

As Costs of Climate Crisis Grow, Protest Movement Escalates

Long term campaigns to decarbonize the economy and demand emergency climate policies are getting stronger, write Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers.

By **Kevin Zeese** and **Margaret Flowers**

PopularResistance.org



The warnings of climate chaos are coming so fast they are difficult to keep up with. Storms, heatwaves and climate-related weather disasters are increasing at a rapid pace. The leadership of the two corporate-dominated political parties are trying to keep the climate issue out of the 2020 campaign, but the movement is becoming too big to ignore.

Climate justice protests against fossil fuel infrastructure, politicians and the media are also growing. An industry publication describes how [activists are “driving pipeline rejections”](#) reporting, “From large, interstate pipelines to small lines connecting towns and neighborhoods, anti-fossil fuel activists have proven highly successful at blocking, through regulations or lawsuits, new natural gas infrastructure in the Northeastern United States.”

Reports of Climate Chaos

Several reports in recent weeks are expressing new concerns about the climate crisis.

[An MIT study published last week](#) found that we may be “at the precipice of an excitation” of the carbon cycle. Authors reported that when the rate at which carbon dioxide enters the oceans pushes past a certain critical threshold, it can trigger a reflex of severe ocean acidification that lasts for 10,000 years. The history of the earth shows that over the last 540 million years, this has coincided with four of the five great mass extinctions. Today’s oceans are absorbing carbon at an order of magnitude faster than the worst case in the geologic record, even though humans have only been extracting carbon for the last 100 years. This is likely to be similar to past global catastrophes potentially culminating in the Earth’s sixth mass extinction.

A [June 20](#) report by the [Center for Climate Integrity](#) found that U.S. coastal communities face more than \$400 billion in costs over the next 20 years, much of it sooner, to defend themselves from inevitable sea-level rise.

Related to this, a [study published May 20](#) in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* concluded that coasts should plan for 6.5 feet of sea level rise by 2100. Ice loss from Antarctica and Greenland could cause far more sea-level rise than previously thought.

These reports are forcing the power structure to face the reality of the climate crisis. Last month, Moody’s Analytics examined the economic impact of the failure to curb planet-warming emissions in [“The Economic Implications of Climate Change.”](#) Moody’s warns there will be a \$69 trillion price tag by 2100 due to the far-reaching economic damage of the climate crisis. They warned: “There is no denying it: The longer we wait to take bold action to curb

emissions, the higher the costs will be for all of us.”

These reports come at a time of increased climate-caused disasters.

- This year, wildfires have scorched more than 1.2 million acres in Alaska, making it one of the state’s three biggest fire years on record. Fires are spreading farther north into the Arctic, burning more intensely and starting earlier in the year as climate models have suggested. On July 4, Anchorage hit 90°F, breaking the city’s all-time record by 5 degrees. Alaska’s statewide average temperature was 7.9°F above average, according to NOAA’s latest National State of the Climate report. For the first time in the 95-year record, the year-long July-to-June average temperature for Alaska as a whole was above freezing.
- Around the world, global warming has clearly contributed to an increase in extreme fires from tropical rainforests to boreal evergreen forests, and they are often linked with heatwaves. Fires pose new threats to places that aren’t used to experiencing them, including temperate mid-latitude forests near regions with dense populations, as shown by unusual wildfires in places like Germany during last summer’s European heatwave and drought. There is rapid growth of unusually extreme fires burning across South America, Australia, and western North America like the extreme fires in California and Canada last year.
- Tropical Storm Barry, fueled by warm offshore waters, recently caused downpours in Louisiana. The situation showed the compounding of risks that

scientists have been warning about due to climate change. Like [Hurricane Florence](#) in North Carolina last year and [Hurricane Harvey](#), which sat over Houston for days in 2017, Barry brought heavy rainfall and flooding on the coast and lower Mississippi Valley, [according to the National Hurricane Center](#).

- A [report released July 10 by the NOAA](#) finds that sunny-day flooding has doubled since 2000 in the United States. Floods interfered with traffic in northeast states, swamped septic systems in Florida and choked Delaware and Maryland coastal farms with saltwater over the past year. In 2018, the [U.S. tied the record for high-tide flood days](#). The report predicted that annual flood records will be broken again next year and for years and decades to come due to sea-level rise.
- In Indian Country, according to the 2018 [National Climate Assessment](#), weather on the Northern Great Plains has been getting more variable, erratic and destructive. In 2011, the Northern Plains faced a rash of wildfires and drought, followed in 2012, by severe flooding. Occasionally, these take the form of high-powered storms, like tornadoes that ravaged South Dakota reservations in 2016, or the ice storm of 2018, or the bomb cyclone of 2019. A bomb cyclone, last March occurred when an unseasonably hot column of air shot suddenly upward and collided with the frigid high atmosphere sending barometric pressure plummeting. In seconds, the sky erupted bringing devastating wind, storm, and [flooding](#). Homes and ranches of South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation were hit like a missile, more than 500 homes were left uninhabitable. [Click here](#)

[for information on how you can help.](#)

- Washington, D.C., just experienced [nearly a month's worth of rain in an hour.](#) According to a paper published in the journal Nature, these intense rains are a byproduct of man-made [climate change.](#)
- Last month was the hottest June on record globally. In Europe, there were [record heat waves that sent Europe's temperatures soaring](#) to 114 degrees Fahrenheit.

Despite these realities, there is inadequate action by most nations of the world especially the United States. President Donald Trump [dismissed](#) the need for climate action during the G-20 summit in Japan, saying he doesn't want to take action to confront the emergency because such a move would threaten corporate profits. As experts have warned, if we do not confront the climate emergency now, we will pay much more later.

DNC Resisting Climate Debate

In the 2020 election cycle, the Democratic Party is resisting climate change as an issue even though [15](#) of its presidential candidates, [more than 50](#) of its member organizations in the states, and a slew of progressive organizations that make up its voting base, some armed with [petitions](#) bearing over 200,000 signatures, are calling for the Democratic National Committee to hold a separate climate-focused debate. On June 10, the [executive committee of the Democratic Party](#) in Miami-Dade County – the U.S. metropolitan area considered [most vulnerable to sea-level rise](#) – voted unanimously to urge Democrats to devote one of the 12 Democratic presidential debates to the climate crisis.

DNC Chairman Tom Perez, who rejected a climate-focused debate, tried to explain the party's opposition in [a post on Medium](#), saying it would be impractical to hold a single-issue forum. His refusal [led to hundreds of activists sitting in at the DNC headquarters](#), including sleeping overnight, before the first debate, demanding a debate on climate change.

Sen. [Bernie Sanders](#) and Rep. [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) introduced a [resolution](#) asking Congress to declare that global warming is an emergency and demanding a massive mobilization of resources to protect the U.S. economy, society and national security. They called for “a national, social, industrial, and economic mobilization of the resources and labor of the United States at a massive-scale to halt, reverse, mitigate, and prepare for the consequences of the climate emergency and to restore the climate for future generations.”

Billionaire [Tom Steyer](#) has entered the 2020 race pledging to spend \$100 million and focus his campaign on climate change. In his [first television advertisement](#), he focused on the corruption of government and the economy and on climate. He said: “You look at climate change, that is people who are saying we’d rather make money than save the world.”

Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins has put forward an [ecosocialist Green New Deal](#) that not only transitions to a clean energy economy but remakes the economy and creates an economic bill of rights while cutting the military budget by 75 percent.

The Climate Justice Movement's Growing Power

The movement is building power and impacting the direction of the U.S. and the world, but the response by those supporting the status quo was shown in France recently when on the hottest day in French history climate protesters were brutally tear-gassed for demanding climate action.

PARIS – Intervention des CRS qui utilisent des gazeuses pour tenter de déloger les militants.

Plusieurs journalistes ont été empêcher de filmer. pic.twitter.com/XzwTCTYyJE

– Clément Lanot (@ClementLanot) [June 28, 2019](#)

This action, occurring in Paris where the Paris Climate Accord was reached, adds to the heightening of the conflict. The inadequate Paris agreement showed the movement must do more than rely on international agreements.

Third Phase

A longtime labor and climate activist, Jeremy Brecher, describes the climate movement entering a third phase. In the first phase, the man-made climate crisis was confirmed and the movement focused on international agreements and lobbying governments. The second phase arose when the Copenhagen agreement failed, leading to a protest movement against fossil fuel infrastructure, protests of fossil fuel corporations and against investors funding climate-destroying infrastructure.

The third phase centers around a global Green New Deal. It involves protests, electoral demands, and challenging inaction of fossil fuel-funded politicians. He points to groups like Sunrise, Extinction Rebellion and the Student

Strike for Climate as examples of this phase. It is a meta-movement that integrates, environmentalism, ecological restoration, social justice, racial equality, workers' rights, restorative agriculture, and many other challenges to our unjust and unsustainable world order into a practical program.

Climate protests, which have been ongoing for a decade, are having victories. Recently, two major oil pipelines for carrying crude oil from Canada's tar sands region were called into question as judges in Minnesota overturned a key approval for a proposed pipeline and Michigan's attorney general threatened to shut down an aging pipeline under the Great Lakes. These were the latest setbacks for a series of five pipelines designed to transport tar sands that have either been canceled or delayed. The other projects include Energy East and Northern Gateway, both of which were canceled, and Trans Mountain expansion and Keystone XL pipelines, both of which are on hold.

On July 13, climate activists from Beyond Extreme Energy held a protest outside Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) commissioner Cheryl LaFleur's home in Massachusetts. They demanded that LaFleur vote "no" on all new fossil fuel infrastructure. Jordan Engel listed the 100 people responsible for killing the planet. Holding people accountable is becoming a reality in this new phase of climate activism.

People are connecting the issue of militarism with climate. In Maine, 22 people were arrested protesting spending on Navy ships urging "Fund Climate Solutions, Not Endless War." The facts are in, the Pentagon is a top global climate

polluter. Popular Resistance and other organizations are organizing the People's Mobilization to Stop the U.S. War Machine and Save the Planet on Sept. 22 and 23, while the UN High Commission meets, and encouraging people to participate in other actions that weekend, the Climate Strike and Puerto Rican Independence Day March. In our most recent interview on Clearing the FOG, we spoke with David Schwartzman, author of "The Earth is Not For Sale," about ending Fossil Fuel Militarized Capitalism.

Extinction
Rebellion
brought the
protest
movement to
*The New York
Times*. On
June 24, 70
were arrested
demanding the
Times cover
the climate
crisis as a
global
emergency.
During a sit-
in on 8th
Avenue they
chanted "Report
the urgency,
this is a
climate



emergency!” On Monday, Extinction Rebellion D.C. demonstrated at the Capitol.

The movement continues to grow. More than 7,000 colleges and universities across the globe declared a climate emergency on July 10 committing to mobilize on the crisis. This month, more than 70 health organizations called for urgent action on “one of the greatest threats to health America has ever faced,” calling it the “cancer of climate change.” They cite storm and flood emergencies, chronic air pollution, the spread of diseases carried by insects, and heat-related illnesses. Extreme heat has been the leading cause of weather-related deaths.

The movement is having an impact and industry and politicians know it. Long term campaigns to stop climate infrastructure, force banks and investors to divest from the fossil fuel industry and demand emergency climate policies are getting stronger.

At the beginning of July, after a meeting of OPEC in Vienna, their Secretary-General Mohammed Barkindo said, “there is a growing mass mobilization of world opinion... against oil,” children “are asking us about their future because... they see their peers on the streets campaigning against this industry.” Barkindo added the “mobilization” was “beginning to... dictate policies and corporate decisions, including investment in the industry.”

In testimony to British lawmakers this month, famed scientist and environmental advocate David Attenborough said, “We cannot be radical enough in dealing with the issues that face us at the moment. The question is: what is

practically possible? How can we take the electorate with us in dealing with these things?" It is the job of the climate movement to push political systems to respond.

Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers co-direct [Popular Resistance](#).

A version of this article first appeared on [PopularResistance.org](#).

Announcing CN Live! A Weekly Current Events Webcast Beginning Friday on Consortium News

Consortium News announces the launch on Friday of a weekly webcast news show as a successor to the Vigils for Assange that will also delve into other pressing issues of the day.

CN Live! will air every Friday from 2 pm to 4 pm U.S. Eastern time and can be seen here streaming live on **Consortium News** as well as on our [YouTube Channel](#), our [Facebook page](#) and on Periscope. It will also be archived on those platforms.

Besides the latest news on *WikiLeaks* and Julian Assange, our panel will discuss the coming U.S. presidential election, the Middle East, East-West relations, U.S. foreign policy, climate change, media, domestic and international politics and more.

On our premiere edition, Francis Boyle, international law

professor, will pick apart the intelligence and political machinations behind the arrest of financier Jeffery Epstein on sex trafficking charges; Marjorie Cohn, professor emeritus of law, and former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, will discuss the Democratic Party primary battle; As'ad AbuKhalil, political science professor, will analyze the latest developments in Syria, Iran and other parts of the Middle East region; and George Szamuely will join hosts Joe Lauria and Elizabeth Vos to dissect the latest news on Assange and *WikiLeaks*.

Join us Friday at 2 pm EDT for **CN Live!**

The Danger of Getting Sidetracked

What this story really shows is how the corporate media derails meaningful debates and draws us all into a modern version of bread and circuses, writes Jonathan Cook.

By **Jonathan Cook**

Jonathan-Cook.net



I really do not wish to write about Mark Field, the British government minister who assaulted a climate change activist last week, grabbing her by the neck and violently marching her out of a City of London dinner while all the hundreds of other wealthy diners watched either impassively or approvingly.

But whatever my wishes, it seems I must.

I don't wish to write about Mark Field, because the media have constructed a debate that is limited to one matter only, even if there are apparently innumerable variations of that one issue to be raised.

Did Field behave like a gentleman or a knave? Is it reasonable that he believed the woman posed a danger? Is his apology enough? Were the climate change activists trespassing and, if they were, did that justify Field's actions? Has he broken the ministerial code of conduct? Would we still be outraged if the activist were a man? Should he resign? Is his outburst evidence he is a wife beater? And so on.

When we engage in these debates, they seem important. As if we are fighting for the health of our societies; or upholding key values, or at the very least the rule of law. As if it shows we care. As if it can make things a little better.

Media Lens Retweeted



Louise Haigh MP ✓
@LouHaigh



When someone's defence for assaulting a woman is that it was 'instinctive', the Ministerial Code is fairly low on my list of concerns...



Krishnan Guru-Murthy ✓ @krishgm · 16h

Mark Field says his behaviour towards the woman was "instinctive". He regrets it. His concern is whether the ministerial code has been breached.
twitter.com/paulbranditv/s...

8:35 AM · Jun 21, 2019 · [Twitter for Android](#)

Which is exactly why I don't want to write about Mark Field. Because the reality is that things won't get better while we allow ourselves to be manipulated into these kind of ring-

fenced debates.

There is a reason why the corporate media quickly escalate simple stories like Mark Field's into such apparently elaborate and polarizing public discussions. And the reason is to stop other kinds of debates, much more vital ones, from taking place that these stories would naturally provoke if we had a truly free media. We are being offered the modern version of bread and circuses.

Strip away the narrow, sectarian party politics in play here, and there is nothing debatable about Mark Field's actions. He is caught on camera – his face full of rage, not fear – violently grabbing an activist who clearly poses no threat to him and who is, in fact, simply walking behind his chair. Field pushes her up against a wall, then seizes her by the back of the neck and frog-marches her out of the dining hall. If you feel it necessary, you can also factor in that the activist is a woman and the government minister a man.

Simple Situation

Either way, what is shown in the video is an entirely unjustified attack on a peaceful protester. Had the roles been reversed, the activist (whether a man or woman) would have been immediately arrested for assaulting a government minister. The activist would now be in jail with lawyers arguing over whether bail should be allowed. So why isn't Mark Field now in the same predicament?

The point is that anyone who wishes to make the argument any more complex than the one I just outlined is doing so either

in bad faith or because they have listened too credulously to others who have spoken in bad faith. Which includes the entire spectrum of the state-corporate media, including its supposedly liberal components like the BBC and the *Guardian*.



Johnny Mercer MP 
@JohnnyMercerUK



Honestly? Try being in our shoes in the current environment.

He panicked, he's not trained in restraint and arrest, and if you think this is 'serious violence', you may need to recalibrate your sensitivities. Calm down, move on, and be thankful this wasn't worse.

What the story about Mark Field really illustrates is how effective the corporate media is in derailing meaningful debates about the state of our societies. The media offer us a placebo – a public arena for largely empty arguments that we are encouraged to become deeply invested in emotionally.

We are offered two easy options and must choose to rally to the cause of one of those tribes – left or right. And through righteous anger, for or against, we feel temporarily cured of a deeper dissatisfaction or sense of foreboding.

The reality is that these public debates are simply gladiatorial contests offering instant – and hollow – gratification. They have as much concrete meaning in terms of changing the substance of our societies, of addressing the injustice and unsustainability of our political and economic systems, as does cheering a football team.

That is not to argue that denouncing an assault on a peaceful protester is wasted energy, or that rationalizing it – as so many people on the right are currently doing – is not deeply ugly. The treatment of protesters by the state and its agents, or of women by men, are important matters for public discussion. But that is *not* why the media are so willingly fueling the row about Mark Field's actions.

Deflecting Attention

The debate is not being used as an opportunity to clarify how our society should view acceptable behavior; it is being actively promoted by a ruling class to deflect our attention from the deeper contextual issues the Mark Field episode highlights.



Darren Grimes 
@darrengimes_



I think the reality we need to face up to is that these climate change protestors won't be pleased until we're all crawling around in our own filth and only the rich can go on holiday, drive a car or eat meat. Can we stop pandering to them, please?

10:17 AM · Jun 21, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Allowing two sides in a debate about whether he behaved appropriately is already to have conceded the progressive argument. It is to accept that there is room for discussion, that the video evidence is not conclusive in itself.

This is a contest where the stakes are so immaterial to the corporate media that each outlet can afford to take either side of the debate and know it will make no meaningful difference. They can berate Mark Field or sympathize with him, and it will make no odds to anyone or anything but Field and possibly the victim of his assault.

And the very cynical fueling of this debate by the state-corporate media, one that may last days or even weeks, can then be cited as seemingly persuasive evidence that the media truly is a pluralistic forum for public discussion, where all sides are represented, where everyone is given a voice. Contrived debates like this one will be used as ammunition to shunt media critics like myself further into sidings, showing how vigorous, relevant and on the side of the underdog the “mainstream” media really is.

This is the primary purpose of the state-corporate media. To draw our energies away from real issues hiding in plain sight towards obvious ones of only specific or marginal significance, and then persuade us that we are in fact engaged with the most vital issues of the day.

Personalities, Not Power Structures

This is precisely why the media are obsessed with individuals and personalities – celebs, sporting heroes, royal family members, actors, politicians, world leaders – not the actual power structures that dictate the patterns of our lives, that determine the chances of us gaining redress or justice, that offer the key to extricating ourselves from the economic and environmental ruin we are hurtling towards.



Jeremy Vine 
@theJeremyVine



Day one of Tory leadership contest:

1. Police called to Boris Johnson flat after neighbours hear screaming and crashing
2. Jeremy Hunt has to suspend one of his Foreign Office ministers for throwing a woman against a wall

This could be a lively month
[#conservativeleadership](#)

If necessary, Mark Field can be sacrificed by the power structures that dominate our lives (though usually only temporarily – think of other government ministers who have found themselves briefly ousted from power and then quickly rehabilitated, such as Boris Johnson or Liam Fox) because

the mechanisms that protect these power structures are far more important than the punishment or humiliation or any lone individual.

Consider two much deeper issues desperately struggling to gain any traction as they are smothered by the media's gleeful furor over the Mark Field story.

One concerns the event Mark Field attended. It was an annual dinner at Mansion House, the official residence of the mayor of the City of London. The City of London is not the Mary Poppins' way of saying "London." It is a tiny, secretive enclave within Britain, a state within a state located in the heart of London. Seen another way, it is a kind of British Vatican, though one that worships money alone.

Corrupt Fiefdom

It abides by its own rules, financial and criminal, creating effectively a tax-haven within the UK that cannot be policed by any of the usual watchdogs. The City of London has managed to continue unreformed from its medieval origins into the modern era for one reason alone: it is the perfect way for a wealthy elite to maintain their power and privilege by bypassing the imperfect democratic system operating outside its concrete shores, in the rest of the U.K. The City of London is a deeply corrupt fiefdom inside a slightly less corrupt Britain. If the mafia were given the chance to make themselves look legit, they might create in Italy something very much like the City of London.

Those attending the dinner are drawn from either Britain's wealth elite, or those who serve them and aspire to join them. Figures such as Field, a minister in the Foreign

Office, and Philip Hammond, the chancellor, who addressed the dinner, oil some of the wheels of this exclusive club partially out in the open, through U.K. politics. But they oil other wheels in the shadows, through their activities in the City of London. What precisely they get up to in the City is difficult to know given the secrecy, and all the harder to now learn about after Field's ruling party has worked so assiduously to hobble Julian Assange and the *WikiLeaks* platform that was established to help whistleblowers expose the more shadowy activities of our rulers.



talkRADIO 
@talkRADIO



Sir Michael Fallon responds after Mark Field MP manhandled a protester out of a dinner: "It was an appalling breach of security ... we should work out how these people actually got in and why there were not enough security to get them out."

The City of London is the biggest weapon in the armory of the ruling elite's class war against the British – and global – public. It is a vacuum sucking up public finances

to further enrich the wealthy and leave the masses reeling from austerity policies, while using the media to bolster the impression that it is a hub of wealth creation.

That's why you almost never hear anything about the City of London. Our supposed representatives, politicians and corporate media alike, are happy to keep the veil mostly drawn across this pocket of power. It is not just that they do not want to take it on, they are already very much part of the power structures it has designed both to preserve itself and shield itself from meaningful criticism.

As long as we are talking about Mark Field's attitude to women, we are not talking about his and his government's active collusion with the most regressive, secretive, unaccountable rotten borough in the UK – a city-state located geographically inside Britain, but operating outside its strictures.

Mark Field's attack could have provided an opportunity to examine this powerful relic of medieval Britain, to consider who the City of London really serves, and to wonder why the political class are cozying up to it rather than trying to eradicate it as a dangerous behemoth of Britain's surviving feudal order. The City of London is integral to a system of ever-accelerating wealth hoarding by a global elite that is economically unsustainable. But in response, the media willingly amplify a loud culture war and simplistic identity politics precisely so no other kind of debate stands a chance of being audible.



Julia Hartley-Brewer 
@JuliaHB1



Morning all. This happened last night. I have a funny feeling that, in a few years' time, this is how **most** of us are going to feel towards climate protesters...

The other, even more obvious issue the activists were trying to draw attention to was the threat posed to the environment, to other species and to our own future by the preposterous, self-serving premise – espoused by the City of London and its politician and media cronies – of endless economic growth based on the exploitation of the planet's finite resources.

Late Waking to Emergency

We are now facing a climate emergency – or rather some of us are finally and very belatedly waking up to a climate emergency that has been many decades in the making. We have come to it so late because the wealth elite represented at the City of London dinner have used the key power structures at their disposal – the political and media establishments –

to deceive us, to keep us sleepwalking towards oblivion as they have carried on plundering the planet, destroying the biosphere, and stashing away their inordinate wealth.

The state-corporate media has not only downplayed climate change but is still doing so, as credibly as it can manage given the relentless scientific evidence that human society is hurtling towards an abyss.

In fact, many of the journalists responding to Mark Field's attack have lost no time in using it as a way to further alienate the public from climate change activism. They have presented those prepared not simply to wait quietly for us all to be driven over the cliff-edge as a nasty, uncouth, potentially violent rabble. They have done this even as the video footage shows the women who protested at the Mansion House dinner were dressed in evening gowns and remained entirely peaceful as they sought to gain attention for the most urgent and catastrophic issue of our time.

There should be no debate that they are right, that we live in a rotten and rotting system of power that has blindly invested all its energies in perpetuating a feudal system of wealth creation for a ruling class, even as the futures of our children – all our children – hang in the balance.

Yes, Mark Field, his face red with indignation, looked like a man who had lost the plot, who was filled with an overwhelming sense of his own entitlement, and who was deeply threatened – not by violence from the protesters but by arguments he simply has no way of addressing rationally.

The real debate we need urgently to engage with is not whether Mark Field is a wife-beater or misogynist. It is how

we deal with the power structure he represents, the system he is a loyal servant of. For that psychopathic system is ready to beat us all, men and women alike, into the dust, to keep extracting the last ounce of wealth from a dying corpse, to obliterate our futures.

Jonathan Cook is a freelance journalist based in Nazareth.

This article is from his blog, [Jonathan Cook.net](http://JonathanCook.net).

Fake Meat: Big Food's Attempt to Further Industrialize What We Eat

We need to decolonize our food cultures and our minds of food imperialism, writes Vandana Shiva.

By Vandana Shiva

[Independent Science News](http://IndependentScienceNews.com)



Food is not a commodity, it is not “stuff” put together mechanically and artificially in labs and factories. Food is life. Food holds the contributions of all beings that make the food web, and it holds the potential of maintaining and regenerating the web of life. Food also holds the potential for health and disease, depending on how it was grown and processed. Food is therefore the living currency of the web of life.

As an ancient Upanishad reminds us “Everything is food, everything is something else’s food.”

Good food and real food are the basis of health.

Bad food, industrial food, fake food is the basis of disease.

Hippocrates said "Let food be thy medicine." In Ayurveda, India's ancient science of life, food is called "sarvausadha" the medicine that cures all disease.

Industrial food systems have reduced food to a commodity, to "stuff" that can then be constituted in the lab. In the process both the planet's health and our health has been nearly destroyed.

Planetary Impacts

Seventy five percent of the planetary destruction of soil, water, biodiversity, and 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from industrial agriculture, which also contributes to 75 percent of food-related chronic diseases. It contributes 50 percent of the greenhouse gases driving climate change. Chemical agriculture does not return organic matter and fertility to the soil. Instead it is contributing to desertification and land degradation. It also demands more water since it destroys the soil's natural water-holding capacity. Industrial food systems have destroyed the biodiversity of the planet both through the spread of monocultures, and through the use of toxics and poisons which are killing bees, butterflies, insects, birds, leading to the sixth mass extinction.

Biodiversity-intensive and poison-free agriculture, on the other hand, produces more nutrition per acre while rejuvenating the planet. It shows the path to "zero hunger" in times of climate change.

The industrial agriculture and toxic food model has been promoted as the only answer to economic and food security.

However, globally, more than 1 billion people are hungry. More than 3 billion suffer from food-related chronic diseases.

It uses 75 percent of the land yet industrial agriculture based on fossil fuel intensive, chemical intensive monocultures produce only 30 percent of the food we eat. Meanwhile, small, biodiverse farms using 25 percent of the land provide 70 percent of the food. At this rate, if the share of industrial agriculture and industrial food in our diet is increased to 45 percent, we will have a dead planet. One with no life and no food.

The mad rush for fake food and fake meat, ignorant of the diversity of our foods and food cultures, and the role of biodiversity in maintaining our health, is a recipe for accelerating the destruction of the planet and our health.

GM0 Soya is Unsafe

In a recent article ["How our commitment to consumers and our planet led us to use GM soy," Pat Brown](#), CEO & founder of Impossible Foods, says: "We sought the safest and most environmentally responsible option that would allow us to scale our production and provide the Impossible Burger to consumers at a reasonable cost."

Given the fact that 90 percent of the monarch butterflies have disappeared due to Roundup ready crops, and we are living through what scientists have called an "insectageddon," using GM0 soya is hardly an "environmentally responsible option."

In writing this, Pat Brown reveals his ignorance about weeds evolving to resist Roundup and becoming "superweeds" now

requiring more and more lethal herbicides. Bill Gates and DARPA are even calling for the use of gene drives to exterminate amaranth, a sacred and nutritious food in India, because the Palmer Amaranth has become a superweed in the Roundup Ready soya fields of the U.S.

At a time when across the world the movement to ban GMOs and Roundup is growing, promoting GMO soya as “fake meat” is misleading the eater both in terms of the ontology of the burger, and on claims of safety.

The “Impossible Burger” based on GMO, Roundup sprayed soya is not a “safe” option.

Zen Honeycutt and Moms across America just announced that the Impossible Burger tested positive for glyphosate. “The levels of glyphosate detected in the Impossible Burger by Health Research Institute Laboratories were 11 X higher than the Beyond Meat Burger. The total result (glyphosate and its break down AMPA) was 11.3 ppb. Moms Across America also tested the Beyond Meat Burger and the results were 1 ppb.

“We are shocked to find that the Impossible Burger can have up to 11X higher levels of glyphosate residues than the Beyond Meat Burger according to these samples tested. This new product is being marketed as a solution for ‘healthy’ eating, when in fact 11 ppb of glyphosate herbicide consumption can be highly dangerous. Only 0.1 ppb of glyphosate has been shown to destroy gut bacteria, which is where the stronghold of the immune system lies.”

Recent court cases have showcased the links of Roundup to cancer. With the build up of liabilities related to cancer

cases, the investments in Roundup Ready GMO soya is blindness to the market.

Or the hope that fooling consumers can rescue Bayer/Monsanto.

There is another ontological confusion related to fake food. While claiming to get away from meat, “fake meat” is about selling meat-like products.

Pat Brown declares “we use genetically engineered yeast to produce heme, the “magic” molecule that makes meat taste like meat – and makes the Impossible Burger the only plant-based product to deliver the delicious explosion of flavor and aroma that meat-eating consumers crave.”

I had thought that the plant-based diet was for vegans and vegetarians, not meat lovers.

Big Food & Big Money Driving Fake Food Goldrush

Indeed, the promotion of fake foods seems to have more to do with giving new life to the failing GMO agriculture and the junk food industry, and the threat to it from the rising of consciousness and awareness everywhere that organic, local, fresh food is real food which regenerates the planet and our health. In consequence, investment in “plant-based food companies” has soared from nearly zero in 2009 to \$600 million by 2018. And these companies are looking for more.

Pat Brown declares, “If there’s one thing that we know, it’s that when an ancient unimprovable technology counters a better technology that is continuously improvable, it’s just a matter of time before the game is over.” He added, “I think our investors see this as a \$3 trillion opportunity.”

This is about profits and control. He, and those jumping on the fake-food goldrush, have no discernible knowledge, or consciousness about, or compassion for living beings, the web of life, nor the role of living food in weaving that web.

Their sudden awakening to “plant-based diets,” including GMO soya, is an ontological violation of food as a living system that connects us to the ecosystem and other beings, and indicates ignorance of the diversity of cultures that have used a diversity of plants in their diets.

Interconnections

Ecological sciences have been based on the recognition of the interconnections and interrelatedness between humans and nature, between diverse organisms, and within all living systems, including the human body. It has thus evolved as an ecological and a systems science, not a fragmented and reductionist one. Diets have evolved according to climates and the local biodiversity the climate allows. The biodiversity of the soil, of the plants and our gut microbiome is one continuum. In Indian civilization, technologies are tools. Tools need to be assessed on ethical, social and ecological criteria. Tools/technologies have never been viewed as self-referential. They have been assessed in the context of contributing to the wellbeing of all.

Through fake food, evolution, biodiversity, and the web of life is being redefined as an “ancient unimprovable technology.” That ignores sophisticated forms of knowledge that have evolved in diverse agricultural and food cultures

in diverse climate and ecosystems to sustain and renew the biodiversity, the ecosystems, the health of people and the planet.

The Eat Forum, which brought out a report that tried to impose a monoculture diet of chemically grown, hyper-industrially-processed food on the world has a partnership through FrESH with the junk food industry, and Big Ag such as Bayer, BASF, Cargill, Pepsico amongst others.



Fake food is thus building on a century and a half of food imperialism and food colonization of our diverse food knowledges and food cultures.

Big Food and Big Money are behind the Fake Food Industry. Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos are funding startups.

We need to decolonize our food cultures and our minds of food imperialism

The industrial West has always been arrogant, and ignorant, of the cultures it has colonized. "Fake Food" is just the latest step in a history of food imperialism.

Soya is a gift of East Asia, where it has been a food for

millennia. It was only eaten as fermented food to remove its anti-nutritive factors. But recently, GMO soya has created a soya imperialism, destroying plant diversity. It continues the destruction of the diversity of rich edible oils and plant-based proteins of Indian dals that we have documented.

Women from India's slums called on me to bring our mustard back when GMO soya oil started to be dumped on India, and local oils and cold press units in villages were made illegal.

That is when we started the "sarson (mustard) satyagraha" to defend our healthy cold pressed oils from dumping of hexane-extracted GMO soya oil.

Hexane is a neurotoxin. While Indian peasants knew that pulses, or legumes, fix nitrogen, the West was industrializing agriculture based on synthetic nitrogen, which contributes to greenhouse gases, dead zones in the ocean and dead soils. While we ate a diversity of "dals" in our daily "dal roti" the British colonizers, who had no idea of the richness of the nutrition of pulses, reduced them to animal food. Chana became chick pea, gahat became horse gram, tur became pigeon pea.

We stand at a precipice of a planetary emergency, a health emergency, a crisis of farmers livelihoods. Fake food will accelerate the rush to collapse. Real food gives us a chance to rejuvenate the earth, our food economies, food sovereignty and food cultures. Through real food we can decolonize our food cultures and our consciousness. We can remember that food is living and gives us life.

Boycott GMO Impossible Burger. Make tofu. Cook Dal.

Vandana Shiva is an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and alter-globalization author.

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The Madness of Fossil Fuel Subsidies

A system worried about global warming and the health impacts of air pollution should stop aiding companies that produce those public threats, writes Niklas Hagelberg.

By **Niklas Hagelberg**
in **NAIROBI, Kenya**
Inter Press Service



Fossil fuels – oil, gas, coal and their derivatives – pollute the atmosphere and emit the greenhouse gases that are ramping up global heating to dangerous levels. And governments around the world are subsidizing this pollution.

Historically, governments used fossil fuel subsidies for a variety of reasons, including to promote energy independence, encourage industry and cushion the poorest in society.

But they never took sufficient account of what economists call “externalities” such as air pollution and the resulting impacts on our health.

There is a special kind of madness in a system that funds the healthcare burden from asthma, respiratory diseases and

lung cancer, and at the same time funds companies that pollute the air and contribute towards these health issues in the first place.

Ordinary people pay the price three times over – taxes for healthcare, taxes to support fossil fuel subsidies and then the ultimate price of compromises to their health. Air pollution claims the lives of 1-in-9 every year and is the single biggest health risk facing people across the world. Fossil fuel subsidies often fail to benefit targeted groups and are a significant drain on national budgets.

Redirecting Resources

Global fossil fuel subsidies cost taxpayers about \$400 billion. Imagine if these public resources were directed to finance sustainable development, clean energy and [climate action](#).

Fossil fuel subsidies disproportionately benefit the top oil majors, help their profit margins and serve as a powerful disincentive to develop renewable energy. They also reduce the available pot of resources for investment in renewables.

Countries that heavily subsidize these fuels of the past are stifling the current and future business and economic opportunities that renewable energy provides.

Redirecting the money used for fossil fuel subsidies has the potential to accelerate our ability to address the global climate crisis, and ensure a just decarbonization. The additional resources could also be used for other development priorities such as health, education or infrastructure.

The planet can no longer afford these subsidies. We should move to scrap them as soon as possible and make the switch to a green economy.

Changing Energy Landscape

The energy transition is happening now, all around us. The growth rate of renewables is three times faster than fossil and nuclear fuel, with record growth rates in solar and wind power.

However, despite the rapid pace of change, the bulk of all our power for heating, lighting, cooking, transport and industry still comes from fossil fuels.

A major way to reduce air pollution – which exceeds World Health Organization safety levels in many cities around the world – is to switch more quickly away from fossil fuels. We should eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, except for liquefied petroleum gas cooking programs.

UN Environment, in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Institute for Sustainable Development Global Service Initiative, has developed a methodology to measure fossil fuel subsidies, providing comparable data to allow the tracking of national and global trends.

The [report](#) helps governments to understand the extent of the problem (for example what percentage of their Gross Domestic Product they spend on fossil fuel subsidies) and take action to reduce or abolish these subsidies.

Niklas Hagelberg is coordinator of the Climate Change Programme at UN Environment.

This article is from [Inter Press Service](#).

A 'Just Transition' from Fossil Fuels

All agree that there are no jobs on a dead planet, writes Linda Flood. But the road to fewer emissions is full of opinions.

By [Linda Flood](#)

in Stockholm

[Inter Press Service](#)



The trade unions' solution for a greener world is new jobs with good working conditions. The critics argue that there's not enough time. "We can either protect industrial jobs in the global north or save the climate," says political scientist Tadzio Müller.

Politicians, businesses, and unions all agree: there are no jobs on a dead planet. But the road to fewer emissions is full of opinions.

While the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere is expected to reach record levels this year, the work towards a "just transition" continues. The aim is to secure workers' interests when countries and employers convert to more climate-friendly ways of doing business.

"It is extremely urgent and I'm worried. But if employers, governments, and big financial interests had been more interested in the carbonization two decades ago we would have been in a great position," says Samantha Smith. She's

the director of the Just Transition Centre, created three years ago by the International Trade Union Confederation, the ITUC, to bring more attention to the matter and to gather unions, organizations, businesses, and countries in a social dialogue.

The UN climate change conference COP 24 took place in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, and “just transition” was high on the agenda.

The concept of “just transition” was first used by union activists in the U.S. in the 1980s. It took until 2013 for the United Nations’ agency [ILO to create](#) guidelines for “a Just Transition towards environmentally-sustainable economies and societies for all.” The [Paris Agreement](#) of 2015 also includes mentions of “just transition.” Through the Paris Agreement, governments commit to making sure that workers continue to have fair conditions during the climate adaption.

Fifty three countries, including Sweden, signed the [“The Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration,”](#) which states that the countries must consider workers’ perspectives while shifting to climate friendly policies.

In Sweden, issues on this matter are being discussed regularly at the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO, and Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, among others. Sida recently donated 1,5 million euros to the organization Bankwatch, to support the transition towards a coal free Eastern Europe.

Samantha Smith points out that every sector in every country will be affected in order to stay within the target of 1.5

°C warming above preindustrial levels that the report by the UN's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) recommends to avert the worst risks of heat waves, droughts and floods in areas of current human habitation.

“We wanted to start with rich countries because they have the wealth and capacity. In some poor countries you have a number of issues going on at the same time, one is recognizing basic labor rights which is also human rights.”

Tadzio Müller, political scientist and senior advisor on climate justice for the leftist foundation Rosa Luxembourg, says he supports workers' interests. “I am absolutely for giving workers every social protection that we can manage. I would even argue that a universal guaranteed income would be a great way to transition in heavy industrial regions, like western Germany or the north of France. I don't oppose just transition, but the fact is that the function of 'just transition' has been to slow down ambitious climate action.”

Müller adds: “If Sweden, Germany and Great Britain want to do their bit to save the climate they have to shut down old industrial infrastructure within the next 10-15 years so that the rest of the world can still emit some carbon emissions.”

Müller is critical of the trade union movement. “We have to be honest that it was, at least in part, the same industrial trade unions that called for a just transition that were fighting against ambitious climate politics and policies to save jobs,” he says. He mentions Germany's mining unions as an example.

Samantha Smith at the Just Transition Centre says to her critics: “What is your alternative? Especially in a democracy, like for example Germany. How are you going to shut down coal mines if local government and all the people working in the mines don’t agree to it?”

She points out that it’s better to do something than nothing.” And it’s better to do something that will support social justice and strengthen the labor movement and democracy to get down emissions.”

These are the 25 biggest carbon emitters in the world. These companies produced a fifth of the global carbon emissions, according to a review by Swedish newspaper *Dagens Industri*.

1. Coal India
2. PJSC Gazprom
3. Exxon Mobil Corporation
4. Cummins Inc.
5. Thyssenkrupp AG
6. Rosneft OAO
7. Royal Dutch Shell
8. China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation
9. China Shenhua Energy
10. Rio Tinto
11. Petrochina Company Limited
12. BHP Billiton
13. Petróleo Brasileiro SA – Petrobras
14. Korea Electric Power Corp
15. BP
16. Total
17. Valero Energy Corporation

18. Chevron Corporation
19. Toyota Motor Corporation
20. Wistron Corp
21. United Technologies Corporation
22. Peabody Energy Corporation
23. YTL Corp
24. Phillips 66
25. Volkswagen AG

Linda Flood is a reporter for *Arbetet Global*.

Translation by Cecilia Uder.

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Historic Anti-Nuke 'Golden Rule' Resumes Mission, Bound for Hiroshima, Nagasaki

The refurbished peace boat set sail on May 1, with its first leg taking it to Hawaii, reports Colonel Ann Wright.

'Wave Maker' Found Derelict in 2011

By Ann Wright

Special to Consortium News



A refurbished peace boat that left the coast of California 61 years ago on a historic quest to disrupt U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands is back at sea.

The Veterans for Peace boat, the Golden Rule, set sail from San Diego on May 1 on a 15-month voyage scheduled to raise awareness of the continuing, planetary dangers of nuclear weapons. The captain and crew aim to reach Hiroshima, Japan, in time for the Aug. 6, 2020, commemoration the 75th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of that city and of Nagasaki.

The Golden Rule was found derelict in Humboldt Bay, California, in 2011, by a shipyard owner, Leroy Zerlang. Two Veterans for Peace chapters in Northern California volunteered to restore it. With Chuck Dewitt as project manager, many volunteers carried out the work over the next four years.

“We are sailing for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful, sustainable future,” says Gerry Condon, national president of Veterans for Peace. “Now it is time for us to visit the island nations of the Pacific, which have suffered so much damage from nuclear testing and military bases.”

In 1958, the boat’s crew attempted to intervene in U.S. atmospheric nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands by sailing from California to the testing site. There, U.S. nuclear testing from 1946 to 1958 blew up several islands and atolls and radiated many Marshallese who are still suffering from the effects of the nuclear explosions. The combined explosive power of all the bombs dropped on the

Marshall Islands during that 12-year period equals 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day.

The U.S. Coast Guard stopped the 1958 crew twice in Honolulu, Hawaii, where they were arrested and jailed.

While the ship never made it to the Marshall Islands, the attempt drew international publicity to the dangers of atmospheric nuclear testing and helped mobilize citizens throughout the world to put pressure on their governments to stop the testing. Atmospheric and underwater nuclear testing was finally stopped in 1963 with the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom.

The current crew is now bound for their first stop in Hilo, Hawaii. This leg will take approximately three weeks, arriving during the week of May 21. The Golden Rule will stay in the waters around the Big Island of Hawaii for the month of June before heading for the island of Maui in July where she will remain until Aug. 7.

She will visit the small islands of Lanai and Molokai before sailing on to Oahu where she will remain for August, September and October. She will sail to Kauai for the month of November. In each of the islands, crew members will be speaking in schools and to civic groups.

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Hawaiian elder Puna Kalama Dawson flew to San Diego to give an invitation and a blessing for the Golden Rule to come to Hawaii, home to many U.S. military bases. She thanked

Veterans for Peace, the captain and crew for their commitment to peace in the world and for using the vessel as an educational vehicle for discussions about folly of nuclear weapons.

In December 2019, the captain and crew of the Golden Rule will sail to the Marshall Islands.

After a month in the Marshall Islands the Golden Rule will sail to Guam where the U.S. military is increasing the size of U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine and U.S. Air Force facilities. The next stops will be Saipan and Okinawa, sites of many U.S. military bases.

Follow the Golden Rule's voyage [on a map](#) that updates every 10 minutes and with a [daily blog](#). Email the Golden Rule Project to receive the [blog link by email](#).

The Current Crew

Captaining the Golden Rule from California to Hawaii is Dan Lappala of Hilo, Hawaii. He has been a professional sailor for decades, has owned his own sailing company in Hawaii. This will be his fifth voyage from the West Coast of the U.S. to Hawaii.

First Mate [Tom Rogers](#) of Keyport, Washington, is a retired U.S. Navy Captain who was the commander of nuclear submarines. After he retired from the U.S. Navy, he became a peace activist and is a volunteer with [Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action](#), which is near the Trident nuclear submarine base in Bangor, Washington.

The Trident submarine base at Bangor represents the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S. and is

the home port for eight of the Navy's 14 Trident ballistic missile submarines. The Trident bases at Bangor and Kings Bay, Georgia, together represent just over half of all the nuclear warheads deployed by the United States. When asked why he wants to eliminate nuclear weapons, Rogers said, "Our kids deserve to grow up in a world without nuclear weapons. It is a failure of our generation that they must live in fear of nuclear annihilation and bear the cost of a massive modernization of our nuclear weapons complex."

Crewmember Connie Burton, known as "C Be," is a sailor from Anahole, Kauai, Hawaii. She was taught to sail by Captain Dan in 2002 and has been sailing in Hawaii and Mexico ever since, including the Baha Ha Ha race from San Diego to Cabo. She has crewed on the [Hawaiian Chieftain](#) historic sail boat. She said she enjoys being a part of projects with an important purpose and "trying to inform people about the dangers of the nuclear weapons race is as important as it comes." In the 1980s she walked the length of Florida with a group challenging nuclear weapons.

Crewmember [Jamie Skinner](#) from La Center, Washington, was a pilot in the U.S. Navy and had a career as an airline pilot. He is now retired and has extensive sailing experience in the Pacific northwest. Jamie has been battling cancer, but it is in remission. "I feel it's a privilege to be a part of the crew on this voyage and I hope to be an advocate for a greater awareness of nuclear disarmament and trying to work towards world peace."

Alternate crewmember Chris Mayer from Berkeley, California, has helped with a multitude of tasks during the preparation of the boat for the voyage.

For the past two weeks, the Golden Rule operations manager Helen Jaccard has been familiarizing the captain and crew with the Golden Rule. Jaccard has been sailing on the Golden Rule for the past three years on its voyages along the West Coast of the U.S. She has been orienting the crew to the communications and navigational equipment, assuring proper rigging for a transpacific crossing, and ensuring that the crew is properly prepared with first aide training, man-overboard drills and providing the food and water needed for the three-week trip.

In its four years of sailing along the West Coast of the United States, the Golden Rule has visited communities in Humboldt Bay, Eureka, San Francisco, Monterrey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Long Beach, San Diego, Portland, Seattle, Bremerton, and Bangor. The Golden Rule has sailed twice to Ensenada, Mexico, to visit with [deported U.S. veterans.](#)

["Making Waves: The Rebirth of the Golden Rule"](#) is a 25-minute documentary about the Golden Rule's history and current mission. The 1958 mission of the Golden Rule is chronicled by the Golden Rule's then captain, Albert Bigelow, a 30-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, in his book, ["The Voyage of the Golden Rule: An Experiment with Truth."](#)

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. She was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to President George W. Bush's war on

Iraq. She is co-author of “Dissent: Voices of Conscience.”

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The System, Youth and Democracy

When masses of students from all over the world mobilize around a utopia, adults become uncomfortable, writes Roberto Savio.

By Roberto Savio
in Rome

Inter Press Service



If we ever needed proof of how the political system has become self-referential and unable to update itself, the latest student march in more than 1,000 towns is a very good example.

Of course, politicians referred to it in declarations and, in a totally demagogic gesture, Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Community and an old political fox with a lot of mileage, even kissed the hand of Greta Thunberg. She is the 16-year-old Swedish girl who, frustrated with the pace of government action to deal with climate change, launched a “school strike for climate” last year, setting off an international youth movement and widespread demonstrations in an unprecedented initiative on climate change. We are fortunate that the Asperger’s syndrome Greta suffers from brings little empathy and greater determination, so is totally improbable that she

will be co-opted by flattery and recognition.

It was interesting to see the reaction of politicians. In the Italian Parliament, for example, insiders report that the reaction was one of “in any case they do not vote, they are too young.”

It should be recalled that in its 2017 budget, the Italian government earmarked \$20 billion to save four Italian banks and just \$2 billion for subsidies and support to young people. School principals from Germany to Italy declared that the duty of students is to study, not take part in demonstrations, and – as usual – a conspiracy theory circulated that because climate change is too complex an issue for young people to understand, Greta was clearly a puppet in the hands of adults.

Rush to Discredit

Newspapers dwelt on the relations between Greta Thunberg’s family and climate change campaigners to show that she had been used. Maybe so, but it is now too late to discredit her. She acted on her initiative, on goals that were hers, and the hundreds of thousands of students around the world were not copying her ... she has touched a chord that was already there.

The fact is that when masses of students from all over the world mobilize around a utopia (a concept which has totally disappeared in the political world), adults become uncomfortable. It measures the distance between what we are now and what we were when young; the world was more idealistic then than now, and we all had some hope and engagement.

That distance is quite large ... many of us have betrayed those ideals or put them to sleep. The way out is skepticism and paternalism. We know the reality, we know what dreams are, and young people should listen to our experiences. In May 1968, during the student riots in France, Tristan Tzara, the father of Dadaism, shouted to the marching students from his balcony: "Criez, criez, vous serez tous des notaires" (Yell, shout, you will all be notaries). And for those of us who have not betrayed ideals and commitments, there is the sad realization that we are a failed generation, a generation that was unable to implement its vision of a better society.

The difference is that when we were young, the most existential threat was the atomic bomb, and we took part in many marches. Today, that threat is not only coming back to haunt us with abolition of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), but there is a new existential threat: climate change.

What is very impressive is that many students speak of how they are changing their lifestyle: from not using plastic bottles, to reducing meat consumption and using less water when they brush their teeth. This change of lifestyle goes far beyond climate change, it goes to the heart of our consumption society and its values, a society in which advertising budgets are greater than those for education.

And the fact that the heavy users of the Internet, the first willing victims of commercialization of the Net, are starting to doubt the use by Google, Twitter and other platforms of people as consumers and not as citizens is a significant fact. They are now ignoring advertising.

Automakers are very sad that the car is no longer a status symbol among young people ... Nike, jeans and smartphones are today's status symbols and their impact on climate is much smaller.

Extremely interesting are the reflections of a high-level staff member of the World Economic Forum in Davos: "We view with great sympathy the mobilization of civil society ... thanks to them, several gaps in the field of medical assistance, museum and art care, and many social problems, are being taken care of ... this has a dual positive effect: it reduces social tensions, and it keeps volunteers busy, and out of political engagement." In other words, civil-society activists are seen as hamsters: running all the time, and going nowhere.

The time has perhaps come for our generation to make three considerations.

No. 1: 2008 Crisis

The first is that we would do well to remember that until the crisis of 2008, with the exception of Le Pen in France, populist, xenophobic and nationalist parties were marginal. Now they are everywhere, except for Portugal, and they are frequently in power, as in Italy, Austria, Poland and Hungary, or in the government coalitions of several countries, including the Nordic countries. Nobody at that time could have thought of rabid nationalists like the U.S. Donald Trump, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, Colombia's Iván Duque Márquez, India's Narendra Modi, the Philippine's Rodrigo Duterte, Japan's Shinz? Abe or China's Xi Jinping would be at the helms of these countries. Nor could anyone have seen

how the multilateral system, based on the idea of peace and cooperation, would be disintegrating.

Now we know what capitalism and finance mean when they are unchecked. We now have a financial system that is 40 times more powerful than the world of industry and services, and without any control. Since 2008, banks have been fined over \$800 billion for illegal practices.

Nobody foresaw a world where 40 people would possess the same wealth as 2.3 billion people, a world where in just one minute the family owner of the Walmart supermarket chain makes the equivalent of the yearly salary of its employees. Over the last decade, fiscal paradises have hidden at least \$30 trillion from the fiscal system: six times the budget of the U.S. government. Countries are now unable to act globally, while finance does so daily, unfettered.

The last decade has seen a steady deterioration of democracy, of social justice, of concern to secure a future for the young and halt the existential threat to the planet, to humans, animals and plants.

There have been only two new changes. One is the arrival of women on the political scene, with millions mobilizing against injustice and patriarchy. Has that enormous mobilization brought about any change in legislations and budgets? Hardly. On the contrary, the prestige of dinosaurs like Russia's Vladimir Putin, Trump, Hungary's Viktor Orbán, Italy's Matteo Salvini, Le Pen and company has been reinforced; they are the defenders of the values of the Western civilization, against dissolution of the family and the advancement of woman (associated in the same breath with

lesbians, gays and transgenders in a revealing logic).

The second is the arrival of young people who are mobilizing ... so far, the extreme right has made no comment. Yet, touching on climate change, alternative energies and lifestyle is bound to create opposition soon or later. A strange destiny that of the extreme right; it is now against peace, development and social justice as central values. In a short space of time it will be against women, and now it will be against young people.

No. 2: Young People

The second consideration is this campaign by young people. Its main value is that it has put the political system in front of its responsibilities. "We have no time," and it is true. We are all mesmerized by the Paris Agreement on climate change, with the participation of all countries of the world. However, it is important to see how the treaty was conceived. To make a tent large enough to accommodate everybody, the rules are: every country will decide what targets it will adopt; and every country is responsible for checking implementation of its engagement. What would happen if we did that with taxes? Citizens would decide how many taxes they would pay, and all would be responsible for seeing that they complied.

Well, on the basis of the engagements taken until today, global temperature will increase by 3.5 degrees C compared with 1840. Scientists have always insisted that a reasonable limit is 1.5 degrees C, after which they speak of irreversible changes. Paris adopted the goal of 2 degrees Centigrade to make things easier.

Then Trump left the Agreement, explaining that climate change is a Chinese hoax to block American development. He has cancelled all legislation on climate control created before him, to the point that he is now opening all national parks to fossil fuel extraction. Of course, this pleases people like the Koch brothers who own almost all the coal mines; the petrochemical companies; the workers displaced by the fight against climate change, like miners. And it pleases the large numbers of Americans who see China as the main threat, and believe that America is a victim of international exploitation, especially by its allies (Canada, Europe, Japan), Trump's withdrawal has given a perfect alibi to countries like Poland (coal) and Saudi Arabia (oil) and others for ducking the issue.

So governments now say that in 2020, when the first conference on implementation will be held, they will assess the situation. But the students are here to remind us that, according to the vast majority of scientists, unless we change the present trend, by 2030 we will be over the famous threshold, of 1.5 degrees C, and they are calling for an unprecedented effort. But climate change is now considered a left-wing issue and times are not really the best. In other words, there are many chances that we will reach 2020 and we will still be debating. The very important *Laudatio Si* encyclical from Pope Francis, who links climate to social justice, migration, technological progress, and so in a holistic approach, has been largely ignored.

Young people are asking us to act now. As Greta said at Davos: when we arrive in society, the damage will already

have been done. This is an intergenerational call, and it is very important and powerful. “Parents, if you say you love us, why you do not take care of our future?” Should young people take a lesson from the violence of the Yellow Vests in France to be heard, instead of peaceful marches?

No. 3: Previous Grassroots Movements

Now to the third consideration. The climate movement comes after several others grassroots movements. The most traumatic was the protest against the World Trade Organization in Chicago in 1999, when thousands protested against unchecked capitalism imposed by the Washington Consensus (a holistic neoliberal view of international and national relations, based on extreme reduction of the role of the state and unfettered capitalism). This Consensus, subscribed to by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Treasury, changed the trend from cooperation to competition and success. Social costs were unproductive, only trade and finance were the tools for the world. Margaret Thatcher famously said: there is no society, only individuals.

Then, in 2001, in Porto Alegre, the World Social Forum was created, a meeting place for sharing practices and views as an alternative to Davos, and started a process of conferences with several hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world. This process continues today, albeit with a major loss of steam. Ten years later, in 2011, the Movement of the Indignados started in Madrid, asking for change to the democratic and financial system, and spread to 68 towns of Spain, lasting until 2015. Anti-system parties came out in 2013, and stood at the European elections of

2014. Podemos gathered 1,253,837 votes and won four seats. The others did not make it: Partido X received 105,561 votes, the Movement of Citizens Democratic Renewal 105,688 and Recortes Zero 30,827. Had they stood together, they would have won seven seats. But a proverb says that the left unites only in front of a firing squad.

But many other citizens' movement took to the streets. In 2011, there was Occupy Wall Street against greed, corruption, social inequality and the power of finance and corporations over political institutions, joined by several hundreds of thousands of people. Some see the Arab Spring, and the massive protests of Algiers as part of the same revolt. But it is instructive to see how the political system read those events. They were classified as anarchist movements. Horizontalism (they elected no leader), autonomy from existing institutions and defiance, demonizing the rich and introducing class warfare, were considered anarchists who rejected the political system. The content of the demonstrations was obscured by how they structured themselves.

It is a fact that by acting without the rules of organization that political parties apply has been a huge handicap. Podemos, the only survivor of the Indignados wave, like the 5 Star Movement in Italy, structured itself as a political party. Like it or not, laws are made in parliament, and external protests, large as they might be (just think of the women's movement), can be perfectly ignored, no risk except for recurring elections. But the political system today is not a free one. It is conditioned by finance, corporations, trade, armaments and technological

developments (many more people will be made jobless by artificial intelligence than by migrants). The political system is hardly the representation of citizens in the old sense. There are 32,000 lobbyists in the U.S. Congress, and 16,000 in the European Parliament: not really a symptom of unfettered democracy. The Koch brothers, who donate hundreds of millions of dollars to the Republican Party at each election, have a vote like anyone else? Do they compete at an equal level?

Now, the student movement is asking those in power to introduce urgent changes on their behalf. Until now the system has been able to ignore requests from peoples' movements, and let them fritter away, "Students do not vote" was the main comment from the system after the last large demonstration.

Yet, the students are denouncing an existential threat, which will reach the brothers Koch, as well the unemployed (but remember, the weakest will be affected much more). If the system does not listen to the voices of young people, the gap between political institutions and citizens will increase. And history tells us that voices from the street can be ignored once, twice, many times, but not for ever.

Young people are those who see clearly that climate change jeopardizes their future, already affected by precarious jobs, unemployment and a difficult future in which pensions will be minimal. They see growing injustice and lack of participation. They represent a revolt based on idealism and hard facts. They are also a minority because of our changing demography. If the political system ignores this latest mass movement, it will take an unprecedented risk. What happens

will be something that will shape history. If the young people are be ignored, democracy will be in great peril ... killing idealism is a very great responsibility.

Publisher of *OtherNews*, Italian-Argentine Roberto Savio is an economist, journalist, communication expert, political commentator, activist for social and climate justice and advocate of global governance. Adviser to INPS-IDN and to the [Global Cooperation Council](#). He is co-founder of *Inter Press Service* news agency and its president emeritus.

Yellow Vest Movement Not Yet Changing Its Color to Green

From Paris, Léa Bouchoucha reports for **Consortium News** on two sets of demonstrators, some of whom are mingling while others keep a distance.

By [Léa Bouchoucha](#)

in Paris

Special to Consortium News



Some had hoped the two marches in Paris last Saturday— one focused on global warming and the other representing the 18th straight weekend of Yellow Vest protests – would join forces and help unite environmental activism with social equity.

On March 8, Cyril Dion, a well-known documentary film maker and environmental writer, gave a joint interview to [Le Parisien](#) with Priscillia Ludosky, considered one of the founders of the Yellow Vest movement, in which they both

encouraged protesters to march together.

To an extent that happened. Yellow vests were a common sight in the climate demonstrations on Saturday. And nongovernmental groups – Greenpeace France, the Nicolas Hulot Foundation, SOS Racisme, Friends of the Earth, 350.org and Alternatiba – voiced a fusion of environmental and economic demands. “Time to change industrial, political and economic systems, to protect the environment, society and individuals,” was a typical message expressed on one banner.

The contrasts between the two demonstrations, however, wound up drawing the main press attention. Coverage by outlets such as *Reuters* and the *Associated Press* emphasized how the march on climate change – which drew around 45,000 in Paris, according to media estimates – was peaceful and included movie stars. The smaller Yellow Vest demonstration in the capital, estimated at around 10,000, was marked by rioting and vandalism.

Some Yellow Vests disagree with violence in demonstrations. But plenty of images have spread on social media that show a few protesters posing proudly in front of vandalized, expensive restaurants and luxury shops along the Champs-Élysées Avenue.

A strong majority of French – 84 percent of those polled – condemned the violence in a survey released March 20 by Elabe, an independent consultancy.

‘Part of the Game’

Stephanie Albinet, who wore a yellow vest to Saturday’s climate demonstration, would have been in the minority of

that polling group. She was sanguine about the looting and police confrontations she'd personally witnessed at another point that day along Champs-Élysées. "That's part of the game I would say. At some point we should stop treating the people like fools."

Consortium News asked Albinet about another criticism of Yellow Vests: that they are too tolerant of xenophobia and bigotry.

"Yellow vests are not all anti-Semitic, racist, violent people," Albinet responded. "They are people like me who for the past four months have finally found hope in seeing the population wake up. For the past 25 years I did not give a crap about France, but now I feel like a patriot for the first time."

Francois Amadieu, a professor at Pantheon Sorbonne University who studies social movements, noted in a phone interview from his Paris office that protest violence can achieve results. "It's classical and always an issue in France," he told **Consortium News**. "In terms of timing. French executive power has often made concessions under pressure. It was for instance the case on Dec. 10 when the government announced some measures after two very violent Saturday protests."

Black Bloc Attention

[France24](#) reports that the government has attributed the violence to extreme elements – so-called *casseurs* – who have infiltrated the movement from both the left and right. The episode is drawing public attention to "black bloc" anarchists who have been associated with the most extreme

violence.

Amadieu said that black bloc militants aren't acting out of spontaneous emotions. "They have long theorized that violence and vandalism will launch a state reaction by the police. This repression, in the form of tear gas and so on will gradually cause protestors to become more radicalized and understand this violence. Black bloc theory also assumes that people become bored in authorized protests and when there is spillover [into criminal behavior] people stop being bored and become motivated to reclaim the streets, and so forth."

The government is planning to militarize its response to Yellow Vest demonstrations and deploy French soldiers to prevent further violence by Yellow Vest demonstrators, media outlets are reporting.

Despite some mingling of climate and Yellow Vest protesters, Amadieu said it was significant that a core of Yellow Vests refrained from joining the climate march. "Usually, this convergence does not work out as it is not the same sociology," he said.

Hoping to Unite

Corentin Durand, a 26-year-old physics post-graduate student who wore a yellow vest to the climate march, hopes the two movements are merging. "We should fight a battle on two fronts," he said Saturday as the climate protest moved through the city's Grands Boulevard neighborhood. "I can't deal with the fact that our society is fully dependent on people who work very hard every day to make ends meet. It's intolerable," Durand said. "I hope that fighting climate

change will bring social justice for everybody.”

Durand said his apprehensions about global warming affect his everyday routine. “All day long, in each of my actions; when I turned on the light or the tap, I’m wondering how it would impact the environment. I never ride in elevators, always take public transit and bike and never get on a plane.”

Public transit, however, is patchy in rural France. And when President Emanuel Macron tried to initiate his climate-protection agenda by raising fuel prices, he notoriously ignited the Yellow Vest movement, which sent a loud message not to expect low-income people, already struggling to pay their bills, to pay a disproportionate price for climate mitigation.

In response to Yellow Vest pressure, Macron on Jan. 15. launched a two-month-long “big debate” of listening tours and town halls and citizen input via booklets of complaints. Some thought the process had been lulling the Yellow Vests into complacency, but Saturday’s protests countered that impression.

66 Proposals

Attempts to make climate policy more socially equitable are coinciding with Yellow Vest pressures on the Macron government. On March 5 in the context of the “big debate,” 19 nongovernmental organizations presented the government with 66 proposals as part of a new ecology and social compact to ensure the country’s environmental transition program is done more equitably.

One champion of this effort is Nicolas Hulot, a former environment minister and longtime campaigner who resigned on live radio on Aug. 28 out of impatience with the government's foot dragging on climate and other goals.

Laurent Berger, a prominent unionist, is also aligned with the effort. "There is no contradiction between social consciousness and the respect of the environment," [Berger told *Le Monde*](#). "In our pact, we find environmental organizations, unions, anti-poverty, housing, youth associations and popular education movements."

In the same article, Hulot promoted "big bang" reform of a tax system skewed in favor of the affluent. "The current system is unfair, and the burden is not equally shared," Hulot is quoted as saying.

Stéphane Cuttaïa lives in rural France, the stronghold of the anti-system Yellow Vest movement that generally regards the Macron government as indifferent to its concerns and preoccupied with European Union affairs and urban centers of wealth.

"We're very interested in revitalizing the local economy," Cuttaïa said by phone this week from his home in the Île-de-France region. "The Yellow Vests speak to this. What we see today in France is that there are large cities –Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Marseille – and then there are many rural and semi-rural territories where public services and trade have disappeared. Residents here are forced to go long distances to shop, see a doctor. It is generating many energy costs."

'Green Vests'

Cuttaïa runs [C'est déjà ça](#) – a café that he describes as providing a community center in the small town of Saâcy-sur-Marne, around 75 kilometers from Paris. In November, he used social media networks to launch Green Vests, a largely citizen initiative that hopes to mix Yellow-Vest and “green” environmental issues. The Green Vests are now circulating [an online petition](#) with 30 proposals. One of those proposals is free public transportation in rural areas; a more equitable approach to reducing emissions than Macron’s attempt to raise fuel prices.

“We recognize our social concerns in the Yellow Vest movement, but we think that measures regarding ecological emergency are very limited,” Cuttaïa said. “We want to create a bridge between the different organizations mobilized on behalf of climate deregulations, biological exterminations and social claims.”

Bernard Guericolas, a 75-year-old retiree who joined the environment protests in Paris on Saturday, regrets the years that have been lost to inattention and inaction on global warming. “When I was young, I was happy to take a plane ride,” Guericolas said. “I would have loved to own a big car had I been able to afford one. But I had it all wrong. We were not aware of what we did. In my mind, it’s the role of politicians to anticipate and it is what they are paid to do. At the end, we (our generation) are guilty, but we are not accountable.”

Along with 2 million other French people so far, Guericolas signed an [online petition](#) in support of the lawsuit that several nongovernmental groups filed on March 14 against the government for climate inaction.

The lawsuit, which is similar to litigation confronting several other governments around the world, is probably more important politically than legally, says Arnaud Gossement, a professor at Sorbonne University in Paris who specializes in environmental law and spoke by phone. “The lawsuit helped to stir the mass mobilization we saw this weekend, but from a legal point of view, it’s more complicated.” For one thing, Gossement said, a judge could dismiss the case. And if the case goes forward, it could take several years. “And we do not have time to wait.”

That sense of urgency – long pent up among climate activists – is motivating young people worldwide to follow the lead of the 16-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who last year began cutting school, holding solitary demonstrations outside the Swedish parliament and questioning the point of schoolwork when the future of humanity looked so uncertain.

In a scathing speech at a UN climate conference – during which she told participants “our civilization is being sacrificed so a very small number of people can continue making enormous amounts of money” – she became an international sensation and role model.

About three months ago, some French high school students began cutting school on Fridays to join climate demonstrations.

On Friday, March 15, Eponine Bob was one of them as she joined the Global Student Strike march in Paris. “I’m here because our generation is going to live with the effects of global warming, ” the teenager told **Consortium News**. “People are afraid.”

Bob said she tries to do her best to consider her personal effect on the environment in everyday life. “But in the end, it’s not families that pollute the most. It’s [corporate] lobbies and big companies,” she said. “I don’t think that there is enough regulation and it’s become a real issue.”

Léa Bouchoucha is a multimedia journalist currently based in Paris. Her work has appeared in Vogue U.S, the *Huffington Post*, *NPR*, *CNN International*, *Women’s eNews*, *Euronews*, *Elle*, *Le Figaro*. She has reported from Turkey on Syrian refugees and LGBT rights and from Israel, where she was working as a news editor and reporter at the international news channel *I24 News*.

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Africa’s Sovereignty Over Food

Local food and seed systems must be rebuilt for Africans, write Mariam Mayet, Stephen Greenberg and Linzi Lewis.

By Mariam Mayet, Stephen Greenberg and Linzi Lewis African Centre for Biodiversity

in Johannesburg

Inter Press Service

Africa is facing dire times. Climate change is having major impacts on the region and on agriculture in particular, with smallholder farmers –many of them women – facing drought,

general lack of water, shifting seasons, and floods in some areas.

Smallholder farmers are often women because in the prevailing division of labor, women are generally responsible for food acquisition and diets. Smallholder farmers are facing the loss of agricultural biodiversity, deforestation, declining soil health and fertility, land and water grabs by the powerful, loss of land access, marginalization and loss of indigenous knowledge and generalized lack of essential services and support.

At the same time, economies are weakening and remain heavily dependent on foreign aid, with extractivist interventions from outside. There is a strong authoritarian orientation in governments in the region, with secrecy and lack of transparency and accountability, weak and fragmented civil society organization and top-down development interventions.

There has been corporate capture of key state institutions, decision making processes and functions. Seed and food systems have been appropriated for multinational corporate profit.

Unchecked Corporate Power

At present, corporate power is almost unchecked in agricultural input supply. The dominant narrative of agribusinesses being indispensable for feeding the world holds great sway on the continent, where corporations have captured policy making processes.

Although most seed on the continent is sourced from farmers' own savings, sharing and local markets, this system is not

recognized in policies and laws in most countries. Instead, farmer seed practices are marginalized and generally denigrated as poor quality and backward.

The predominant thrust of agricultural and seed policy and programming on the continent is to seek to replace them. Multinational corporate interests, with support from key continental, regional and national state institutions and agencies, are driving two trends. One is large-scale commercial industrialization by a global agribusiness coalition, or through a Green Revolution smallholder strategy to integrate a layer of smallholder farmers into corporate value chains for the export of bulk commodity crops such as maize and soya.

Women play an essential role in the selection, saving, and sharing of seeds, as part of a broader network within farmer-managed seed systems, shaping the agricultural diversity that meets needs of local populations. This applies to both staple crops, as well as other food crops. In many ways, this pool of genetic resources, which women continue to develop and maintain, is the backbone of human society.

The restrictions placed over reproductive materials, i.e. seed (including all cultivation materials), and the centralized decision-making around reproduction towards uniformity, homogeneity, ownership, creates greater inequality, amplified vulnerability and a reliance on external inputs, which places the future of food production at greater risk.

Increasing restrictions on use, lack of support for these

activities and even their criminalization makes production conditions more challenging for all smallholder farmers

Restrictions on seed use, what may and may not be produced and how, translate into limits on food diversity at the household level, which is a key element of nutrition.

Since the majority of seed cultivated on the continent is saved on farms, exchanged and locally traded by farmers, this provides a solid base for alternative seed sovereignty systems to thrive outside the credit and corporate market.

For small-holder farmers in Africa, the importance of farmer seed systems as central to conserving biodiversity, ensuring nutrition diversity and supporting livelihoods has been highlighted in a huge body of work over the past 30 or 40 years.

However, these systems can benefit from external support. A key priority for smallholder farmers in Africa is resilience in the face of harsh weather events. This requires seed variety adaptation and greater agricultural diversity. Women are the primary custodians of our seed diversity, the custodians of reproduction, of life. This highlights the struggles of farmers' rights, of reproductive rights, to self-determination, and to maintain life-supporting systems.

An ecological, food-systems-transition coalition, based on agroecology and food sovereignty, has found some traction in Africa and globally, but remains relatively weak, fragmented and under-resourced.

Farmers, with support from civil society groups, are doing important work on agroecology and sustainable agriculture,

but are often unable to break out of their localized practices.

These need to urgently connect with others on the continent into a bigger and more coherent movement for change, especially radical feminist movements on the continent.

Together, we can fight back and contest the hegemony of large-scale commercial farming and corporate agri-business. We must, together, rebuild and strengthen local food and seed systems for all Africans.

The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is a nonprofit organization based in South Africa with staff in Tanzania. It carries out research and analysis, learning and exchange, capacity and movement building, and advocacy to widen awareness, catalyze collective action and influence decision making on issues of biosafety, genetic modification (GM) and new technologies, seed laws, farmer seed systems, agricultural biodiversity, agroecology, corporate expansion in African agriculture, and food sovereignty in Africa.
