiting workers is the way that they exploit the planet. So transitioning into an economy where the minimum wage is actually a living wage, and there is a corporate culture of taking care of each other instead of using each other to crawl to the top.

And we need to recognise that it's not a matter of choosing between say, Black Lives Matter or climate justice. The two are intertwined. 69% of US coal plants are built in communities of colour. 20,000 people die from air pollution alone each year in the US, and the majority of those people are people of colour. That's not a coincidence.

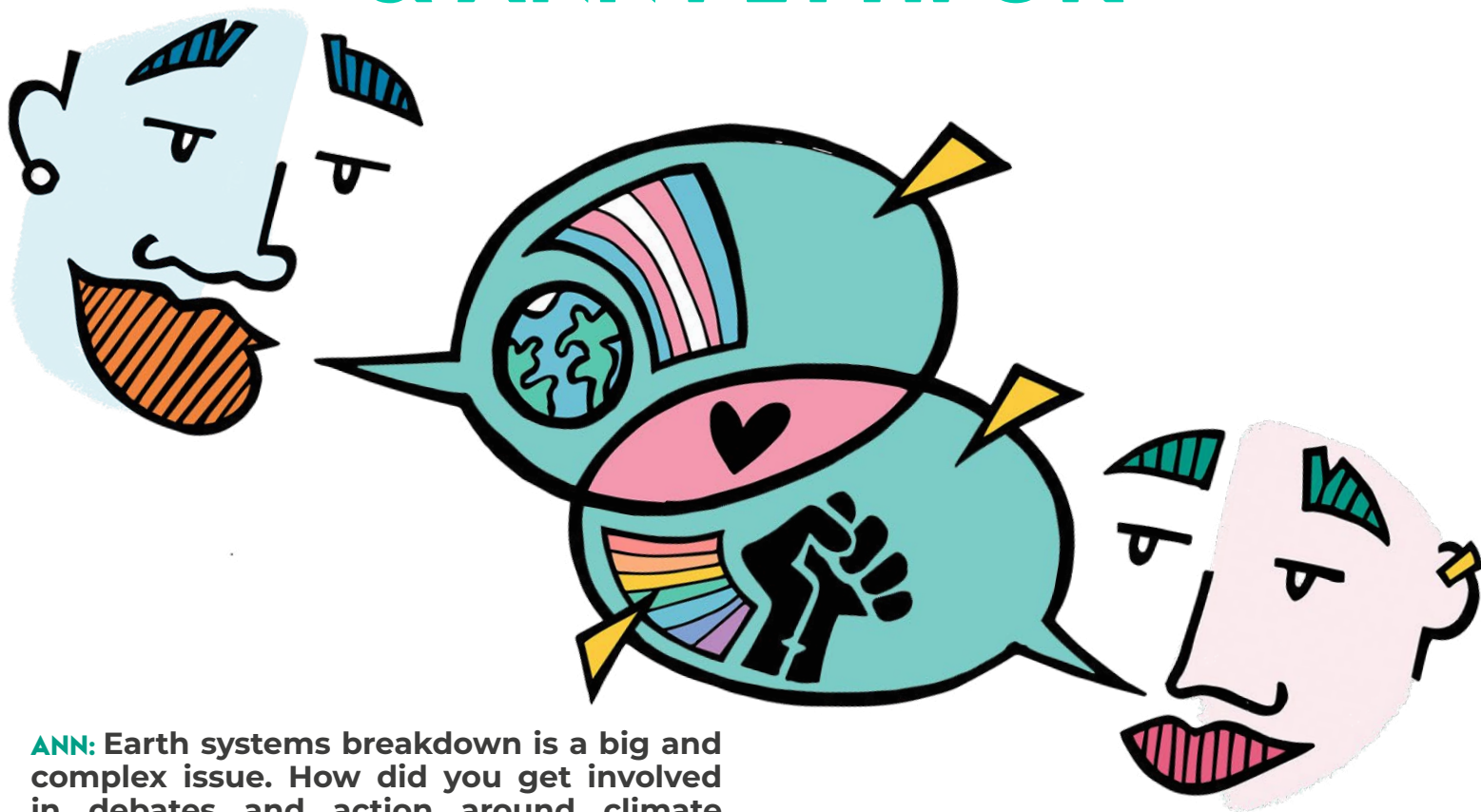
At Zero Hour, the organisation I founded which centres the voices of diverse youth around climate justice, we've reached out to frontline communities who we knew had to be at the centre of the movement, like some of the youth from the Standing Rock tribe who famously let the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

So let's fight this crisis like we're the heroes in a dystopian movie trying to stop the world from ending before it's too late. Because that's exactly what we are.

Jamie Margolin is a climate activist and founder of the youth climate organisation Zero Hour



A Q&A WITH JAMIE MARGOLIN & ANN PETTIFOR



ANN: Earth systems breakdown is a big and complex issue. How did you get involved in debates and action around climate breakdown – and do you have advice on how to get more young people involved?

JAMIE: First, existential dread drew me to this issue, but gradually I began to realise how solving climate change means dismantling all the systems of oppression that caused it in the first place.

In the summer of 2017 I was surrounded by other politically engaged high schoolers at a summer course at Princeton University. By that time I had had a ton of community organising experience. That was also a summer full of natural disasters, and thick smog that covered Seattle thanks to stronger-than-usual wildfires up north in Canada.

That was when I finally decided to take the plunge and found Zero Hour. It took us a while to find our footing but since then we've organised many actions, lobby days, protests, and have expanded into a fully fledged organisation.

We are not a movement that happened overnight at all. It took gruelling hours of slow but gradual movement building. My advice is to just jump in and do whatever you can with the resources you have and pour yourself into it.

JAMIE: Do people fully understand the intersections between the climate crisis and all other social justice issues, or is the connection still very distant for most people? How can we make the general public understand the intersectionality of this issue?

ANN: Good question. When I think about this, I am reminded of the campaign to cancel the sovereign debts of low income countries - Jubilee 2000. When we started I was told by experts - including experts in NGOs - that the international financial system and the complexities of sovereign debt was a) beyond the grasp of the wider public and b) there was no interest in this complex subject. We proved them wrong. By slowly steadily informing, briefing and educating the public, we built up huge, well informed support. The government was shocked. They were not prepared for the fact that so many people felt passionately about these issues that about 70-100,000 people turned up to the G8 Summit in Birmingham in 1998. We have to do that again.

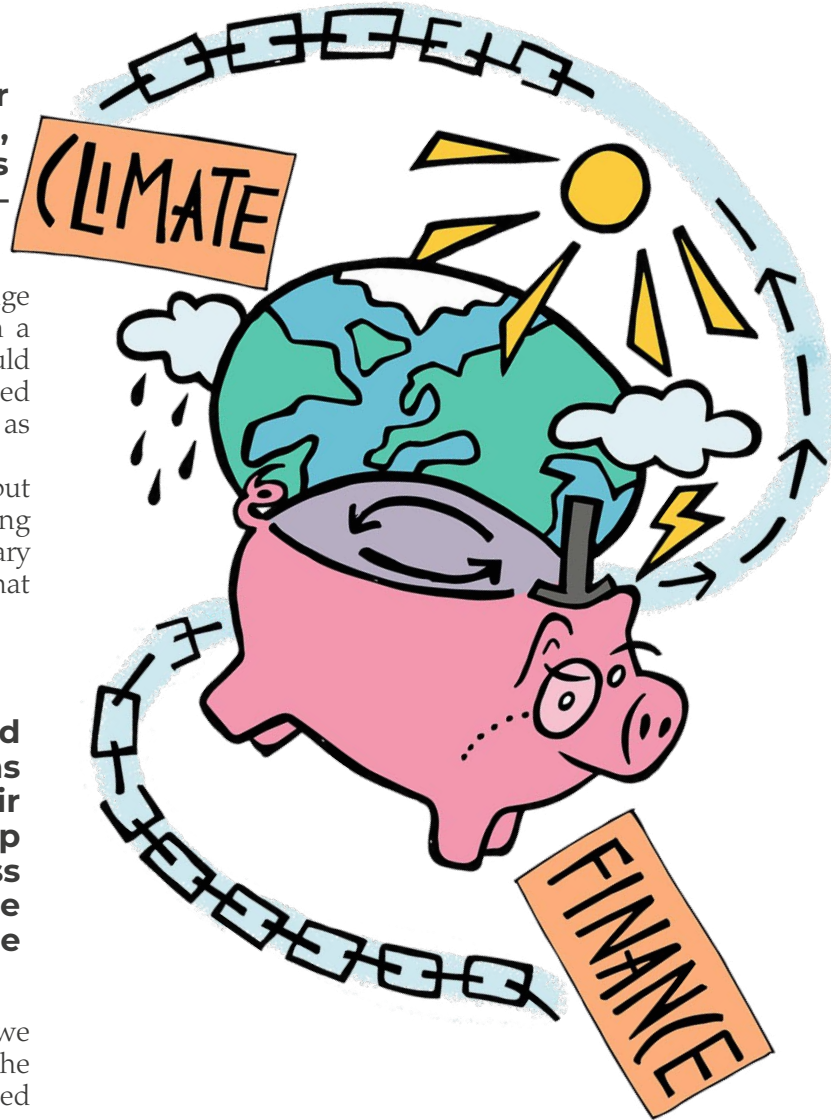
ANN: The world, and friends and family in our own communities, seem stuck in old habits, traditions and harmful ways. What events in history have caused people to change – radically and rapidly?

JAMIE: Events in history that have caused people to change radically and rapidly were events where there was such a level of mass mobilisation that the cries of the people could not be ignored. In terms of the radical social change we need to happen, the problem is it's never happened as quickly as we need it to now.

Maybe certain aspects of movements happen quickly, but it's only after the buildup of years of grassroots organising and a situation building up until it's unbearable. The scary thing about the climate crisis is we don't have time for that gradual change, but that's how most change happens.

JAMIE: Climate change is the grand culmination of all of our societal systems of oppression like colonialism and their negative effects that have been building up for centuries. How do we start to address these deep rooted systemic issues in the rapid time scale that we need to solve the climate crisis in?

ANN: That's a big and deep question. We can't fix the past, we can't heal the deep scars of colonialism, but we can fix the future. We *can* transform the currently globalised, financialised and hugely extractive economic system. I know because we have done so before. We changed the system in 1933 and again in 1945...when we were able to create the NHS, public housing, public education etc...And then Thatcher and Nixon and Reagan changed it back in the interests of Wall St and the City. But transformation takes, first, understanding of the forces at play, and the work that has to be done. Second it takes the mobilisation of political will. Greta Thunberg is teaching us how to do the latter...so I am hopeful.



ANN: A recent survey by the Bank of England revealed that many people do not know how to define the economy. Do you and your fellow climate strikers discuss issues like globalisation, the finance sector and economics? If not, what or who in your experience would stimulate – or light up – debate around these issues amongst young people?

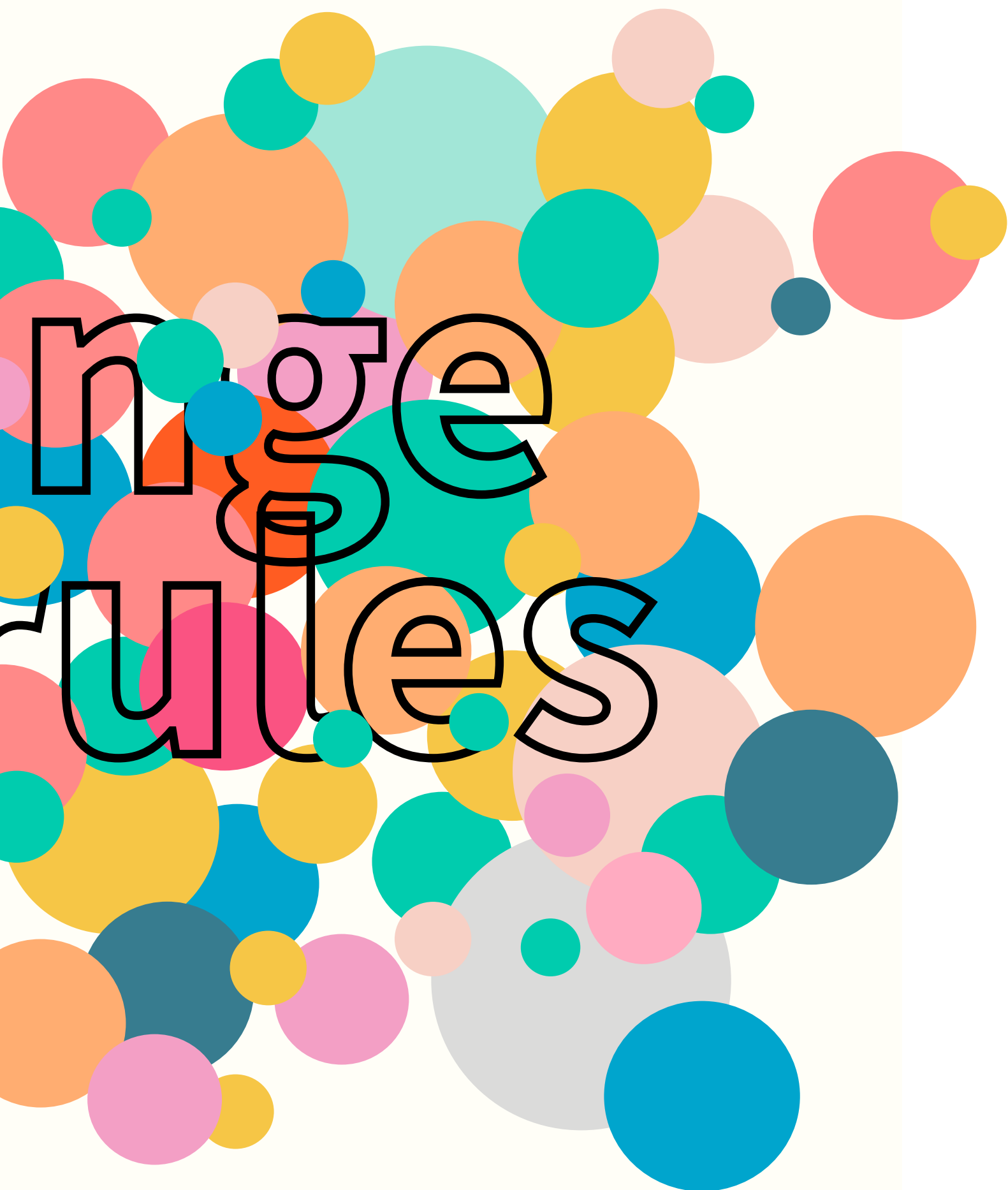
JAMIE: We do like to discuss the economy, the finance sector and economics because it is so intrinsically intertwined with the 'debate' around the climate crisis. This is because often the number one excuse for not taking action is: "but we have to protect the economy." Without even being able to define what 'the economy' is they are already voluntarily willing to sacrifice all life on earth for it.

From what I learned, the economy is supposed to work for the people, not people being slaves to the economy and unable to prioritise life and health because it needs to be maintained.



The background of the page is a dense, abstract composition of numerous overlapping circles in various sizes and colors. The colors include shades of orange, pink, teal, blue, yellow, and grey. The circles are scattered across the entire page, creating a vibrant and textured effect.

Change the m





Why we must DECOLONISE ECONOMICS

*From the reimbursement of slave owners after the abolition of slavery to the banking system that emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries, our economic system has deep roots in British colonialism. Without understanding our economic history, we cannot hope to change the rules of the economy for the future, writes **Guppi Bola***



We are sold many myths about the economy which we accept as truths: that the economy is something objective, that only the experts can understand it, and that economic and social inequality are separate problems with separate causes. But when we look at the etymology of the word 'economy' this picture changes. 'Eco' means 'home' and 'nomy' means 'management'. So 'economy' can simply be expressed as 'the way that society (that's you and I folks!) decides how to manage its resources'.

As a racial justice activist, thinking about the economy in this way this tells me that:

- The economy is the result of political decisions created by those with social capital and power;
- The economy is a driver of inequality that impacts marginalised communities in many ways, such as the £3.2 billion racial pay gap;
- Political education is essential for any movement wanting to change the rules of the economy, and really attend to their roots through the solutions we build.

These three lessons are the central message in workshops I deliver with my partner-in-crime, Nonhlanhla Makuyana, on Decolonising Economics. Because we are both absolute geeks, the work we enjoy the most is digging into our colonial pasts to create more meaningful

stories for the facts and figures behind today's interrelated inequalities. That's what decolonising economics is about: it unearths the colonial roots of our current economic system, and interrogates the power systems at play within our economic and social policy ideas. A central building block of the neoliberal capitalist system that we live in today is white supremacy, its foundation laid by centuries of colonialism.

Critical race scholar Frances Lee Ansley says that white supremacy is not only "the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups" but "a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and

entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. "We have to understand how white supremacy and colonialism helped shape all parts of our economy: from wealth distribution, to financial instruments and the narratives we hold around marginalised communities.

Looking back to move forwards

We find a starting point to unearth the roots of racial inequality in the economy in the 19th century. After the abolition of the slave trade in 1833, the government pledged £20 million to reimburse slave owners for their loss of income. This bailout, known as the Slave Compensation Scheme, made up 40% of government expenditure in 1834, and enabled 46,000 individuals who profited from slave-owning to maintain their wealth, social status and political influence. The Slave Compensation Scheme was the second largest public bailout in British history (after the 2009 bank bailout) and was only paid off by the Treasury in 2018.

Despite the huge compensation for slave owners, the British government has actively dismissed calls for reparations for those who were kidnapped, enslaved, indentured or continued to live in Britain without rights or freedoms. The white supremacist culture means that the concerns of people of colour are dismissed, which creates not only the racial wealth gap, but other injustices like those impacting the Windrush Generation and residents of Grenfell Tower.

Looking back to the colonial era again, the history of our European banking system, including our contemporary financial instruments, developed as a direct response to the expansion of plantations and the trading system that came with it. Financing this profit-driven system were some well-known high street banks such as Lloyds and Barclays. They underwrote the expeditions of the 16th and 17th Century which would bring back a 'cargo' of enslaved African people. Insurance ensured shareholders of private companies profited above all else, even human life. Even after slavery was made illegal, the system of insurance continued to peddle racial stereotypes, that meant even within the process of insurance provision, Black people were charged higher premiums. These racialised practices persist in today's insurance industry.

At the forefront of Britain's colonial expansion were private, profit-making bodies like the Royal African Company and the East India Company who were often conferred by Royal Charter (a fancy way of saying that their violent practices were sanctioned by the British state). These companies heavily influenced the development of the financial systems around them in order to compete economically with their other European counterparts. Early capitalism was driven by the goal of accumulating wealth, and this logic flowed into the financial practices that developed from it

such as speculation, shares, and derivatives. The racist justifications for the capture of indigenous land and exploitation of Black and indigenous communities were used to support actions which enabled these companies to flourish.

During the financial crisis in 2008 and subsequent years of austerity, BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of colour) communities continued to be the most impacted by cuts to public spending. Structural inequality today is rooted in colonial legacy, and across all social indicators people of colour show up worse than their white counterparts. The financial and insurance systems evolved out of colonial projects which exploited Black and indigenous people across the globe. Why would we assume that these systems would support people of colour today?

Challenging all those norms

Black feminist writer Adrienne Maree Brown says: "Colonialism stole our capacity to imagine a different future by determining our past for us" If the rules for how we programme the economy originated in systems and techniques that emerged during colonialism, this means we need to understand colonial history if we want to rewrite the rules for a new economy that centres racial justice.

But decolonising economics must take us further than thinking about race alone.

The intersection of oppressed identities that are controlled in neoliberal capitalism are given a framework through what bell hooks calls "the capitalist white supremacist imperialist patriarchy". Like many Black feminists before and after, she recognises how the entanglement of white, male, global north superiority, and the pursuit of individual property and profit, is a driver of multiple structural inequalities.

During the development of capitalism, Europeans categorised all bodies according to whether they were the beneficiaries of or the tools for profit. This is how our society became laden with binaries, dividing people into Black or white, young or old, man or woman. Key to this was the belief that the only use for Black bodies was to be the engines of production under slavery, or to be imprisoned - but never free. At the same time, participation in society was dictated by your capacity to contribute to the workforce - either with your own hands or through reproduction of the workforce through childbirth and rearing. As such, disabled people and LGBTQI+ folks were deemed either useless or immoral, which these communities struggle against to this day.

If anything, the colonial mindset has been strengthened by capitalism's dominance as an economic ideology that is also fuelled by our far-right political environment. All of us, including those working to build a new economy, are influenced by the narratives we hear and the assumptions that lay beneath them. We need to understand this in order to work to dismantle it.

Getting strategy right

Like all good learning processes, my journey

in decolonising has been non-linear, and has emerged through a constant questioning of my own position. Understanding how each of us upholds the colonial mindset by taking an unquestioned view of history is a huge task, let alone working as a collective to move beyond it. If we're going to change some rules, let's begin with the ones we've embedded in our own organising. We can do this work by ensuring social power and privilege isn't seen as a separate and less immediate concern to single-issue campaigns like climate change or corporate power. 'Diversity and inclusion' practices within NGOs need to become central to the design and delivery of our work.

A practical way forward is to seek leadership from queer liberation, disability justice and racial equity movements and acknowledge their work. These movements hold the key to imagining a different way of being, through organising practices, narratives, strategies and envisioning a world where we are thriving. For example: the first credit union was started by Afro-Caribbean migrants in Britain in 1967. Solidarity economy practices emerged from landless farm workers in Latin America who collectively organised in the wake of the debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes to take ownership of factories and farms. Frontline communities should not be seen as 'the most impacted', but as people who are already changing the rules of the economy through their own creativity, commitment and need to survive.

Decolonising economics will bring more depth and integrity to our work. By ensuring we have the right understanding of the history of our economy, we will know when we are moving towards one that is based on justice and equity. It requires us to look more deeply at the roots of the system, so that we know we're undoing the injustices of the past as we begin to build the future. Decolonising is not about returning to a place where colonialism didn't exist, it's about respecting the histories of colonised people, and taking their leadership for a vision of a new economy.

Guppi Bola is one half of double-trouble duo Decolonising Economics with Nonhlanhla Makuyana, Co-founder of www.workingonourpower.org and grassroots organiser with Wretched of the Earth and Speaking Statues. She is the former Interim-Director at Medact. You can find out more on guppibola.com

FURTHER READING

From BBC Four: Racism: A history. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0070xxd>

From Movement Generation: From banks and tanks to cooperation and caring https://movementgeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/JT_book-let_Eng_printspreads.pdf Guppi says: "Movement Generation have shown how we can completely flip the way we identify groups of people, and challenge where these constructs derive from, and how they have been developed to divide and minimise the social value we bring to the world."

From the Guardian (2015): The history of British slave ownership has been buried: now its scale can be revealed. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/12/british-history-slavery-buried-scale-revealed>

DISABLED PARENTS LIVING UNDER AUSTERITY

*In an extract from her new book, 'Crippled: Austerity and the Demonisation of Disabled People', **Frances Ryan** describes the toll that cuts to public services have had on disabled parents, who fear that their children will be taken into care*

It's a bit of a primal fear that your children will be taken and no matter how hard you fight, you can't get them back,' says Jemima, one of the staff at an advocacy and advice centre run by, and for, disabled people in south-west London. Jemima, who uses a pseudonym here to protect the identity of the women she helps, has seen this fear lived out a number of times in recent years and is at the forefront of what in many ways is the local effort to keep disabled mothers with their children.

Across the country, there's a growing pattern of children being removed by the state. The number of looked-after children in England in 2018 was the highest it has been since 1985. One in five children under five are referred to children's services; adoptions are higher than in any other European country, and now stand at the highest level since data was first collected (more than 90 per cent of which are done without the consent of the family, according to Legal Action for Women, a legal service and campaign group).

There's a clear class bias to this. Research by Legal Action for Women in 2017 warned that low-income women are unjustly being separated from their children due to poverty. Charges of neglect are being used to 'punish' women for their 'unbearably low incomes'. The Child Welfare Inequality project in 2017 found this class difference to be so severe that children living in the poorest neighbourhoods of the UK are almost ten times more likely to be taken into care or placed in a child protection plan than those from affluent areas. This is not surprising: parenting is much harder if you don't have enough money to provide food, housing, heating and clothing. It can also be the case for disabled parents, who are considerably more likely to be taking on caring responsibilities or coping without a wage.

The influx of deep cuts to services since 2010 has only exacerbated this trend, with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) in 2017 stating that austerity policies were 'fuelling record numbers of children being taken into care'. It pointed to 'welfare' cuts, reductions in family support services such as Sure Start, and rising poverty levels as contributing to 'families find[ing] themselves at the point of crisis with little or

no early help available'. This is compounded by the fact that poorer local authorities – facing greater overall demand for child protection services and proportionally larger funding cuts – are increasingly rationing expensive early intervention services that might have previously caught problems before they turned into a crisis. In 2018, the charity Action for Children found that council budgets for early help services designed to prevent families reaching crisis point have shrunk by £743 million in five years – amounting to a cut of more than a quarter. The pressure to cut early intervention services is likely only to increase in the coming years; the Local Government Association estimates that children's services will face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025 just to maintain the current levels of threadbare service.

Carla called social services herself because she worried she was a bad mother. The twenty-seven-year-old has autism and multiple mental health problems – borderline personality disorder, depression and anxiety – as well as scoliosis of the spine and an immune system disorder. Her six-year-old daughter, Harmony, is disabled too; she has ADHD, epilepsy and a learning disability that leaves her with the reading age of a toddler.

It's just her and Harmony at home: at first, a privately rented small attic in London. To get to it, the stairs were so steep that both Carla and her daughter repeatedly fell down them. It was so cramped there were no cupboards to keep their things. When Carla was in the middle of a mental health flare, the flat was the first place to show the signs of things going awry: clutter everywhere, toys on tables, and clothes piled in corners. Depression meant Carla had no energy to clear it up. 'I got to the point I was looking around the flat and thinking, "my mental health must be really bad",' she says. 'I felt like I was a really bad mother. I didn't want Harmony to have to live in this mess.'

On top of the housework, Carla was struggling with day-to-day tasks for Harmony: making phone calls, getting to appointments and taking her to school on time. Going to new places is impossible for her without support because of her mental health and autism, she

explains. 'I just can't do it.'

In 2016, Carla contacted her local council to ask for support – a few hours' social care for cleaning, she hoped, or some help with Harmony's school appointments. She cried on the phone but was informed social care wasn't available to support her. 'It was, "no, we only help people who can't get out of bed or who have an IQ below 70,"' she says. Over the course of a year, she repeatedly rang both adult social services and child social services for help but was refused an assessment. 'I was at rock bottom. I was falling and falling but if they'd helped me earlier [it wouldn't have got that bad],' Carla says. 'I know there's cuts but . . . what if you can't stand up for yourself? What if they make you cry and you just don't go back?'

This is common; cash-strapped local authorities are often failing to provide a social care assessment for disabled mothers even when need is obvious. Research funded by Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (Drill) in 2018 painted a disturbing picture. It found that adult social services too often ignore the needs of disabled people who become parents, frequently prioritizing 'monitoring' over the sort of meaningful, practical support that might keep families together. The research, by the Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care at the University of Bedfordshire, found that children's social services too often see the parent's disability as a potential risk to their children.

As cuts to social care, housing and disability benefits have kicked in, there are reports that more disabled women have had to fight authorities for custody of their children, particularly after they had repeatedly been turned down for support. It can be a case of 'disabled women are not supported with their needs and then blamed for not parenting "properly",' explains Jemima. 'There's a real fear that social services will take the children instead of helping.'

Dr Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist and author of 'Crippled: Austerity and the Demonization of Disabled People' which is published by Verso. You can buy a copy here: <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2972-crippled>

WHO OWNS THE ECONOMY?

Who owns what is a key tenant of our economy – it dictates who has a voice, who has power and, often, who has opportunity.

Mathew Lawrence reimagines ownership



wnership matters. Who owns what shapes how our economy operates and in whose interest. Today, too few of us have a direct stake or say in our economic lives.

This has resulted in unequal patterns of ownership, which drive inequality and the desecration of the natural world, as the natural commons is transformed into private property for the benefit of the few. In the face of the interconnected and reinforcing political, economic and environmental crises confronting us, we urgently need a new and pluralistic ecology of ownership and control, one that is democratic and inclusive by design.

The ambition for a democratic economy is simple but systemic: the steady, irreversible replacement of today's unequal and extractive economy with institutions that share the wealth we create in common, where deep freedom, solidarity and capability are a universal inheritance, and which embeds environmental and social rights in how it operates.

Ownership is power. Owning assets grants important economic and political rights to the owner, shaping the distribution of income and control both within companies and wider society. Today, deep concentrations of ownership create undemocratic and unjust economic and social outcomes. By contrast, a democratic ownership agenda means three things. First, a radical expansion and reimagining of ownership rights to ensure we all share in the wealth we create in common. Second, the scaling of a more diverse array of ownership forms and business types that better distribute economic and political rights. And third, the rewiring of enterprise and institutions so we all have a stake and a say in decision-making that shapes our workplaces, communities and society.

We should begin with an ambitious new agenda for public ownership in place of the failures of privatisation. From buses to energy and

from the railways to Royal Mail, we must ensure vital public services are run for people, not profit. But critically the point is not to swap the centralised hierarchy of the private corporation for the centralisation of Whitehall. As *We Own It's* 'When We Own It' report sets out, we need democratic public ownership that is decentralised and innovative.

But the ownership agenda cannot end with public ownership. We need to nurture a 21st century commons, the democratic management of shared resources for common benefit. Whether it is new forms of stewardship of nature or a technological commons where data and digital infrastructure is organised for the

heart of decision-making.

Strategies for democratising ownership are a strategically vital step to moving beyond neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is many things, but at its core, in every form, it is a conscious strategy to insulate the economic from the political, to zone off the economy from democratic intervention. By insisting on the plasticity of the institutions of the company, its political ordering, and hence its malleability and capacity for change, interventions to reshape the nature and distribution of property in the economy can reassert our ability and need to consciously design economic life in ways that provide the conditions for universal flourishing.

After all, if capitalism is grounded in a set of exploitation rights owners have in relation to their assets – from the landlord's right to extract rent to the right of shareholders to control a company and its surplus – then a post-capitalist political economy will be anchored in new arrangements of ownership and control that deepen and extend social and economic freedom and support generative forms of enterprise.

Accelerating environmental breakdown and the deepening crisis of democratic capitalism makes transformative action the safest course. Twice before in living memory we have transformed how

and for whom we organise our economy on a scale and at a pace the moment now demands. Critically, both times it was radical changes in property and ownership that were fundamental to change, from the extension of public ownership that underpinned the post-war consensus, to the mass privatisation that was the tip of the spear of neoliberalism's counter-assault.

Any transformation of our economy in the decades ahead – toward the deepening of democracy in all spheres of life – will depend on similarly deep shifts in ownership. It is time we owned the future.

Mathew Lawrence is the Director of *Common Wealth*

“Ownership is power. Owning assets grants important economic and political rights to the owner, shaping the distribution of income and control both within companies and wider society”

common good, we need to rethink interlocking forms of governance, control and ownership.

We also need an array of interventions to thicken out and scale up a richer ecology of company forms that are democratic by design and that radically broaden capital ownership in society. It requires a conscious effort to scale generative business forms, from social enterprise to employee-owned businesses to a new wave of co-operatives, enterprising forms of business focused on fulfilling needs over maximising profits. And it demands efforts to broaden income and control rights within large businesses, through a new agenda to expand social ownership of companies and corporate governance reform that puts the voice of labour and the environment at

WOMEN, WORK AND REAL CHOICE

*There are more women in work than ever before but the system doesn't work for them or their lives. **Alice Martin** asks whether a shorter working week and alternative models of childcare could mean a better balance for families, and more control and empowerment over working time for women*

Women have, up to now, been incorporated into a world of work designed by and for men - we know this when we look at wages, but it's also

true if you look at working time.

Despite warnings about long working hours making us ill — particularly women¹ — as a society we continue to give the lion's share of our time to work. Our other needs — caring for others, leisure, rest — are subsumed under a model of paid work where nine-to-fives are supplemented with round the clock online presenteeism and part-time self-employment — or 'side hustles' — are used by many to top up wages.

In the four decades since the 1980s, women have entered the workforce in high numbers and yet there has been no real change in full time working hours² — with the UK working some of the longest full-time hours in Europe. During this period women have either been expected to fit into this model of full-time work while carrying out the majority of unpaid, reproductive labour like housework and caring for children; or to opt for part-time options, taking the lower pay and lower status that usually comes with the territory.

Though 'flexible working' policies have played a role in opening up paid working opportunities

for some women, they have done little to structurally change the status of women in work. We only have to look at the persistent gender pay gap to see that flexible working hasn't achieved much on this front.

This is because when we rely on individuals' personal choice to make decisions about labour patterns, our choices are shaped by our gender, class, race, age, and other identities. Societal norms mean that women opt for the types of jobs and hours that enable them to meet gendered caring responsibilities. Meanwhile, men are afforded the space and support to progress in their careers more effectively, reinforcing existing gendered labour inequalities.

And whole swathes of the population don't have any choice over their working patterns: the TUC found recently that most people in working class occupations aren't given the option of flexible working. For people in low-paid, non-standard forms of work (a massive 1 in 6 of the working population³), the 'choice' over working hours is enacted with even thinner agency, with many obliged to settle for the insecurity of casual work as a substitute for flexibility. Women, particularly women of colour and migrant women, are overrepresented in low-security jobs like agency work and zero-hours contracts that pay less than the real Living Wage. Often the

uptake of these jobs is through necessity: there are twice as many women as men who want more work but have had to settle for low hours in low-paid roles.

A growing number of women are moving into self-employment where the absence of rights like parental or sick pay, or limited access to financial products like mortgages, has meant that the promise of flexibility has often ended in disempowerment. Many women in self-employment have to rely on partners and other family members for an economic safety net.

So how can women carve out more control and empowerment over their working time — in both paid and unpaid work? As Emily Scurrah has argued, beset by the triple shift of employment, domestic work, and emotional work⁴ it's not a straightforward task.

Having a childcare system that's prohibitively expensive and underpays its (mostly female) staff only entrenches these issues. When I returned to work after having my first child I realised that our childcare system is a clumsy afterthought to the world of work where, for many, long hours are requirements of the job and result in huge childcare bills. Childcare workers prop up this model but certainly aren't the ones profiting from it — as is usually the case with feminised labour, low pay is endemic in the sector.

Government policy is in fact keeping it that way: NEF reported in 2017 that the 30 hours of 'free' childcare guaranteed by the government has left nursery budgets short, with the cost pushed onto nursery workers through capped wages, or back onto the parents through hidden fees.

A crucial step towards fostering more autonomy over women's time is to better value time spent caring - materially, not just rhetorically. This could begin with dramatically improving the working conditions and pay of nursery workers – as an end in itself but also a catalyst for transforming our childcare model - [as Miranda Hall has outlined](#)⁵. NEF is developing a model of affordable childcare that puts childcare workers and parents in charge through cooperative governance and even ownership of nurseries. This model can enable the skilled work of childcare workers to be better recognised and remunerated as such, with care providers given the opportunity to become worker-owners rather than hourly-paid staff. A model like this requires parents to have more time away from their own jobs to participate actively in their children's care. There is a growing consensus that moving to a shorter working week as the 'norm' could help to promote more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work⁶, and free up time for people of all genders to participate in caring roles - whether through running a nursery or through actively caring for

loved ones across a lifetime.

Employers have a central role to play in enabling time for their workforces to do this. This is increasingly likely to take the form of reducing the working week: a business school in the University of Reading recently reported that almost half of large UK employers believe that offering a four-day working week will be important for their future success.

To ensure that women and those who are at the sharp end of the labour market don't continue to shoulder the burden of our societal needs, the pretence of choice over working hours must be replaced with mechanisms for collective decision-making over how we use and value our time. This could look like a rollout of worker and union negotiations with employers to reduce working hours while maintaining incomes, legislation that increases paid leave for all genders whilst seeking to eradicate low paid, insecure forms of work, and the proliferation of worker and service-user-led care models. At NEF we are working with unions alongside policymakers to push this agenda forward and build a world of work based on equality and democracy, not fake choices.

Alice Martin is Head of Work and Pay at the New Economics Foundation

FURTHER READING:

1 From Autonomy: <http://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Shorter-working-week-docV5.pdf>

2 From NEF: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/03/average-weekly-hours-fell-faster-between-1946-and-1979-than-post-1980>

3 NEF analysis for Living Wage Foundation Report 'Living Hours: providing security of hours alongside a real living wage' 2018. Available at: [https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/Living Hours Final Report 110619.pdf](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/Living%20Hours%20Final%20Report%20110619.pdf)

4 From NEF's Emily Scurrah in Tribune: <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2019/06/the-nanny-state>

5 From NEF's Miranda Hall: https://apolitical.co/solution_article/this-indian-womens-union-invented-a-flexible-childcare-model/

6 From Women's Budget Group: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Reclaiming-Womens-Time-paper.pdf>

THE FUTURE IS OURS

*The way that automation is frequently discussed, reported and feared, paints a misleading view of the future. Technology has the potential to generate many of the things that we'd want in an equal, flourishing society including improving jobs and pay in sectors where women tend to work. A forward-looking, progressive approach to automation can do better, argues **Carys Roberts***

When automation appears in the news, it is often in dystopian visions of a world where humanoid robots have replaced human interaction and have taken the jobs. Nightmare visions sell papers, but they tell at best a partial story, and by generating fear, they make it harder to realise the benefits that technology could bring. It is important that those who care about the incomes, power and lives of ordinary people are active players in this conversation around technology and how it is shaping our economy. It also matters politically: the story politicians tell about the future they want to create, and about the way forward in a changing world, shapes their electoral fortunes. So how should movements on the left, like those in new economics, understand and talk about technology, and particularly automating technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics?

First, by placing people front and centre: adding agency back into the picture. No robot is coming to take your job, and no robot is capable of paying a robot tax. But people who own robots and companies that use them may want to reduce their wage bill, and the same people could pay taxes on the profits that using robots generates. Technology is as good or bad as the people who design and control it.¹ And in the modern economy, that is too frequently private sector firms with monopoly power and little representation from wider stakeholders, such as employees.

In reality, technology has the potential to generate many of the things that we'd want in an equal, flourishing society. It could do work that humans find dangerous, unpleasant, or just boring. It could make us much more productive, and therefore able to produce the same with less work, or to create things that people need. It could help us meet human needs without depleting natural resources: automation and AI in farming allows far more precision in the use of water, pesticides and other resources for example.² AI could help us better identify, diagnose, and learn about disease. What matters is who controls it and shapes what it produces: and as a result, who benefits. The left and the movements fighting for a better and fairer future for all should tell a story about the benefits that could come about with democratic control over how technology is used.

Take the example of gender, which we at IPPR have looked at in a recent report.³ The Office for National Statistics has reported that more

women than men are 'at risk' from the effects of automation. Others – mainly in the corporate world – have claimed that, as robots take on both routine cognitive tasks and manual tasks, softer feminised skills like communication and emotional intelligence will increasingly be in demand, benefitting women who, they say, are more likely to have these skills. Both positions miss part of the picture by leaving out agency.

Many of the jobs 'at risk' of automation are unlikely to disappear any time soon. For example, restaurant waiting jobs have been assessed by experts to be highly automatable. But there are societal barriers to robot waiters: people are used to talking to a real person during an evening out. And even more importantly, there are millions of low-paid workers, predominantly women, who are simply cheaper to employ than the cost of researching, installing and maintaining the technology needed to do away with waiting staff.

Instead, a real risk to women is that their jobs won't see enough automation. While many of the new jobs that will be created by new technologies – high productivity, high paid roles in tech, engineering and managerial posts – are likely to be taken by men, there will still be plenty of jobs waiting tables, caring for people, providing customer service predominantly filled by women: but they will be low paid.

It doesn't have to be this way. We could choose to accelerate automation in low-paid occupations through an active industrial strategy in sectors like social care and retail. Higher productivity – if accompanied with strong bargaining power for workers – could enable a pay rise for millions of low-paid workers, many of whom are women. We could choose policies to encourage a more equal gender balance across occupations: encouraging men to enter caring professions, and placing strict requirements on tech and STEM sector employers to diversify their staff at all levels.

And what about the corporate utopian view: will women win in a world where communication and soft skills are in high demand? Even if we accept that somehow women are innately imbued with these skills and lack the cool logic that has led to men dominating top jobs(!), there's a big difference between skills being in demand and women being remunerated for having them. We currently have a big gap in caring skills in our society, yet caring remains one of the lowest paid jobs.

A forward-looking, progressive approach to automation can do better. We should embrace

technological change while acknowledging that its effects depend wholly on who controls its use. Decisions about how automating technologies are adopted and their benefits shared should be made by the people who are affected. That means that workers should be at the heart of the process, including having a seat at the boardroom table and shaping adoption processes in their day-to-day work. And, automation can't just be for sectors dominated by men, but should be used to improve jobs and pay in sectors that women tend to work in too.

We also need to put the institutions in place to ensure that everyone can benefit from rising productivity. Alongside strengthening workers' bargaining power, we propose a Citizens' Wealth Fund, which would share the wealth created through technological progress by providing everybody with a stake in the modern economy. But productivity improvements do not only deliver higher wages: they can also enable us to produce the same with less labour.⁴ That's why we recommend a gradual increase in annual leave entitlements, making time for family, care and leisure and enabling a shift in who performs care work.

These changes won't happen on their own. We didn't reach a 38 hour week and 20 days leave by chance: they came about through worker organising and democratic intervention in the economy. That's why it's so important that the left doesn't accept the view that technology will happen whether we like it or not. There's everything to fight for and everything to win.

Carys Roberts is Chief Economist and Head of the Centre for Economic Justice at IPPR

FURTHER READING

1 From IPPR: Managing automation: employment, inequality and ethics in the digital age. <https://www.ippr.org/publications/managing-automation>

2 From engineering.com: 'Smart farming—automated and connected agriculture', engineering.com, article. <https://www.engineering.com/DesignerEdge/DesignerEdgeArticles/ArticleID/16653/Smart-Farming-Automated-and-Connected-Agriculture.aspx>

3 From IPPR: The future is ours: women, automation and equality. <https://www.ippr.org/files/2019-07/the-future-is-ours-women-automation-equality-july19.pdf>

4 From Progressive Economy Forum. How to achieve shorter working hours, Progressive Economy Forum. <https://progressiveeconomyforum.com/publications/how-to-achieve-shorter-working-hours/>

THE BLAME GAME

*Blaming immigrants for the UK's economic problems is a familiar trope. **Maya Goodfellow** describes how the belief that immigrants are "bad for the country" has persisted for decades, and makes it harder for those marginalised in the economy – immigrant or not – to come together in solidarity*

Uncontrolled mass immigration makes it difficult to maintain social cohesion, puts pressure on public services and forces down wages," then immigration minister James Brokenshire said in 2014. His was one of an untold number of comments I could have chosen where people in positions of power argued the same; they blamed immigrants – sometimes the very people who are some of the last to come into the country – for the UK's long-term economic problems. Deregulation, austerity or extractive capitalism are nowhere to be found in their analysis; it's immigration that is the issue.

These are well-rehearsed arguments. According to some of the country's most prominent politicians and newspapers, immigrants undercut wages and 'take' jobs but at the same time refuse to work; coming to the UK just so they can take from the welfare state in the form of so-called benefit and health tourism. Regularly disseminated and widely believed, these contradictory messages have been turned into common sense: it became almost unquestionable that immigration was, in some way or another, bad for the country.

The message has been depressingly similar in previous decades. In the sixties, people who came to the UK from colonies and former colonies – working in the NHS or keeping public transport going – were repeatedly accused of bringing economic and social problems to the UK. Supposedly here to take from and change the country, politicians argued it was predominantly people of colour that were the problem. And they legislated to try and change that by making it more difficult for certain groups of people to come and settle in the UK.

The groups of people who were at the centre of this message might shift over time – at different times it has been Jewish people, people of colour coming from the colonies and former colonies, Muslim people – but the core idea remains the same: namely that certain groups of migrants – usually consisting of people who are poorer and not white or 'not quite white' – are an economic threat to the country.

These strategies of blame and dehumanisation paved the way for the Coalition and Tory governments to introduce the policies that make up the hostile environment. It's against a backdrop of claims that immigrants are a drain and a threat that politicians can strip people of their right to housing and work simply because they don't have the 'right' documentation. If people are 'taking'

from the system, the argument goes, its right to penalise them in an effort to stop them.

But these arguments don't just act as justifications for punitive policies. Mistruths about immigration obscure the solidarity that could be, and sometimes is, built between people regardless of their immigration status or citizenship. Many people who migrate here experience the same exploitative economy as the people who happen to be born in the UK. It's these people who will suffer if there's a Brexit-induced recession and who have borne the brunt of an unequal economy. It's these people – working class people born in the UK and working class people born elsewhere – who have more in common that politicians would like to believe.

One of the problems is how to respond to all of this. From the regularly-repeated 'undercutting' claim to the aggressive 'benefit tourism' myth, there's no real or robust evidence to support the main anti-immigration arguments about the economy. One former David Cameron advisor admitted that in the run-up to the EU referendum, they could not find any 'hard evidence' that immigration was causing the economic problems that politicians claimed.

For some, furious that the framing is so disingenuous and inaccurate, the main focus is pointing out that immigration is good for the economy. For those who are the focus of the discussion – that is, people who have migrated to the UK – proving this narrative as false might be important because it runs counter to their everyday lives, where they work tirelessly to get by.

But the 'migrants contribute' argument – understandable though it is – continues to treat human beings as things, where peoples' worth corresponds to what they are seen to contribute economically. In the short term, given the deluge of misinformation people receive about immigration, the strategy makes sense; long term, it's hardly paradigm breaking.

Immigrants have been repeatedly blamed for the UK's economic problems; a useful tool for people in positions of power to block from view the real causes of inequality. No matter what happens with Brexit or the economy, there's a good chance these ideas will persist. And so these lies have to be shown to be what they are. But in a deeply unequal global economy, people should not just have the right to come to and to stay in the UK because they're perceived as economically productive. And so this too is where the debate needs to change on immigration.



Immigrants have been repeatedly blamed for the UK's economic problems

*Maya Goodfellow is the author of **The Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats**. She is a researcher, writer and academic currently completing a PhD at SOAS, University of London.*



What will the practice of being in power be like for the left or any radical government? What do they need to think about before they get there? And how can a radical government stand up to an establishment that is hostile to any significant redistribution of wealth and power? **Christine Berry and Joe Guinan's** recent book 'People Get Ready!' explores the nitty gritty of what's needed to bring about transformative change. In this edited extract on getting organised they look at what we can learn from history on both left and right, and shine a light on exactly how important social movements are for creating change



Transformative shifts in the economy require much more than just a political party ready to take state power. Both the neoliberal experience and the history of early 20th century socialism point to the importance of a robust exchange of ideas and a strong community of current and future leaders. The recent history of radical movements in Greece and Spain tells us that independent social movements with deep roots in communities are essential to counteract not just the power of the establishment, but the pressure on any sitting government to abandon its radicalism. Not only that, they are central to the project itself. The democratic economy we are trying to build requires the active participation and empowerment of citizens and the building of local economic alternatives.

Building power

In Occupy activist Jonathan Smucker's book *Hegemony How-To*, he argues that the role of social movements is twofold: to wage the battle for power (shifting the balance of forces in institutions and wider society) and the battle for narrative (contesting the public discourse and symbolic cultural practices). First, let's look at building power. At its heart, this is about how social movements can grow and scale by reaching out to new constituencies, bringing disparate groups into alignment, to forge what Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci called a "collective will". Taking on board the participatory instincts of recent social movements, it is also about how they can empower the people worst affected by our economic system to build their own leadership.

Gramsci called this "articulation": the process of fragmented individuals coming to identify as a group with common interests. Traditional Marxism assumed that common economic interests were simply an objective fact, and political identities emerged as an expression of that fact. But Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, two Gramscian theorists influential on the new left, argue that it is not this simple. It is not only that the working class is fragmented (for example between secure, well-paid professionals and those in low-paid precarious work, distinctions that also fracture along racial and gender lines). It is that we all occupy a series of overlapping identities, not just as workers but as renters, debtors, or citizens.

How we perceive these roles and which of them define our politics are the product of struggles for meaning and power. Constructing these alliances is part of the role of social movements, through which people come to see their personal problems as rooted in structures of oppression they can take on collectively, rather than their individual failings.

Smucker gives the examples of Black Lives Matter and of foreclosed homeowners after the crash. In the UK, we could point to the rise of renters' unions, seeking to build new forms of collective power to resist the power of the extractive economy in the form of landlords. We could look to those, like the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), who are organising outsourced cleaners and precarious workers in the "gig economy", or to GMB's landmark court victory against Uber.

Groups like Migrants Organise and the campaign to shut down Yarl's Wood are building the power of migrants and organising against racist structures. The Just Treatment campaign is organising patients against the exploitative practices of big pharma and the high drug prices they produce. Groups like Reclaim the Power successfully held off fracking for years by organising with the communities directly affected. All of these movements in different ways are building counterweights to the power of extractive capital. They are pivotal to building and sustaining the new democratic economy, and to creating the strong social base that could underpin a radical government.

For UK community organising to be genuinely transformative, it must be more than an attempt to patch up holes in the welfare state: it must be part of an effort to build new political identities and communities, to tell a new story about where problems like hunger and homelessness actually come from and how we can fight them together. Crucially, grassroots organisers need a strong sense of this political compass to guide their work. Conversely, the lived experiences of people most oppressed by the system must inform the political programme. This is where popular education, community organising, and the development of new ideas go hand in hand.

Building new narratives

The battle for power and the battle for narrative are intimately linked. Thatcher's Conservatives certainly understood this. The 1977 *Stepping Stones* report argued that the Conservatives needed to tell a compelling story about what was going wrong with the UK economy and why their free-market policies were the way to put it right. By making this the dominant story in the public debate, they not only won the coming election, but set up the new government with a clear popular mandate to drive through transformative change.

Cameron's Conservatives absorbed these lessons too. The left was blindsided by the Conservatives' success in turning a crisis of neoliberalism into a crisis of government spending through rhetorical sleight of hand that saw the airwaves full of Tory

politicians repeating the mantra that we'd maxed out the nation's credit card, that they were dealing with the mess the Labour government left, that Labour had spent too much and crashed the economy.

Making the state rather than the banks the culprit justified their true political project—a wider stripping back of the state—whilst cementing the idea that there was "no alternative" to austerity politics. The left's attempts to explain that austerity didn't make economic sense failed to cut through this powerful story. One campaigner likened it to "bringing a spreadsheet to a knife fight".

This prompted a flurry of interest in American cognitive linguist George Lakoff's book *Don't Think of an Elephant*, which argues that the way we frame issues—the categories we use—influences how people perceive and understand the world. The left needed to use new frames of its own: trying to argue against austerity within our opponents' existing frames only served to strengthen their grip. At the same time, there was a revival of interest in Gramsci's idea of "common sense": the unconscious way in which people see the world, influenced by dominant ideologies and cultural stories as well as their own experiences. Successful political projects need to tell a coherent story about how the world works, where its problems come from and how to fix them, and to establish this as the new "common sense".

Recent research suggests that anti-elite populist rhetoric could be effective at tapping into people's existing instincts about inequality (what Gramsci called "good sense") and shifting their perspective on the economy. But it must be used in a way that points to systemic problems and solutions, rather than corrupt individuals: the latter risks exacerbating both people's fatalism and the tendency to scapegoat. It must also be used in a way that adopts a clear and expansive definition of who counts as "the people". The recent rise of right-wing populists, from Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen to Donald Trump, makes abundantly clear that the rhetorical clothes of anti-elitism can easily be worn by racist nationalists for whom "the people" does not include migrants or people of colour. Our narratives need to use this anger as a jumping-off point to tell a positive story about how we can build an economy that serves the common good.

So what does this mean for the grassroots movement? It might seem like the battle for narrative is one to be waged by politicians in speeches and media interviews. But Gramsci's idea of common sense is much more sophisticated than this. It arises from people's everyday experiences, the cultural messages they encounter, their interactions with others, as well as the messages they absorb through the national media. For

Gramsci, common sense starts to shift when a disconnect emerges between people's lived experience and the dominant narrative: it no longer makes intuitive sense.

And there is considerable evidence that the mass media is in fact becoming less powerful in defining the common sense. The Brexit vote is a good example. The story people were hearing did not seem to mesh with the reality of life in post-industrial communities. There is a growing gulf between the stories told by the mainstream media and the everyday political conversations taking place in people's homes and communities.

And so we need doorstep conversations, popular education programmes, co-operative spaces where people can hear the new story and experience it directly. Indeed, with mass membership and organising capability, the left is arguably stronger on this territory. And our stories are stronger if they grow from this on-the-ground experience. Shifting the narrative is not synonymous with media strategy: it is about much more than this.

Building economic alternatives

One way to cement the new narrative is to show in practice that new economic solutions can work, refuting Thatcher's famous mantra that "There Is No Alternative". As the experience of Greece's solidarity economy shows, creating a different economy from the ground up can not only help those suffering but be powerful in helping achieve change at the top. This is one of the key ways that we can begin to displace the economic power of big institutions immediately.

Social movements can play a part in this through initiatives like community energy co-ops and community land trusts. Just as Greek solidarity networks saw bankrupt small businessmen rub shoulders with hard-left activists, so community energy projects in the UK have built alliances far beyond the usual suspects. In places like Balcombe, threatened with fracking under people's homes, local residents have come together with environmental activists to build their own renewable energy solutions. Such actions are the seeds of a new democratic economy. They will need state support to survive and thrive, but until we have a government able and willing to give that support, it falls to social movements to keep the seeds alive.

Where progressives are in power at city and regional level, they can also play their part. Many have been inspired by Barcelona en Comú's efforts to build new local economic alternatives while strengthening social movements—for instance, by taking energy and water into local public ownership. Closer to home, Nottingham City Council have set up Robin Hood Energy, a

publicly owned energy supply company. This gives local people lower energy bills, directly displaces the economic power of the Big Six energy companies, and proves that publicly owned energy can work.

Meanwhile the "Preston Model" has become a byword for how local councils can use their power to build a more resilient, democratic local economy. Preston councillors have worked to "repatriate" their procurement spending to keep money circulating in the local economy, by choosing to support local small businesses rather than outsourcing to big business. The council are paying and promoting the real Living Wage. They are also working to incubate new co-operative businesses in areas where local firms do not already exist. This model is widely credited with Preston's impressive

“It might seem like the battle for narrative is one to be waged by politicians in speeches and media interviews...But it arises from people's everyday experiences”

regeneration over recent years.

We need a serious effort to replicate and extend these experiments. What is being called the new "municipal socialism" is vital for many reasons. It improves people's lives in the here and now, demonstrating what radical politicians can achieve when in power. It shows that another way of doing things is possible. And, perhaps most importantly, it strengthens the connective tissue of the democratic economy while weakening the pull of the extractive economy. The more local people can draw on the community for essential services, and the less they depend on firms like Carillion and G4S, the harder it will be for vested economic interests to hold a progressive government to ransom.

Of course, the pressures of austerity and the erosion of local government powers mean that delivering radical initiatives is not easy for local councils (as even Preston itself has found). They need to be supported both from above (by an enabling state) and from below (by organic social movements such as a strong co-operative movement, or campaigns like Switched On London, which demanded a public energy company for the capital).

Building leadership

In all of this work, we need to be developing

and supporting a strong cohort of movement leaders from diverse backgrounds, with a particular focus on those with under-represented identities. Whether it be media spokespeople, parliamentary candidates, policy staff, or community organisers—there simply hasn't been a strong pipeline of radical leaders for a generation or more.

Building a leadership isn't just about acquiring hard skills, like economics knowledge or media training, although some of that will be needed. It is also about building communities that support and nurture the whole person—groups of people with a shared analysis but a diversity of life experiences, capable of working together from street level to the House of Commons.

Crucially, it's about a new style of leadership—one based not on big egos,

hierarchies, and strict discipline, but on the ability to collaborate, to listen, and to empower others to lead. Several people we spoke to emphasised the need for better social and emotional support for developing leaders, and for greater emphasis on the soft skills of co-operation, communication, and emotional resilience this kind of leadership demands.

The job of grassroots movements is not simply to get a radical government elected and to defend it. Rather, it's the other way around: the job of a radical government must be to serve the movements that will truly transform the economy, society and politics.

Christine Berry and Joe Guinan are the authors of People Get Ready. Christine is a freelance researcher and writer, The Next System fellow and a trustee at Rethinking Economics. Joe is vice president at Democracy Collaborative and executive director of The Next System.

*People Get Ready! is available exclusively from OR Books. Use the code: **GETTINGREADY** to get 20% off the paperbacks, e-books and the paperback+e-book combos. (Code for use once per customer) <https://www.orbooks.com/catalog/people-get-ready/>*

*To radically reform the economy, a future government can't just come up with better policies: it must reform the way it models, plans and assesses its programmes. Luckily, alternatives are emerging, writes **Sahil Dutta***

It's hard to know what exactly gives a government power. A party taking office can make new laws and set new policies. But turning these into practice needs other forces.

To make good on a promise to halve national carbon emissions, for example, governments face a variety of options: a tax on the worst polluters, land reform to promote rewilding, a four-day week to aid less carbon-intensive lifestyles. The path it ultimately takes will be a product of its history, its ideology, its members, and estimations of the electorate's desires. That's the familiar stuff of politics.

But maybe even more important is the ways in which policymakers come to 'see' the world. How and what they see shapes what they do. Just as, when the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything as a nail, the technologies of government matter as much as who is in charge and what policies are promised.

One especially important tool is a document called the Treasury Green Book. It lies at the centre of the British state and has huge influence in policymaking. Put simply, the Green Book is a method of calculation that helps policymakers assess the monetary costs, benefits and risks of any particular policy. It is part of the everyday infrastructures of the powerful, helping governments decide how much to spend and on what.

A government committing to a Green New Deal, for example, would have to run any possible spending plan through the Green Book's analysis to determine whether money could be better spent elsewhere. By doing so, the whims of ministers are supposed to be grounded with a more rigorous evidence base – one the Treasury (the most powerful government department) can keep beady watch over.

The Green Book first took life in 1982, growing out of developments in accountancy and management science in the 1960s. It helped change how governments planned public services. Before, they worked around quantity. Each department would submit estimations of how many school spaces or hospital beds, for example, would be needed. The money would follow accordingly. The Green Book was part of the shift from volume to cash. The Treasury would dole out the money – a cash limit – and the ministries would organise their departments within this. Scarcity became the watchword of planning.

It seems unsurprising that the Green Book emerged under Thatcher. But it was not simply a neoliberal cover to force through austerity. It was much more profound and long lasting. It outlived Thatcher and was crucial to the New Labour government who were more explicitly comfortable with public spending. Rather than just save money, what cost-benefit analysis does is help policymakers model the world and its problems, and decide about possible solutions.

The effects of a new airport, for instance, are hard to imagine. It's a puzzle to assign costs of damage to local ecosystems, noise pollution, carbon emissions and low-wage job creation. Similarly, it is not easy to 'see' the gains felt by frequent flyers, energy companies, and outsourcing giants. Deciding whether this is good for society as a whole is then even harder. In a 2007 government analysis of the Heathrow airport expansion, for example, the costs of climate damage were not modelled, while the apparent social benefits included the time saved by business travelers (supposedly worth £62 an hour).

Despite clear problems, the growth of cost-benefit analysis made budgeting a centrepiece of politics. Budgets were once something made at the end of the year to work out how much had been spent where. Important, but not the stuff of strategy. Now they were transformed. They became a way to construct the future and plan accordingly. And with that a new kind of expertise took hold of the state.

Managerial specialists, their expensive know-how and their very particular worldview became ever more important to the way governments decided what policies to follow. Their calculations gave a value to possible programmes and made some options seem 'objectively' better than others. In the challenge of working out what to do and how, this makes government's job much easier. It is precisely why such techniques have proved so durable.

To radically reform the economy, a future government can't just come up with better policies: it must reform the way it models, plans and assesses its programmes. And alternatives are emerging.

James Meadway, former advisor to shadow chancellor John McDonnell, has written for the Common Wealth thinktank about ways to 'green' the Treasury Green Book and make it more pliable to plans for any future Green New Deal. He proposes reforming its guidance for investment in projects to lock in assessments of social and environmental impacts, rather than straightforward 'economic' efficiency.

Similarly, environmental economist Frank Ackerman has proposed replacing cost-benefit analysis with a more holistic 'Multi-Criteria analysis'. Rather than trying to calculate the single price value of any proposed government infrastructure investment, this would involve establishing five or six separate categories, and letting people judge accordingly. Such schemes could also help loosen the Treasury's stranglehold over the civil service.

It is impossible for any collection of metrics, accounting or otherwise, to adequately model and capture the future. But that is really not their point. Rather, they end up politicising issues in particular ways that empower some experts, while sidelining others. Currently, managerial specialists are the key authorities empowered to build our understanding of the challenges of inequity, sustainability and justice and how we should respond. This is a problem. The point of a reprogrammed economy must be to thrust other kinds of expertise to the forefront.

To make something as arcane as a cost-benefit analysis a central issue of political struggle seems to jar with the revolutionary necessity of the moment. The inequality, climate catastrophe, and nativist hostility defining politics now is precisely why technocratic reform is not enough. The progressive left is rudely awake to this.

Yet what will drive an epochal, structural shift is not a collective change of heart. Ideology doesn't work that way. Instead it is about undoing and remaking the infrastructures that construct the injustices of today, and modelling the possibilities of tomorrow.

Sahil Jai Dutta is lecturer on the new MA Global Political Economy programme at Goldsmiths University

HOW TO MAKE CHANGE



Change can be a hard thing to get your head around – an intangible and seemingly out of reach idea. And what do we mean by change anyway?

*Activist, campaigner and organiser **Rebecca Winson** has dedicated many years to creating change. Here she shares some of her experience and the best ways to build power and use it*

I have a strange job. It doesn't have a neat place on a drop down menu, or in people's minds, in the same way a nurse, cleaner, shop assistant, or teacher might.

Recently I got married and when I went to give notice of my marriage to my partner, Joe, the registrar asked us both about our professions. Joe's – "Electrician" – goes down as easily as flicking a switch, while mine – "Organiser" – gets a pause.

Being an organiser means I work on campaigns, but... more than that. It basically means: my job – somehow — is to help people change things. And themselves, and other people. For the better.

The registrar looks at me. He asks the question that everyone does when I tell them what I do, sooner or later. "How do you do that then?"

Joe's job and mine have one thing in common. When either of us turns up somewhere, the person that's called us often expects us to pull a big box of tools out and fix huge problems in five minutes. To him they say: "What do you mean, you can't fit my underfloor heating in a day without taking up any tiles?" And to me? "What do you mean you can't get me 2,000 people, right here and now, to join a march?"

We all want change to be easy. But there is no toolkit which makes it so. In fact, if you have an easy way of changing things, you're either a very powerful person fiddling with the apparatus of the state to salve your own boarding-school-wrecked ego, or you're someone who means well but who isn't trying to change anything real. Our society is in such a state, after all, that even reasonable demands mean struggle.

Need a living wage? Take a year. Recruit 60% of your colleagues to a union; battle for recognition; negotiate. Need your GP surgery to stay open? Take two years, thousands of locals, the council and your Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Want your estate maintained, not demolished? Five years. Street stalls, meetings, protests, then reading up on and forming your own bloody community land trust just to get a say on how your own front door looks.

So, how to do it?

First: accept that it takes ages and is hard. A lot of the time, you will feel like you're struggling because you're terrible. You will not be terrible but you will struggle, because broken things are difficult to fix, and new things are even more difficult to build.

But the second, cheerily, is to understand that changing things is always possible - if you build power and use it. In progressive movements – or basically in any campaign group which isn't full of those with a ton of privilege – we are seemingly allergic to power. People break out in hives when they talk about it. As for using it? "Bit aggressive, isn't it?" they choke, falling into anaphylactic shock. But you can stay simply angry and itching with those people in a meeting room, or you can get powerful.

It's simple. Like electricity. Your opponent will always, at the start, have more power than you do - so their power needs neutralising or redirecting if you want change. The only way to do that is for you to use power of equal, or greater force. Using it could look like anything, from delivering petitions to going on strike - but use it you must, or all you'll be is angry.

This is one of the most important lessons in creating change: you have to do the work.

Building power

Building that power, and doing that work, will always look the same though: with people, as many of them as possible. And that's the third way you make change. You talk face-to-face with most and ring the rest. Social media, WhatsApp and leaflets will help you get initial contacts, but after that, to keep a group or campaign going and grow it and your power, you need to persuade others to act, and they in turn need to engage others.

This part, building the power, is the most exhausting part of organising. It's also what, to my mind, makes it beautiful and important. Proper organising means proper change, because it's not about an outsider with a big mailing list getting people to sign a petition or turn up to a march, then vanishing. It is about supporting people to develop their own collective power so they can lead, and change things themselves.

No one needs, for example, estate regeneration campaigns led by middle-class kids with PhDs. This isn't because that type of campaign is less likely to win - in fact they are just as if not more likely to, in the short term. Those campaigns are not needed because unless people on estates, or in workplaces, or in any community, develop and manage their own power and leaders, in five years or five weeks time, they'll have to fight all over again: their problems will have been solved for them, but their powerlessness will remain.

The tools

Teaching people, or teaching yourself, how to do all that sounds difficult but here's something which helps. The fourth way to make change happen is by using a few key tools, because yes, there are actually some tools and resources,



and I literally have a box full of them, including a pack of fags for stress relief. Any bunch of people will come up with its own ways of doing things, but there are a few things which help direct the chaos of any campaign and manage the maelstrom of relationships in any group. Google the following, and look at them together: 'Anger Hope Action' conversations, one-to-one conversations, power mapping, workplace charting (this also works well outside a workplace). Don't be afraid to take what you're doing seriously enough to do it consciously and strategically because, be in no doubt, the other side are.

The meaning of change

Thanks to a certain few, we are living through a period of time where things change so rapidly that the word itself has almost become meaningless. Not least because change in its noun form has been plastered everywhere – from the billboards selling luxury housing to

new political parties. But the change that's actually happened has all been in one direction, all for the benefit of a few and all to the detriment of the many. In the midst of that, fighting back feels exhausting. Who wants more change?

But the far-right, neoliberal, mass exploitation of both people and planet is not real change. It is deepening the status quo, solidifying the elite and mainstreaming bigotry but it is not change. The alternatives – a society built on kindness, ending racism and sexism, a Green New Deal, freeing our trade unions, a four-day week – are. They would transform our society, and us.

The reason those alternatives haven't happened? Because for the most part, on the left, in movements like ours, we don't know how to change things. For the past few decades, we've come up with ideas, and solutions, but built no big, diverse, grassroots movements, or power behind them. We've mistaken talking about things with those who agree with us for

progress; and being elected for having power.

Council estates are easy to regenerate out of existence because the people in them don't have the power to fight back, and no one outside them cares. Workers are increasingly exploited because the union movement was smashed and no one has repaired it yet. The NHS, in contrast, although being quietly butchered, was kept from wholesale privatisation even under Thatcher as the public simply wouldn't countenance it. Under Johnson – and Trump – it is being fought for by local groups from Southend to Carlisle furiously organising and campaigning to keep services open and in public hands. Their wins are slow, but significant.

That's the last thing we all need to remember if we want to make change: it isn't simply a concept. It's not something we can keep talking about. It's a verb, not a noun. It's something we need to make it happen.

Rebecca Winson is Senior Organiser at the New Economics Foundation

THE REVIEW: BE THE CHANGE

WORDS BY SOFIE JENKINSON



Everyone wants to believe that they can change the world. We all have the capacity to, so what is it that stops us? Is it fear? Is it a lack of confidence? Is it that it's bloody hard work? Maybe it's all of those things. But many of us have lost sight of change, for the good, as a possibility. And that's not, as this book helps outline, an accident.

Gina Martin was just another human person going about her life, minding her own business when something happened to her that stopped her in her tracks and made making a change an almost non-negotiable aim. In the balmy summer of 2017 Gina went to a festival and someone took pictures up her skirt. Upon realising that nothing could be done about this under the law (in England; it has been illegal in Scotland since 2010) she decided to take action – and while she did not take action immediately, take action she did and in 2019 the voyeurism act came into law. Boom.

Gina's book *Be The Change* is part story, part practical guide. First, it tells the story of Gina's experience both of the triggering event itself, the aftermath and the decision to take action, and then it tells you how you can apply some of the lessons she learnt along the way and create change of your own.

Now, change isn't easy. And as discussed in Rebecca Winson's fantastic article just one leaf back on page 34, change is a many-feathered

thing. It's a noun and a verb, it doesn't mean the same to everyone and it can go in more than one direction. So the definition of change is hard enough, but making it? Boy oh boy, that's a whole other kettle of fish.

In the scene setting of the book Gina explores how it's no coincidence that people feel they have no power (often they don't) but also it's when people know and feel they can make a difference, however small, that they begin to claim their power. She says:

"It's time to realise that normal everyday people know, truly, what matters most. Normal everyday people hold the key to change because they understand better than anyone what needs to change. They see it and live it, day in, day out."

This is exactly what we, at the New Economics Foundation, believe. That you can make as much policy as you want and offer solutions until you're blue in the face but if that thing doesn't work for the people over there living their lives, those that are being impacted by that problem or need that solution, then it doesn't really matter. Some things are big picture and top down and clearer to find a fix for (like a welfare system pushing more and more people into poverty, or making something illegal that it should be like Gina did) but some things need different solutions in different places and for different people. And those people should have a voice in that.

One of the reasons that Be the Change is a great book is that it gives you a spectrum of options and places to start – whether that be in a campaign you want to run or just things you've been thinking about changing in your life. From thinking differently about how you spend your money, to challenging your own privilege and changing things in your social circle, through to mapping out the course of a campaign and writing a media strategy, this book really is a little pot of mind-tingling things that are both challenging and useful. And that's true no matter where you are in your journey of activism, campaigning or just trying to live your life in a better way.

For me, the most powerful part of Be The Change is the chapter on white privilege. The reason it is especially powerful? Because it appears twice – once written by Gina and once edited by the incredible anti-racism educator, writer and fashion consultant Aja Barber. As with everything Aja does it's challenging and hugely instructive – it's a valuable resource to use to educate yourself (which if you hold white privilege like I do, you have a duty to do) and it is a useful exercise in getting comfortable with being wrong and then working to be better.

Self-education is a privilege and time is a privilege. And taking action is so often left to those without much. In the lives of (young) women, people of colour, people living with disabilities both visible and not – something can often happen which thrusts you into taking action, or at the very least standing up for

yourself against a powerful force. Whether that be power in the broadest and immeasurable terms like patriarchy and white supremacy, or whether that be the specifically held power of law and policy makers or businesses.

In a world where things often feel stuck, power seems more consolidated than ever and making change seems as daunting as it ever did, this book is a ray of light. But it's more than the 'toolkit' it self-defines as. Be The Change is a call to personal arms – to take your self-education seriously, to take responsibility for the things you should and to start the change you want to create within you. It pulls on thread of Ghandi's famous phrase deliberately, of course, because a large part of what Gina is talking about here is change within yourself – change where you get your information, change how you spend your money, change what you read and how you challenge yourself, change the narrow feed of people you follow on the internet who look like you. To make the changes we need in the world, we need an army of people who take changes seriously enough to do it for and within themselves every day.

In Gina's own words:

"...the truth is, politics has never just been about the people working in Westminster's beautiful buildings. It's always been a process of making decisions, and the organising and managing of situations that affect a group of people or a community. It's the way we live. It's in how your workplace runs, it's in the fabric of our communities and in our friendship circles, and as soon as you realise it's about far more than just the Houses of Parliament, it becomes a lot less daunting. Politics is something the people have a role in because it is simply the way in which our society is run, and becoming part of changing that is what pushes politicians to listen and realise what matters to the people."

Sofie Jenkinson is Head of Communications and News at the New Economics Foundation

THE NEXT ISSUE

WE ARE OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEW ECONOMICS ZINE.

THE THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY. WE ARE INTERESTED IN ANY PIECES ABOUT HOW OUR MENTAL STATE INTERACTS WITH THE ECONOMY. THIS COULD INCLUDE (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO): OUR MENTAL STATE UNDER NEOLIBERALISM; AUSTERITY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; WHAT A WELLBEING ECONOMY COULD LOOK LIKE; WHETHER WELLBEING IS JUST ABOUT CREATING BETTER WORKERS; HOW DIFFERENT IDENTITIES INTERSECT WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.

TO PITCH AN ARTICLE IDEA TO US PLEASE EMAIL:

ZINE@NEWECONOMICS.ORG

WE CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

CHANGE THE RULES

Coming soon: a digital platform to map new economy projects around the UK and showcase the policies we need to make the economy work for everyone.

NEW
ECONOMICS
FOUNDATION

THE NEW ECONOMICS ZINE

PEOPLE. PLANET. POWER