

Fighting Global Neo-Extractivism

Fossil-Free Social Movements in
South Africa

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This chapter outlines comparative and global perspectives on social movements against fossil-fuel extraction. The South African cases analysed in Chapters 5 and 6 will be compared to German social movement action against coal. Here, I show that fossil fuels are entrenched in the German case, but that the state has conceded to some of the demands from anti-fossil-fuel mobilisations. I focus my analysis on a social movement called Ende Gelände that is rallying for an acceleration of the agreed coal exit in Germany. Second, I analyse the potentials of different anti-fossil fuel frames regarding their potentials for global mobilisation. Discussing three different frames, I show that the EJ frame offers the most potential for concerted claim-making between anti-fossil movements from the Global South and the Global North.

Germany: ‘Coal Exit Is a Handicraft’

Social movement action in Germany in the past years has more and more focused on ‘coal exit’. This chapter discusses social movement struggles against coal in Germany as the biggest emitter from fossil fuels in the European Union (EU) and the seventh largest CO₂ emitter globally (Statista 2021). Seven among the ten largest single sources of emissions in Europe are coal-fired power stations in Germany (Suhr 2019). The German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe) calls Germany ‘an important mining country’ only second to China in lignite production (‘Braunkohle’ in German) (2020, p. 7). Lignite emits more CO₂ than other types of coal (Kahya 2014). There are still three coal mining areas in Germany – namely in Rhineland, Central Germany, and Lusatia (Bundesverband Braunkohle n.d.). Current mobilisation also takes place against the backdrop of the German ‘coal compromise’, a multi-stakeholder arrangement between the state, energy corporations, scientists, and civil society actors that made policy recommendations. These recommendations finally lead to the coal-phase out act of 2020 that agreed to end coal for energy generation by 2038. German climate movements reacted to the compromise by mobilising for demonstrations as the 2038 target is seen as incompatible with the government’s emission targets (Meisner 2019).

In this chapter, I present the German fossil fuel resistance and later compare it to findings from the previous analysis of South African social movement mobilisation against fossil fuels. Despite struggles against fossil fuels being mostly local in nature, local protests against fossil fuels belong to the same ‘class of conflict that appear regularly in the world’ (Martinez-Alier *et al.* 2016, p. 747). Increasingly we see that social movement actors recognise themselves as part of the same struggle, thus creating the potential for a more globalised fossil-free movement. As we will see, social movements in South Africa and Germany are part of the same ‘class of conflict’ fighting back the fossil-fuel frontier with sometimes similar frames and tactics. Social movement mobilisation primarily responds to national or local political opportunity structures, but some movements respond to global problems (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, p. 20). However, environmental problems come in different forms around the world and are thus hard to frame in a common language (Uekötter 2014, p. 103).

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, the general context of coal extractivism and the role of the German state are discussed. Even before the German reunification in 1990, coal mining played a central role in both German states. Second, I describe the context of the eastern traditional coal mining area Lusatia which became an intense site of anti-fossil fuel protest since 2015. Third, I compare and contrast the anti-fossil-fuel movements in Germany with the ones in South Africa to offer an international comparative perspective on fossil-free movements in major fossil-fuel-producing countries. I conclude with an outlook on the global fossil-free movement with a particular emphasis on North-South social movement relations. I argue that framing around climate justice has more potential for global claim-making than calls for a Green New Deal or de-growth that are embraced by social movement actors (Table 7.1).

The German State(s) and Coal Mining

In post-war Germany’s both eastern and western parts, energy policy was almost synonymous with coal production and use (Renn and Marshall 2016). Both German states relied on their domestic hard coal and lignite deposits for post-world war reconstruction. At crucial political junctures, both German administrations decided to entrench coal power. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after the oil shock of 1973, the socialist unity party intensified its lignite production which remained the primary energy source until the end of Cold War (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 1988). Coal workers and engineers enjoyed great appreciation by the GDR symbolised by the yearly Miners’ Day and were rewarded with extra pay (Müller 2017, p. 218). After German unification, outgoing chancellor Helmut Kohl inaugurated the coal-fired power plant Schwarze Pumpe in 1998 calling it a ‘business for the 21st century’ in parliament (Deutscher Bundestag 1998, p. 23059). Even though environmental destructions such as acid rain and forest death (‘Waldsterben’) from coal-burning were problems identified early from the early 1980s (Uekötter 2014, p. 114), coal as a source of energy was not questioned by any significant political force until 2015.

German extraction regulation promotes ‘economical and careful use of land’ (Umweltbundesamt 2020). In this spirit, a pro-coal post-unification charm offensive brought investment in landscape rehabilitation of former coal mining areas to make up for the dirty image of coal – to great costs and mostly limited success (Renn and Marshall 2016, p. 228). Even the first government between the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and Greens (1998–2005) remained committed to coal use and instead actively promoted the phasing-out of nuclear energy (Illing 2016, Chapter 8). The SPD remained committed to coal until 2020 when they agreed with their former coalition partner Christian Democratic Party (CDU) to end coal by 2038. The coal phase-out act was adopted after sustained pressure by social movements and national media attention on climate change and coal. The act also agrees to compensate workers over the age of 58 affected by decommissioning of mines or coal-fired power stations (Bundesregierung 2020). While the government celebrated the act as landslide success, anti-fossil-fuel movements were everything but convinced by what was achieved. In fact, movements were quick in pointing out that the act was a wholly inadequate response and that continuing coal for almost two decades would not be in line with emission targets (Fridays for Future n.d.).

The coal phase-out act was accompanied by major concessions to energy companies, which can be explained by the long-term involvement of lobbyists in government. As reported in the press, the government agrees to pay 4.35 billion Euros in compensation to energy companies Leag and RWE (Pinzler 2020). German fossil-fuel lobbyists from major energy companies are influencing political decision making in the energy sector. They slow green transition ambitions that were first initiated by the first coalition government coalition between the SPD and Green party, by toning down or deny the results of climate science (Götze and Joeres 2020). As Götze and Joeres show, there are a number of cases of revolving doors between political elites and the fossil-fuel industry.¹ Fossil fuel subsidies for coal between 1970 and 2012 amount to 400 billion Euros in Germany (ibid., p. 165). Even though Germany is seen as the role model for clean energy transitions, the pace of change is lagging behind the government’s climate targets and significant concessions have been made to fossil-fuel interests.

Pro-lignite organisations are also struggling to push the government back to reverse the coal phase-out. There are a number of pro-fossil fuel advocacy networks pointing to the high costs of renewable energy and the loss of jobs in the coal industry. The federal association for lignite in Germany claims that domestic coal is the ‘only domestic energy source that is available in sufficient quantities and at competitive conditions. Lignite ensures the security of supply in Germany – even when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining’ (Bundesverband Braunkohle, n.d.).

Ende Gelände and the Fossil-Fuel Frontier

The current anti-coal mobilisation in Germany draws on some of the practices and traditions of the anti-nuclear movement, alter-globalisation movement, and

British climate camp movements (Sander 2017; Brown *et al.* 2018). The movement can be seen as part of an emerging climate justice movement that demands global socio-environmental transformation (Sanders 2017). A formative event was the 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm that inspired the organisation of a number of climate protest camps. The British tradition of climate camps was first taken up in Germany at the ‘climate and antiracism camp’ in Hamburg in 2008 (Sander 2017, p. 27). Another crucial event was environmentalists’ deception of the Copenhagen Climate Change summit outcomes in 2009 (Häußerman and Wolny 2017, p. 34). Ende Gelände’s main areas of protest actions are the Rhineland in western Germany and Lusatia in the eastern part. While the majority of people in Rhineland are in favour of exiting coal, in Lusatia coal exit is more contested (Rinscheid 2018). In Rhineland, people are more prone to link coal mining to dirt, air pollution and destruction of the environment, people in Lusatia associate coal mining primarily with jobs but also to smoke stakes and pollution (Rinscheid 2018, pp. 19–20). Even in villages that are being evacuated for coal mining, not every villager took a stance against mining (Müller 2017, p. 217). Müller explains why coal mining has an ambiguous legacy in Lusatia:

Opencast mines and power plants are omnipresent; they are visible signs of coal mining in everyday life. They can certainly have connotations of destruction and decay, but they are also a sign of the region’s economic prosperity. Lignite mining, with its indirect and directly visible and tangible consequences, has long been part of Lusatia and has become part of the region’s identity.

(Müller 2017, p. 218, my translation)

The following analysis draws on the experience of Ende Gelände in Lusatia. I discuss the framing the movement employs to mobilise for protests and also look at movement tactics.

Ende Gelände is a social movement that can be seen as part of a new environmental protest cycle in Germany. This protest cycle includes mass mobilisation of the Fridays for Future movement in Germany peaking in 2019 when 1.4 million people were in the streets to demonstrate for a better climate policy on 20 September in 575 German cities (Fridays for Future 2019). 2019 was also the most active year of Ende Gelände so far as they realised two blockades of coal infrastructure in Rhineland and Lusatia (Ende Gelände 2019). Ende Gelände can be seen as the radical fringe of a broad climate alliance in Germany which also includes environmental NGOs and pressure groups. Berlin Intelligence service declared Ende Gelände in Berlin part of the ‘extremist left’ (Verfassungsschutz Berlin 2019, pp. 162–165). Subsequently, more than 20 NGOs and youth wings of three different political parties declared their solidarity in support of Ende Gelände (Ende Gelände 2020a). Ende Gelände is a left-wing movement that formed in 2015 to accelerate the German coal exit primarily by blocking coal infrastructure in Germany. Some Ende Gelände activists have been part of the anti-nuclear movement or other environmental groups, while some others had

no prior activist experience. The majority of activists engaged in mass action and spokespeople of the movement are students living in German cities (Stokowski 2019). The group advocates ‘feminist leadership’ (Stephens 2020) and aims for more inclusion of ethnic minorities.

Ende Gelände frames its message in decidedly anti-capitalist terms combining anti-coal mobilisation with other tropes of the left including demands for open borders, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and feminism. The use of coal is also seen as fundamentally undemocratic as the true cost of climate change-related costs from coal is seen not to be taken sufficiently into consideration by the German government. The movement accuses the government to ignore the consequences of climate change to the detriment of people living in the Global South suffering from climate change as well as the local damages for residents living in coal mining areas.

We as Ende Gelände call for an immediate exit from coal and a socially acceptable transformation of all fossil industries. We want a democratic and decentralised energy transition in which people can decide for themselves about consumption and production. A profound, socio-ecological change is necessary in order to achieve a good life for everyone. We believe that overcoming global capitalism, its growth pressures and mechanisms of exploitation are essential. We do not believe that climate change will be stopped within this capitalist economic system.

(Ende Gelände 2017)

A common feature of the new generation of climate movements in Germany is that it links its claim-making to the 1.5-degree goal as agreed in the Paris Climate agreement. Ende Gelände demands an immediate exit from coal, while the Fridays for Future movement demands a coal exit until 2030 (Fridays for Future n.d.). Both movements share that they criticise the German government’s inertia in addressing coal phase-out. Fridays for Future has also been more reluctant to link coal-exit to a critique of capitalist accumulation strategies and primarily insist that climate and energy policy should be in line with climate science. While Fridays for Future primarily mobilises schoolchildren ‘on climate strike’ in urban centres, Ende Gelände’s primarily tactic aims at blocking of coal infrastructure, as I discuss more in the following section. Analogously to the last chapter, I also discuss educating, connecting, and prefiguring as social movement practices against fossil fuels in Germany.

Blocking and Delaying

Ende Gelände’s main tactic is to block coal infrastructure. Already in 2011 a small group of activists had tried to block a coal mine in the Rhineland but were unable to make a lasting impact. The first action under the banner of Ende Gelände was prepared and realised in 2015. Preparation meetings where direct action was practised took place in different cities around Germany such as Cologne and

Hanover (Ende Gelände 2015). Related activities such as a climate camp and a Degrowth Summer School were also advertised and attended by Ende Gelände activists in preparation to the blockade (Ende Gelände 2015). Finally, the open-cast coal mine Grazweiler in the Rhineland was blocked by around 1.500 activists in August 2015.

In May 2016, Ende Gelände managed to bring together an international coalition under the slogan ‘Stop Coal, Protect the Climate!’. During an action weekend, activists occupied the coal mine Welzow-Süd and the coal-fired power plant Schwarze Pumpe. Especially, the occupation of coal excavators and other mining infrastructure brought a lot of media attention. Blocking the coal mine was informed by tactics from the anti-nuclear movement. In total, both the mine and the power plant were occupied for more than 48 hours. The occupations were attended by roughly 3.500 people (Goodman *et al.* 2020, pp. 147–148). This was the first time in German history that a coal-fired power station had to reduce its output (Toewe 2017, p. 92). Ende Gelände spokesperson Insa Vries explained the success both by looking at the numbers of people in the protest as well as the general social acceptance of demonstrators (*ibid.*, pp. 92–93).

Direct action is especially informed by trust. Some groups within Ende Gelände have engaged together in direct action for a long time (Ende Gelände 2020a, p. 3). The mobilising tactic is around ‘fingers’; groups of people who are responsible for a common task such as blocking railways or mine infrastructure (Ende Gelände 2020c, p. 4). From 2015 onwards, Ende Gelände managed to organise at least one blockade per year, two in 2019. The press mostly picks up on blockades and reports about the movement’s goals when the movement clashes with police forces.

Educating

In order to increase support, Ende Gelände invests a lot of time on education and reflexive practices. The primary educational goal is to show that coal extraction is ‘inefficient and dirty’ (Ende Gelände 2017). Some of the arguments made against coal are as follows:

- Lignite is the most CO₂-intensive source to generate energy.
- Even in the most modern coal-fired power stations, half of the energy gets lost in the production process.
- Over-capacity from lignite crowds out renewable sources of energy.
- Direct and indirect subsidies for coal would amount to 4.5 billion Euros per year.
- Energy generation from coal is structurally incentivised to feed the grid.
- Renewable energy from wind and solar are cheaper than new coal-fired power plants.
- Even new coal-fired power plants cause health hazards and might cause asthma, heart attacks, and lung cancer.
- Ende Gelände also claims that decentralised power generation from renewables coupled with investment in R&D for storage brings more energy security than fossil-fuel production.

Educational aspects are not only about making the argument against coal in leaflets or blogposts, learning also takes place within the movement. Ethnic minorities voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of ethnic diversity, especially in the leadership group. The failure to reflect on the special needs of ethnic minorities in environmental struggles was decried. For example, it has been reflected that undocumented migrants cannot risk arrest like German activists (Ende Gelände 2020b). The movement thus aspires to a form of auto-critique in order to decolonise their own movement practices.

Ende Gelände also runs a podcast to discuss forms of direct action or other aspects of past and future protest action. Film screenings are part of the educational programme of Ende Gelände. An international selection of movies is shown at climate camps and at information evenings in Berlin and other German cities. Film screenings are seen as effective educational tools understanding broader aspects of anti-fossil struggles, but also imagining ways of how to connect to other struggles.

Connecting

According to Goodman *et al.* (2020, p. 148), Ende Gelände manages ‘to shed light on the regional problem but to frame it in a global perspective’. The movement is eager to link their struggle to wider movement struggles both nationally and internationally. Connecting the anti-coal movement to other struggles forms an explicit policy of Ende Gelände.

We also find it extremely important to reach out to other movements. The climate crisis is not an ecological crisis, but it is interwoven with various power relations. Those different social, political, cultural and economic power relations are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing.

(Ende Gelände 2020c, p. 9)

Ende Gelände teams up with the movement *Alle Dörfer Bleiben* (all villages remain) with a support base in the villages endangered by coal companies. *All Villages Remain* targets big energy corporations using lignite.

For people in more than a dozen villages in Germany, the future is at stake. Houses, churches, forests and fertile farmland are to be consumed by open cast lignite mines. This is happening despite it being clear that renewable energy production is possible and a coal exit [is] absolutely necessary to stay within the 1,5°-limit. The villages are to be destroyed and 1.500 people to be displaced solely for the profits of the big energy corporations RWE, LEAG and MIBRAG, which run the open cast mines in the three German lignite mining regions.

(All Villages Remain n.d.)

All Villages Remain’s video material shows excavators destroying German villages contrasted by demonstrators taking village streets and occupying coal infrastructure. Their video material shows activists holding Ende Gelände and Antifa banners and flags next to yellow x’s that stand for *All Villages Remain*.

In the Lusatia area, Ende Gelände managed to rally support among a number of residents and local decision-makers such as majors. However, alliance-building is limited by diverging interests between the movement and other groups, for example, the workers' union that organises coal workers. In 2016, Ende Gelände explicitly invited them to join the climate camp which was declined by the union (Toewe 2017, pp. 93–94). When Ende Gelände demonstrated the coal compromise in 2019, a workers' union leader criticised the movement for not respecting democratic procedure (Meisner 2019).

Prefiguring

As a short reminder, prefigurative politics basically means that social movements practice in small what they want to see scaled-up in the wider world. Prefigurative politics is particularly present at climate camps that Ende Gelände co-organises. The climate camps typically have some important educational elements such as visits to coal infrastructure and action training (Lausitzcamp 2016, p. 18). However, the most important pillar of the Lusatia climate camp has been to live alternatives by putting in practice 'a direct democratic self-management system' (Lausitzcamp 2016, p. 3). The 2016 climate camp that took place just outside the opencast coal mine Welzow-Süd, organisers imagined life in the climate camp in the following terms:

We will live a resource conserving and direct democratic lifestyle. We know about alternatives and demonstrate their feasibility. A responsible approach to nature, awareness and social inter-personal dealing (sic.) is the basic principle and a vivid expression of our vitality and should be self-evident.

(Lausitzcamp 2016, p. 4)

Direct democracy and respect for nature are two key elements of camp self-organising. Every morning, a plenum discussion with delegates from every barrio (neighbourhood) of the camp is taking place. Decisions that are taken by delegates will be discussed in barrio meetings afterwards. Awareness and attentiveness are also an integral part elements of the climate camp. Organisers do not want to 'tolerate any form of racist, anti-Semitic, sexist or homophobic language, actions or behaviour. Violence, harassment or sexual assaults will result in expulsion from the camp' (Lausitzcamp 2016, p. 10).

Conclusion: Germany's fossil-fuel frontier

The discussion first looked at coal mining in Eastern and Western Germany. Lignite mining has a long history in both German states making unified Germany the single biggest CO₂ emitter in Europe. However, it was only until 2015 that lignite mining was explicitly contested in Germany by sustained social movement action. A number of different influences from diverse social movements consolidated a number of frames and tactics to oppose lignite extraction in Germany.

Like the Fridays for Future movement, Ende Gelände is opposed to the German coal consensus and mobilises against the coal phase-out dated for 2038. However, because of its anti-capitalist framing and tactics, Ende Gelände belongs more to the radical fringe of the fossil-free movement. While the Fridays for Future movement is closer to institutional channels such as political parties and not explicitly anti-systemic, Ende Gelände considers fossil fuels integral to capitalist accumulation. As shown earlier, the German climate movement agrees to rally around the 1.5-degree goal as a demand to enter a post-fossil fuel age. However, it seems that the 1.5-degree target has become almost meaningless as most governments, corporations, and climate NGOs buy into this narrative. For most states, this means that they adapt their language of adaptation and mitigation that circumvents questions around fossil fuel use (Wainwright and Mann 2020). A crucial role for fossil-free movements is thus to hold governments to account in order to stick to their own climate targets.

Common Frontlines: Fossil-Free Struggles in South Africa and Germany

This chapter first discussed the political structure that enables coal exploitation and use in Germany. It also showed significant mobilisation against the fossil-fuel industry. However, in how far can we compare the German and South African examples? Germany is a core state of the industrialised world and a trade hegemon. South Africa is a semi-peripheral country with some features of an industrialised country. However, the wealth of South Africa is distributed very unevenly and a quarter of South Africans are suffering from food poverty (World Bank 2020). Acknowledging the limits of comparing an industrialised economy to an emerging postcolonial economy, there are nevertheless a number of similar characteristics between South Africa and Germany regarding their energy policy:

- Strong domestic energy sector dominated by large energy companies.
- Both countries are consolidated democracies.
- Both share long extractivist histories.
- Strong input of domestic coal to the overall energy mix.
- Strong governmental support of the fossil-fuel sector in form of subsidies.
- Both countries have social movements that are shaping the debate on energy intellectually and are prepared to disrupt fossil fuel operations.

Sometimes, the connection between different social movements in the same country is already difficult. For example, Calla (2020) reports how Bolivian anti-extractivist struggles and anti-racist struggles despite common problems find difficulties in joint mobilisation. The potential for transnational political resistance is therefore quite limited generally.

Looking at both the movements' framing and movement tactics, we can identify more than mere familiarity between anti-fossil movements in Germany in South Africa. Ende Gelände, Frack Free South Africa, and Save our iMfolozi articulate demands that are going beyond their own backyards linking site-specific demands

to wider claims around linking fossil-fuel extraction to climate change. Anti-fossil-fuel movements in Germany and South Africa are both rooted in various historical environmental movements. In South Africa, the anti-fossil-fuel movement is rooted in the conservation movement but is increasingly also informed by EJ theory and practice. In Germany, the Ende Gelände movement is inspired by some movement tactics of the anti-nuclear movement and British climate camp activism and is ideologically close to the alter-globalisation movement.

All three movements analysed started in 2015, the year of the Paris climate summit. Other than most grassroots environmentalist movements, they all managed to persist in engaging in sustained opposition against the fossil industry. In the German case, peak mobilisation was in 2019 when coal was high on the political agenda and mass mobilisation against the coal compromise took place. Ende Gelände became more and more an established political movement on the left fringe of the German environmental movement. 2019 was also the year that the Berlin intelligence services put Ende Gelände on its list signalling a potential threat to the constitution (Verfassungsschutz Berlin 2019). The German anti-fossil movement subsequently managed to increase the pressure against deforestation to access coal fields for coal extraction or the construction of a new coal-fired power plant in Germany. Every extension or construction of fossil-fuel infrastructure in Germany is therefore in danger of being blocked in the future.

Fossil-free movements in Germany and South Africa are actively engaged in energy policy from below (Temper *et al.* 2020). The most-reported actions of fossil-free movements are, in fact, when they block the routine processes of the fossil-fuel production cycle. The production cycle starts from exploration to extraction and finally fossil-fuel use. When fossil-free movements are disrupting this cycle, they become agents of energy and climate politics. By blocking and delaying, fossil-free movements are also standing outside routinised institutional politics and are provoking the state to take sides. In both the case of Germany and South Africa, we have seen how the state reacted to extra-parliamentary challenges with mild to moderate forms of coercion. In this regard, the ‘sunrise industry’ discourse of the South African government reveals some ambiguity. On the one hand, the mining industry and its workers are portrayed as an integral part of South Africa’s development. On the other hand, opposition to mining is regarded as un-patriotic as the parliamentary debate on fracking revealed. ANC politicians showed in favour of fracking exploration as a ‘game-changer’, some opposition parties including the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) voiced their opposition. Some other parties at least indicated discomfort with the environmental risks from fracking.

Both the experience of South Africa’s as well as Germany’s fossil-free movements however revealed that the state is not a unified actor when it comes to fossil fuel policy. In the city of Berlin, the local governing parties actually disagreed over the mention of Ende Gelände in the Intelligence report. In the face of commitments to decarbonise the grid and the expectation to legislate for more sustainability, the scope for fossil-fuel infrastructure expansion for German legislators will be smaller in the future. However, taking into consideration the diversity of fossil fuel sources and fossil fuel imports, it is difficult for social movements to mobilise against these multiple

sources. Only some of the fossil-fuel energy imports of the German state are politicised by Ende Gelände. In the face of embargos on Russian oil and gas, opposition to oil and gas imports from the US and other countries will be even harder to organise.

It will be increasingly difficult for democratic fossil-fuel-producing states in the future to make the argument in favour of fossil-fuel production considering their own commitments to CO₂ reductions. Fossil-free movements thus opened a political space rendering fossil-fuel extraction more contentious.

Fossil-free movements allocate a lot of time to other movement tactics that are less visible to the general public. A key tactic is providing education on the environmental damages coming from fossil-fuel extraction and burning. Producing material to counter claims around sustainable fossil fuel use is particularly important in South Africa where fracking is still largely unknown. Corporate reporting from institutions like Bundesverband Braunkohle e.V. or Rhino Oil and Gas on the benefits of fossil-fuel extraction and use are met with counter-reports such as the ‘Fracking in South Africa: A beginners guide’ or the anti-coal factsheets of Ende Gelände (2017). The movements are thus active in both concrete acts of opposition through blocking and delaying fossil-fuel infrastructure, but also engage in the battle of ideas around energy supply.

Fossil-free movements in South Africa and Germany are engaging in prefigurative politics. FFSA members started to declare ‘Frack Free zones’ in their neighbourhoods and advertised for a transition to renewable energies. Ende Gelände in Germany organised climate campsites just outside coal mines where they put in practice ‘a direct democratic self-management system’ (Lausitzcamp 2016, p. 3).

Both in South Africa and in Germany, the racial composition of protesters is rather homogenous. There are some efforts to make the movements more inclusive and multi-ethnic to become more representative of the respective societies at large. There are some emerging practices of auto-critique for these movements to reflect on ways to make the fossil-free movement more diverse. Let us now finally look at the potentials for global mobilisations against fossil fuels. In this context, I will particularly look at the potentials of different action frames to organise against the hegemony of fossil-fuel exploitation and use.

Global Struggles at the Fossil-Fuel Frontier

Probably the most promising global campaign to stop fossil fuels was the Ecuadorian Yasuni-ITT campaign against oil drilling under the *Parque Nacional Yasuni*, a massive sink for CO₂ emissions and home to the most diverse insect, tree and some animal species (Sovacool and Scarpaci 2016). The Ecuadorian government’s proposal backed by indigenous groups and social movements was to raise around half the crude oil worth of revenue not to drill the field. The rationale was that ‘more than 400 million tons of carbon dioxide’ could be ‘sunk’ in the project – leaving the oil asset stranded in the soil (Sovacool and Scarpaci 2016, p. 159). However, there was a considerable gap between donations by the international community and funds raised as only around half a percent of the target amount had been pledged in a six-year period (ibid., p. 156). Finally, the campaign lapsed in 2013 and former

Bolivian president Correa shelved the idea and drilling started in 2016. Sovacool and Scarpaci (2016) identified the major flaw of the project in the lack of political will on the side of international governments fearing that the Yasuní-ITT campaign would set a precedent for them to pay more for unburnt fossil fuels in the future.

The conclusion from this initiative for climate movements is sobering. However, and importantly, as seen in the preceding chapters on fossil-free social movement action in South Africa and Germany, social movements are raising the bar for governments to pursue a fossil-fuel-heavy policy path. For social movements, it shows that governments are not necessarily and uniformly interested in entrenching fossil-fuel extraction. We can expect that the state will increasingly be pressured to take a stance on individual fossil-fuel projects and to move away from fossil-fuel interests. From a government-perspective, resource governance of the future will likely be characterised by twin-risks from both climate feedback-loops from excessive neo-extractivism as well as militant social movement action. The fight against fossil fuels is going to be against climate inert governments and corporations that are fighting back against climate legislation. From a social movement perspective, it will be of importance to make strategic decisions about allies. In recent mobilisations against fossil fuels, the majority of claims were directed against governments. The conclusion from this stand-off should not be to stay clear from institutional politics and political power. Challenges to climate change inertia should come from inside and outside parliaments. Especially in countries that are dangerous places for environmental activists, getting seats in parliament give elected activists the opportunity to speak truth to power. Parliamentary representation also ensures that resources can be directed at mobilising for a green agenda.

Even though the challenge to contain the fossil-fuel industry seems daunting and the time to act short, we should not forget that fossil-free movements are a very recent phenomenon. Targeting fossil-fuel infrastructure only recently became a repertoire of contention. Already, they make an impact in changing the debate and delay or stop the construction of fossil-fuel infrastructure (Temper *et al.* 2020). In fighting fossil-fuel interests, they render visible what I termed the fossil-fuel frontier. As seen in this book, the frontier always has local and global dimensions. The impacts of fossil-fuel burning are global. From the perspective of social movements, it therefore makes sense to highlight that these struggles are part of the same quest for a post-extractivist and post-fossil-fuel agenda. Especially for smaller movements concerned with the everyday struggle to mobilise resources, it is difficult to look for allies elsewhere. The case of anti-fracking activism in South Africa has shown that activists are sometimes left quite isolated. Communal experiences such as the Frack Free Festival in Matatiele are vital to connect the dots between activists mobilising for the same cause. Activist leaders are instrumental in bringing together activists and supporters under the same banner at places like the Frack Free Festival. Growing the movement and scaling-up protest are the main challenges for fossil-free movements. With all major fossil-fuel-producing states not conforming to their own emission targets, this challenge of fossil-free movements could not be more pressing. Therefore, I will finally look at how frames and tactics could be aligned towards to challenge persistent fossil-fuel hegemony globally.

Global Social Movement Framing

A key question arises: What could unite fossil-fuel movements around the globe? What kind of master-signifier could connect the dots between different site-specific struggles against fossil fuels? Finding a common language is a key to move in the same direction. This is true for the global fossil-free movement but also in their relation to other environmental movements in both the Global South and North. In what follows, I briefly want to discuss the affordances and limits of frames bringing a common agenda to life that has ending fossil fuels at heart (see table 7.1), but also reflect a more widely alternative socio-ecological horizon. I discuss the Green New Deal, de-growth and EJ frames as three of the most recurring global environmental frames. All three frames are aimed at ending global fossil-fuel hegemony, but each focuses on slightly different aspects of injustices and change strategies. I conclude that all have the potentials to bring together movements from around the globe, but the Green New Deal and de-growth frames are limited by a Global North bias.

Table 7.1 Main movement environmental frames and their potential for global claim-making.

	<i>Green New Deal</i>	<i>De-Growth</i>	<i>Environmental Justice</i>
Main idea	Policy proposals and investment plans around energy, public transport, green jobs among others	Reduction of material size of the economy, redistribution within planetary boundaries	Disproportionate harm from industrialisation in the Global South and black, indigenous, people of colour communities (BPoCs); related concepts: environmental racism, energy justice
Main actors	Social movements, progressive politicians and political parties in the USA and Europe	Rooted in European social movements	Global social movement networks and local NGOs in the Global South and North
North–South relationship	Focus mostly on economic recovery in Global North; very little resonance in the South	The Global South perspective is taken into consideration, but scepticism and little resonance among Southern movements	Some elements of concerted claim-making between the North and South

Source: Author's depiction

Green New Deal

Green New Deal (GND) proposals are ambitious policy plans ranging from energy, public transportation, green jobs, fair wages, debt relief, public investment in infrastructure, and other proposals that combine social and ecological stimuli. The strength of GND proposals is that they shift the debate to a change agenda rather than merely being an elaborate critique of the status quo (Smith 2021; Riexinger 2020; Klein 2019). Crucially, there is also some reflection on the relationship between the Global North and the Global South and discussion on what a global Green New Deal could bring to make up for rampant inequality globally (Lenferna 2020; Varoufakis and Adler 2019). However, debates and proposals for a GND mostly come from the Global North and currently the case for green recovery amid the Covid-19 crisis is having the recovery of the Global North in mind.

In the USA, the Sunrise movement demands a legislated GND that guarantees ‘no government investments, bailouts or subsidies may go to support fossil fuel polluters or the expansion of fossil-fuel infrastructure at home or abroad’ (Maunus 2021). Sunrise also demands that ‘fossil fuel executives and other agents of corruption must be brought to trial by Congress and the Biden administration’ (ibid.). Before the election of Joe Biden to the White House Naomi Klein commented on the need for strong social movement action for any meaningful GND legislation: ‘any administration attempting to implement a Green New Deal will need powerful social movements backing them up and pushing them to do more’ (Klein 2019, p. 261). Furthermore, Klein demands a holistic GND

[E]xplicit about keeping carbon in the ground, about the central role of the US military in driving up emissions, about nuclear and coal never being ‘clean’, and about the debts, wealthy countries like the United States and powerful corporations like Shell and Exxon owe to poorer nations that are coping with the impacts of crises they did almost nothing to create.

(Klein 2019, p. 264)

It seems quite unrealistic to overthrow the US military–industrial complex, revolutionise the grid, and usher in debt relief to the poorer nations. However, the rhetoric of making the impossible possible is shared by Extinction Rebellion saying that ‘every crisis contains the possibility of transformation’ (Extinction Rebellion n.d.).

In Europe, the last years have also seen a proliferation of GND initiatives from the British Labour Party to the German Green Party and Left Party to the pan-European Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) (Smith 2021; Riexinger 2020; Grüne Hessen 2009). In the eyes of Smith (2021) however, all initiatives save for the DiEM25’s GND proposal fall short in putting enough

emphasis on resource overuse and growth ambitions that would crank up emissions. The GND is not yet a consolidated policy proposal but used by a number of organisations and parties to mean different things. Perhaps more important in this context is that the GND has not seen much resonance in fossil-free grassroots movements. Hesitation to take up the GND narrative is perhaps at least partly due to the European Commission's similar use of terminology in their flagship proposal for a European Green Deal.

De-Growth

The global de-growth movement takes its cues from the 1972 publication of *Limits to Growth* and the Club of Rome's subsequent warnings of global overshoot from resource use, consumerism, and population growth (Meadows *et al.* 2004). In the early 2000s, in France and other European countries, the slogan *décoissance*' (French for de-growth) had some mobilising potency that was used to protest car use, over-consumption and advertisement (Kallis *et al.* 2018, p. 292). Renewed critiques of the growth paradigm have attracted a number of widely noted publications (e.g. Hickel 2020; Kallis 2019; Jackson 2017; Raworth 2018). The Leipzig de-growth conference drew some 4,000 participants (Kallis *et al.* 2018, p. 292). De-growth can partly be seen as a critique of growth-oriented GND proposals as de-growth proponents have doubts about economic growth in general – including green growth (Hofferberth and Schmelzer 2019). Arguments around absolute or relative decoupling of growth from emissions are proven to be unrealistic even considering rapid technological innovation. According to Hickel and Kallis (2020), there is no way to grow the economy out of the ecological crisis. Rather, green growth would entrench problems around resource over use.

From a movement perspective, de-growth insights have informed a number of mobilisations and shaped movements' demands including decommodification, decentralisation, and post-extractivism (Burkhart *et al.* 2020; Brand 2015). More than being an organised movement, de-growth is rather a loose network of mostly scholars (denkhausbremen 2018). There are a number of problems identified by activists with the notion of de-growth outside the Global North. The reasons why de-growth is less appealing in the Global South context include fundamentally different political realities (where 'growing' is not necessarily seen as bad), its Western-centric approach (eurocentrism) and perceived lack of transformative ambition (Rodríguez-Labajos *et al.* 2019, p. 177). From a South African movement perspective, de-growth is a rather neglected perspective similar to GND perspectives. However, as we will see, both global GND proponents (rather than the ones limiting their ambition to individual countries) and de-growth activists have some shared ambitions for global EJ.

Environmental Justice

EJ is a concept that emerged from environmental struggles provoked by toxic waste dumping in African-American communities in the 1980s (Martinez-Alier

et al. 2016, p. 732). Back in the 1980s, the call for EJ was informed by the greater likelihood of African-Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinos living near hazardous and polluting infrastructure (Martinez-Alier 2002, p. 170). The term thus brings together the study of race relations and environmental injustices also referred to as environmental racism (Martinez-Alier 2002, p. 168). The EJ narrative transgresses the conservation-centred approach to environmentalism as it takes into view a whole set of issues that are not considered by the conservation frame. According to eminent EJ scholar Martinez-Alier, the US-EJ movement was successful in scaling up concerns for the environment.

[the US-EJ movement] shifted the whole discussion about environmentalism in the USA away from preservation and conservation of Nature towards social justice, it destroyed the NIMBY image of grassroots environmental protests by turning them into NIABY protests (not in anyone's backyard), and it expanded the circle of people involved in environmental policy.

(Martinez-Alier 2002, p. 173)

Other than the de-growth and GND narratives, EJ framing has been frequently used in the history of environmental struggles in South Africa. The EJ narrative is used both to raise awareness for unrehabilitated dumpsites from apartheid as well as post-apartheid environmental injustices (Martinez-Alier 2002, p. 181). In 2004, the Durban Group for Climate Justice has been an attempt to institutionalise different kinds of mobilisations around these issues (Bond 2010, p. 50). Crucially, the EJ perspective takes into view imbalances between the North and South when it comes to trade relations and externalisation of pollution to the Global South (Bond 2010, p. 52; Martinez-Alier 1997). The EJ perspective is thus helpful to oppose new commodity scrambles in Africa (Munnik 2007). Munnik identifies growing pressures on commodity frontiers in Southern African and the imperative for movements to work together under the EJ umbrella.

The balance of political power in all of our societies, while dynamic and subject to ongoing change, suggests that Southern Africa will face increasing environmental injustice in the way its resources are used, including the ongoing enclosure of people's commonly owned and used resources into private domains, the unequal and unfair relationships between local populations, national decision-makers and private investors, the ongoing exclusion from [the] decision-making of local communities, and the intensifying imposition of externalities. Current developments, specifically the commodities boom and the rapid expansion of South African business and industry into the region, make it increasingly less feasible for environmental justice activists in the region to continue working in isolation in our respective countries.

(Munnik 2007, p. 2)

Even before the end of apartheid international conferences were held where the potentialities of the EJ concept were explored with civil society actors on the forefront (Munnik 2007, p. 3). Considering the EJ history in the US-civil rights movement, the South African experience with EJ, the narrative is most compatible with social movement action.

Comparing the scope and limitations of GND, de-growth, and EJ ambitions, we see some common ground in terms of their respective transformative ambitions. All three share some overlaps. Both GND and de-growth movements share that they want to change the global economy to make it more equitable and sustainable. While recognising global inequalities, there is little emphasis on the needs and grievances of environmental movements in the Global South. There is little resonance from the Global South movement to de-growth narratives (Rodríguez-Labajos *et al.* 2019) and GND proposals. As seen, EJ framing bears the most potential to bridge demands and grievances because of its particular roots from the struggles of oppressed and underprivileged people. For the given reasons, fossil-free struggles are likely to lose Southern movements if they embrace GND and de-growth frames as their main framing. As seen from the Save our iMfolozi Wilderness campaign, demands for EJ have been taken up to frame the protest. EJ is also compatible with other organisations claims and demands such as African unions and NGOs (IndustrALL Union 2021).

Global Social Movements Tactics

From the previous section, we saw that the EJ framing has some potential to make movement claims between Northern and Southern movements. Concerted global movement action against fossil fuels is difficult logistically and needs a well-connected and sustained group of social movements. In this section, I discuss some tactics that existing fossil-free groups use globally.

Looking at global organisations, including NGOs and think tanks (see Table 7.2), we see that a number of fossil-free movements were founded the year that the Paris Climate Agreement was agreed and in the following years. All of these groups are pointing towards the incompatibility of Paris objectives and the deep global entrenchment of fossil fuels. These movements are more and more prepared to engage in blocking tactics. Blockades are among the most used tactics in global EJ mobilisations (Martinez-Alier 2016, p. 438). Previous to that global fossil-free organisations were mostly education-centred and connecting to form transnational networks of exchanges to shift the parameters of the climate change debate to fossil fuels. The biggest concerted action of the fossil-free movement took place in May 2016 when social movements on five continents took joint action blocking fossil-fuel infrastructure including the biggest coal export facility in Newcastle, Australia where 2,000 people blocked the harbour and the train lines as well the shutdown of the Ffos-y-Fran opencast coal mine in Wales for twelve hours (Break Free 2016). May 2016 also saw the aforementioned blockade of the German coal mine

Table 7.2 International anti-fossil organisations and tactics of anti-fossil organisations (selection).

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Organisation type/ URL</i>	<i>Active since</i>	<i>Main tactic</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Regional focus</i>
Shale must fall	Campaign network https://shalemustfall.org	2020	Connecting	Big	Global
Fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty	Campaign network https://fossilfuel-treaty.org	2019	Educating and connecting	Medium	Global/ UK-focused
Fridays for Future	Social movement https://fridaysforfuture.org	2018	Lobbying and educating	Big	Global
Extinction Rebellion	Social movement https://rebellion.global	2018	Blocking and educating	Big	Global
Sunrise Movement	Social movement www.sunrise-movement.org/	2017	Blocking and educating	Big	USA
Ende Gelände International	Social Movement www.ende-gelaende.org/en/	2015	Connecting and blocking	Big	Germany-focused
Environmental Justice Atlas	Research network https://ejatlas.org/featured/blockadia	2015	Educating and connecting	Big	Global
DivestInvest	Activist Network www.divestinvest.org/about/	2014	Diverting finance	Big	Global
Leave it in the ground (LINGO)	NGO www.leave-it-in-the-ground.org/	2011	Lobbying and educating	Small	Europe
Carbon Tracker	Think tank https://carbontracker.org	2011	Educating	Big	Global
350.org	NGO www.350.org https://gofossilfree.org/	2008	Movement building and educating	Big	USA
Oil Change International	NGO http://priceofoil.org/	2005	Lobbying and educating	Big	USA

Source: Author's compilation

Welzow-Süd and the coal-fired power station Schwarze Pumpe, the occupation of train tracks in Anacortes in the state of Washington at the March Point oil refinery, actions against the Pecém power plant in Fortaleza, Brazil and direct action in Aliğa, Turkey against a coal waste site and new fossil fuel plant projects.

The vast majority of movements continue to use non-violent tactics (Malm 2021). While the Fridays for Future movement does not block fossil-fuel infrastructure directly, they block inner cities to show their opposition to industrial policy that is not in line with the goals formulated in the Paris agreement. This is a means of drawing a line symbolically and raising awareness of people living in inner cities. Globally movements are educating activists to become leaders in their struggle against fossil fuels. Larger social movements such as the Sunrise Movement and Extinction Rebellion are dedicating some of their resources to train new leaders and are quite meticulous when it comes to action planning. A key challenge for global fossil-free action is how to render visible the common but differentiated struggles. Organisations such as the EJAtlas visualise these common struggles analysing that ‘conflicts usually arise from structural inequalities of income and power’ (EJAtlas, n.d.). Similarly, the Shale Must Fall initiative wants to ‘increase the global visibility of the frontline struggles from the Global South and other extraction zones’ (Shale Must Fall 2020).

As reported earlier, a number of these struggles organised some spectacular global actions that have been widely recognised to be part of a global insurgence to ‘keep it in the ground’. Currently, we see a global slump of social movement action more generally and fossil-fuel-free activism in particular. Global lockdowns and tight restrictions on the freedom of assembly made it increasingly difficult for movements to uphold the pressure and bring the numbers to the streets (Pleyers 2020). Also, the agenda has shifted to focus on the health sector and smaller acts of solidarity in the neighbourhoods. It will be a key for fossil-free movements to cease windows of opportunities to challenge the fossil-fuel industry that arise from devastating extreme weather events. A crucial element for mobilisation will be to be wary of the fact that the problem is truly global. The focus of most fossil-free organisation is still on the Global North. However, more and more spaces of fossil-fuel extraction are situated in the Global South with governments of the North slowly de-carbonising their energy and transportation systems. The challenge of the future will increasingly compensate for the unburnt fossil fuels in developing countries in the Global South. Unless a broad civil society coalition will ensure that compensation payments for unburnt deposits will flow from the North, most developing states will exploit fossil fuel deposits well into the future to cater for their developmental needs. Fighting fossil fuels will not be enough. The challenge will be to formulate political alternatives in the energy sector and beyond. A global transition towards renewable energy needs to follow democratic protocol; otherwise, people will feel left behind much like mine-affected communities do now. A new sustainable and renewable hegemony needs to find inclusive ways to ensure bottom-up democracy that can be scaled-up.

Note

- 1 An example is the former Prime Minister of Saxony Stanislaw Tillich (Christian Democrats) who became chairman of the supervisory board of a lignite company *Mitteldeutsche Braunkohlegesellschaft* (Götze and Joeres 2020, p. 187). As Götze and Joeres

show, influential networks within the CDU are open for climate change denialism and lobby against laws to halt climate change.

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