

Routledge Handbook on the Green New Deal

Edited by
Kyla Tienhaara and Joanna Robinson

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Introduction

Kyla Tienhaara and Joanna Robinson

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INTRODUCTION

Kyla Tienhaara and Joanna Robinson

It is customary to begin volumes of this nature by spelling out in detail the dire situation that currently confronts humanity. To note the number of degrees of warming that are already unavoidable, and the devastating impacts that climate change will have. To count the species that have been lost, and the number of years we have left before there are no more coral reefs, or summer glaciers. To quantify the economic cost of more intense storms and rising sea levels. To acknowledge the human suffering that the ecological breakdown we are experiencing is already having around the world.

We could reiterate all of this. We could highlight that as we began writing this introduction, the West Coast of Canada was experiencing a previously unimaginable heatwave that would result in hundreds of sudden deaths and contribute to numerous devastating forest fires, one of which would obliterate the town of Lytton, British Columbia. But such a story, while shocking and raw for us in the moment, is likely to quickly become dated as we are all forced to absorb a seemingly relentless onslaught of news of “record-shattering” and “unprecedented” catastrophes. Indeed, less than a month later, we had moved on to being stunned by extraordinary flooding around the world, particularly in parts of Europe and in the Chinese city of Zhengzhou, which received a year’s worth of rain over the course of only three days. As climate scientist Simon Donner notes, these types of events should not be described as the “new normal” because that would require that we had reached a point of stability, which, in turn, would require that we had stopped making the problem worse (Crawford 2021). Instead, we may well look back on this point in time as the “good old days” before things got *really* bad. That is, unless we choose to act.

And that is what we want this book to be about. Not about how bad things are or about where we are headed if we choose to keep our heads in the sand. We assume that if you have picked up this Handbook, you are already aware that the climate crisis and broader ecological crisis are real and urgently need to be tackled with the level of commitment and resources that governments have previously given to fighting wars (Klein 2020). If not, then there are numerous excellent sources available, including the most recent assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2021). What we would like to focus on instead is where we could be in a few decades if we embrace a different way of thinking about how we respond to ecological breakdown. This different way of thinking is captured in the Green New Deal (GND).

What is the Green New Deal?

The GND draws inspiration from the New Deal, which was a series of economic policies, government employment programs, and public works programs that were adopted by the US government during the tenure of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) to tackle the Great Depression. As with the New Deal, providing employment is a central plank of the GND. However, a key difference between the two programs is that in addition to economic ills, the GND must also tackle a global ecological crisis of climate disruption, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, plastic pollution, and numerous other issues. Admittedly, some New Deal programs, like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), had similar aims and would likely be deemed “green” if established today. Between 1933 and 1942, the CCC employed more than 3 million young men who, among other things, planted approximately 2 billion trees and developed 800 new state parks (Maher 2008). A contemporary proposal for a Civilian Climate Corps in the US was “[i]nspired by the ambition and impact” of the original CCC (Evergreen Action 2021).

There are some important limitations to the historical analogy, one of the most critical being that many New Deal policies were racist (see chapter by Rector, this volume) and “intimately tied to the entrenchment of settler colonialism in the United States” including “the continuation of the violence of Native American boarding schools” (Lehman and Johnson 2021). While it is certainly important to be cognizant of these limitations and work hard to ensure that such outcomes are not repeated, there is still value in tying the GND to a historical precedent. Crucially, it helps to address any concerns that the climate problem is just “too big” for us to tackle. Klein (2019) argues that:

By looking decades backward and forward simultaneously, we are no longer alone as we confront our weighty historical moment. We are surrounded by both ancestors whispering that we can do what our moment demands just as they did, and by future generations shouting that they deserve nothing less.

The ability to draw on a successful economic and social mobilization from the recent past is particularly important at this moment when denial of climate science has largely been supplanted by strategies of climate delay (Lamb et al. 2020). Two of these strategies – to suggest that the change required to address the climate crisis is impossible or that we are doomed to failure because it is too late to stop catastrophic warming (Ibid.) – can be effectively countered with examples of how a society has beaten the odds before (see also Klein 2020, who examines the societal mobilization during World War II).

While it draws primarily on American history, the GND is not an exclusively American idea. For most of us, hearing the phrase “Green New Deal” immediately conjures an image of New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) or an office of the US Congress filled with young protesters from the Sunrise Movement demanding “green jobs for all.” While both have done much to popularize the term, proposals for a GND pre-date both the rise of youth-led climate activism and AOC’s first political campaign in 2018. The GND first emerged in substantive form in the UK in 2008, with the publication of a proposal from the Green New Deal Group (GNDG) – a collective of academics, economists, journalists, and politicians (see chapter by Pettifor, this volume). Green New Deal platforms were subsequently adopted by Green parties in Europe and the US. Korea’s 2009 stimulus package was dubbed a Green New Deal, although it was arguably a purely “green growth” platform (see chapter by Tienhaara, Yun and Gunderson, this volume). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also proposed a Global Green New Deal in 2009. In

2015, the Leap Manifesto – a “proto-Green New Deal” (Klein 2019) – was developed by a coalition of environmentalists, Indigenous, labor, and faith leaders, authors, and artists in Canada in the run-up to the 2015 federal election and Paris Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

Each of these GND proposals should be considered within the context of the domestic politics where it emerged, as well as the point in time in which it was developed (e.g., the UK GNDG, UNEP, and Korean versions were very much concerned with responding to the Global Financial Crisis). However, we would argue that most proposals share some assumptions and objectives. We will come to what those are in a moment, but first it is important to clarify the distinction that we make between “a GND proposal” and “the GND.” The former is a specific list of policies for a given sector (e.g., a GND for Housing, a GND for Public Schools) or an entire economy (e.g., a GND for Europe). The broader narrative under which these proposals fit is “the GND.”

A 2021 article in *The Atlantic* entitled “The Green New Deal Does Not, Strictly Speaking, Exist” (understandably) raised the hackles of many of those who have been working hard to develop specific GND proposals. In it, author Robinson Meyer observed that: “the Green New Deal is not a single policy to win, but a change in outlook and approach.” Many authors have described the GND in similar terms, highlighting that the GND is an “agenda for governing” (Ajl 2021); “style of governance” (Aronoff 2021); “framework” (Adler and Wargan 2019); “political process” (Stilwell 2021: 162); or “civilizational *mission*” (Klein 2019). In addition to eschewing the notion that the GND is a single policy, or indeed a “wish list” or “grab-bag” of many policies (as it is often derisively described), most of these authors emphasize that the GND approach is categorically *different* from the (neoliberal) approaches that have dominated climate and environmental policy for more than 30 years. In other words, the GND is not a repackaging of old ideas under a new slogan. Adler and Wargan (2019) talk of “a radical reimagining of our societies,” while Aronoff (2021) sees the GND as “the basis of a new social contract.”

For our part, we think that the best definition of the GND was provided by Schor (2015: 532–533), who was not actually discussing the GND at the time but was instead describing what she felt we desperately needed to achieve progress on the key socio-ecological issues of our age: “an economic narrative that links human well-being to the well-being of the planetary eco-system.” We think that this is apt for several reasons. First, we think that using the term “narrative” articulates better than “approach” or “framework” the fact that the GND tells a story of how the world could be better. Importantly, the story is optimistic in a different way than utopian visions of a post-carbon world that are based entirely on as-yet unjustified expectations about advances in technology. It is possible *today*. Second, it is important that the narrative is an economic one, not just because the economy is so central to society, but more crucially because it is our economic systems that fundamentally need to change if we are to avert ecological collapse. Finally, the definition connects the well-being of people to the well-being of the planet, in alignment with the focus of the GND on centering equity and justice in all decarbonization efforts.

Critiques of the GND

The GND gets attacked from the right, left, and center – for being too radical, not radical enough, or for getting “distracted” by issues that aren’t “climate” (like health care or education; Aronoff 2021). We will not waste the readers’ time on the claims that the GND is too radical (as noted above, there are lots of excellent sources out there for those not yet

convinced that, as Aronoff, Battistoni, Cohen and Riofrancos [2019] put it, “the age of climate gradualism is over”). Those that argue that the GND is not radical enough make many excellent arguments, which are discussed more thoroughly below on a point-by-point basis. Because these critiques are often framed in terms of “the GND could be better if...” rather than “we should reject the GND outright,” we consider them as part of an ongoing discussion in which the GND will evolve.

Before turning to these constructive critiques and discussions, we feel the need to address the centrist critique that the GND includes too many “non-climate” objectives. Klein (2019) describes often hearing this sentiment: “Lowering emissions is hard enough, we are told – why weigh it down by trying to fix so much else at the same time?” Authors at the ecomodernist Breakthrough Institute go so far as to suggest that Green New Dealers do not actually believe that climate change is an existential emergency because:

the test of whether environmentalists take their own catastrophist warnings seriously is whether the solutions they propose diverge in any meaningful way from the sorts of things that environmentalists (and progressives) would want whether climate change were happening or not. The everything-ism of the Green New Deal, in this way, undermines the deadline-ism of the climate emergency.

(Nordhaus and Trembath 2019)

The problem with this critique is twofold. First, it assumes that climate change is a technical problem, but it is in fact a political problem, “in the real sense of the word political, meaning a problem involving competing visions of the kind of world we want to live in” (Kallis 2019). Green New Dealers recognize that a broad coalition to support climate action cannot be built around interventions that will not make people’s lives materially better and could even leave them much worse off. The “yellow-vest” backlash to a proposed raise in fuel taxes in France is an oft-cited example of how climate policy that ignores the interests of the working class will fail (Mehleb, Kallis and Zografos 2021).

Second, the use of the term “everything-ism” suggests that the GND includes issues that are unrelated, simply because they are desirable from a leftist political perspective. While it is certainly true that the solutions proposed within the GND are “the sorts of things that environmentalists (and progressives) would want whether climate change were happening or not,” this does not change the fact that these “things” are also climate/environmental issues. As Hathaway (2020) states, the GND “recognizes the inequities of systemic power relations as root causes of climate change, and their redress as the only promising way forward.”

What unites us

There has been a flurry of books, media articles, think tank reports, academic articles, and even a few poems written about the GND in the last few years. While we have read widely, we don’t claim to have conducted an exhaustive review of the GND literature. Nevertheless, we feel confident in arguing that the vast majority of those that deploy the GND narrative agree on the following:

- 1 The market cannot lead a socio-economic transformation.
- 2 All economic policy must deliver positive outcomes for equity and justice in addition to decarbonization.
- 3 There is power in a message of “good hope.”

The market cannot lead a socio-economic transformation

For as long as most of us can remember, environmental policy has been dominated by a single powerful idea: “that most (ideally all) of our environmental problems can be solved by the creation and enforcement of tradeable property rights in environmental ‘goods’ and ‘bads’” (Eckersley 1993). In line with this idea, climate politics has been reduced to endless political battles over the establishment of carbon pricing schemes (carbon taxes or emissions trading). Biodiversity conservation circles have been similarly overtaken by an obsession with pricing “ecosystem services.”

The rejection of a central focus on market mechanisms in the GND is critically important in distinguishing it from other “green” discourses. The GND diverges sharply from this “free market environmentalism” for four key reasons. First, while market mechanisms may be more economically *efficient* than other approaches, they have not proven to be effective in responding to most environmental issues in practice (Tvinnereim and Mehling 2018; Machin 2019; Green 2021). At best, market mechanisms deliver incremental improvements in terms of emissions reductions and other environmental benefits, which is simply inadequate in the current context. Second, market mechanisms are unlikely to deliver outcomes that also serve to improve equity and may even exacerbate inequality (e.g., regressive carbon taxes). Third, there is a more direct link to employment outcomes with a process of government planning than with a market approach (Stilwell 2021). Finally, and unsurprisingly given the equity and employment issues, pricing schemes tend to be unpopular with the public (Konisky and Carley 2021).

It should be noted that not all Green New Dealers reject market-based approaches outright, with many arguing, for example, that a carbon tax can play a role in a GND if it is designed to consider equity and justice goals (e.g., a tax-and-dividend approach; Fischer and Jacobsen 2021; Konisky and Carley 2021). However, market mechanisms are always presented as part of a broader package and generally take a back seat to other forms of policy. Even those scholars on the left that are somewhat skeptical of the GND recognize that “rather than seeking environmental ‘fine-tuning’ through market mechanisms, it opens the possibility of a more transformative approach to employment, environment, equity and empowerment” (Stilwell 2021: 156).

Of course, it is logical to ask: if the market is not going to lead a socio-economic transformation, then who or what will? For most Green New Dealers, the response to this question is, first and foremost, the state. Acknowledging the limitations of the state, and the abysmal environmental record of most states, Green New Dealers nevertheless conclude, as Eckersley (2021: 261) does, that “states are better placed than any other actor or organisation to facilitate socio-ecological transformation given their powers to regulate, tax, spend, redistribute, and procure and to perform these tasks in ways that are more or less responsive and accountable to citizens.” Furthermore, looking to past technological revolutions (e.g., the internet), almost all have involved a massive investment from the state (Mazzucato 2015). Given the pre-eminent role of the state, the GND is often characterized as “a leftist resurrection of federal industrial policy” (Meyer 2019). However, the range of policies that many GND proposals cover goes beyond steering “industry.” For example, a just transition is also likely to require regional-focused rather than industry-focused policy in countries where fossil-fuel-dependent communities are highly concentrated in certain areas (e.g., Australia, Canada; Stilwell 2021). Furthermore, many discussions of “green industrial policy,” do not delve into issues of race, gender, and economic equity (see, for example, Rodrik 2014; Altenburg and Assmann 2017).

There are notable tensions within the GND movement around the central role given to the state. Those that try to build on the GND with insights from degrowth, for example, worry about how compatible a “top-down” GND approach is with their preference for “bottom-up” grassroots initiatives (Mastini, Kallis and Hickel 2021). Concern is understandably greatest for those who have suffered the most under state oppression: racialized communities and Indigenous peoples. The authors of the Red Deal (discussed further below) are explicit about this: “States protect capital and its caretakers: the ruling class. They do not protect the people. Reformists who appeal to the state for change compromise our future by aligning with the interests of the ruling class” (Red Nation 2021).

It is also worth noting that there are an increasing number of GND proposals emerging at the sub-national level. A particularly inspiring example is the GND platform of Boston mayoral candidate Michelle Wu, which includes proposals to decarbonize and decommodify housing, make transit fare-free, and create jobs through an Urban Climate Corps (Wu Committee n.d.). Christopher W. Gibson discusses some of the challenges that local governments face in their efforts to adopt such radical reforms in the final chapter of this volume.

Equity and justice

At the core of the vision for the GND is the belief that policies should be designed to simultaneously address the ecological crisis and preserve “human values and dignity – for all humans, not just those who can pay” (Konisky and Carley 2021: 2). Green New Dealers argue that it is not possible to “fix” the emissions problem while leaving global inequities firmly entrenched (and even if we could, this would be an undesirable outcome).

The Resolution on the GND put before US Congress by AOC and Senator Ed Markey includes a call for “stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of Indigenous Peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth” (H. Res. 109, 2019). As Coleman (2019) notes, this wording “is starkly different from the color-blind, economically muffled message that mainstream environmental organizations have long favored.”

Of course, the GND movement does not have a monopoly on equity and justice concerns. Environmental, ecological, and climate justice discourses have existed for decades and have been extensively studied (for an overview, see Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003; Pellow and Brulle 2005; Schlosberg 2007; Jafry 2019). There is also increasing recognition among mainstream NGOs of the critical role being played by Indigenous land defenders and water protectors in resisting further fossil fuel developments and other forms of extraction, and in preserving biodiversity. Environmental organizations have also been forced, by the power of the Black Lives Matter movement, to reckon with the racism of their founders (e.g., John Muir of the Sierra Club) and the ongoing exclusion of non-white voices from environmental policy discussions (NoiseCat 2019). Calls for “climate justice now” are, in 2021, very much in the mainstream. What distinguishes the GND from general calls for justice and equity is the way in which these principles are envisaged to be integrated into specific economic policy programs.

For example, the job guarantee (see further chapter by Huang, this volume), the centerpiece of the AOC–Markey proposal, is a “commitment to leaving no one behind amidst economic transformation and climate chaos” (Aronoff et al. 2019). It is also not enough for any jobs created under a GND to be “green” – they also need to be good (i.e., well paid, unionized; Tcherneva 2020). Furthermore, while the “green jobs” slogan generally conjures

up images of men wearing hard hats and installing solar panels, the GND recognizes “the crisis of social reproduction” and aims “to expand work in the caring economy” (Eaton 2021: 7). Battistoni (2017) refers to jobs in teaching, nursing, and child/elderly care as “pink collar work” and notes that while this work is low carbon and critical to society, it is also often poorly paid and exploitative. She also points out that pink collar jobs are disproportionately occupied by women, immigrants and people of color. The focus on equality and justice in the GND demands that pink collar jobs be elevated along with other green collar jobs (see further Roberts-Gregory, this volume, and Robinson, this volume).

Although employment is central to the GND, it is not the only path through which inequality and injustice is to be addressed. As Gunn-Wright (2020) argues, the “green” parts of the GND are not distinct from the “equity” parts – all projects in a GND proposal should be designed to contribute to both. For example, in any energy-efficiency home retrofitting scheme, financial assistance for low- and middle-income households should be prioritized (Stilwell 2021). There are also important discussions about the role of Universal Basic Services in a GND (Vansintjan 2020) and the role that reparations (whether they be within a country – see Coleman 2019 – or globally, see further below) can play in furthering the goals of justice and equity. Obviously, there is still a lot of work to do and there are understandable concerns that what has been included in GND proposals to date is far from enough. Nevertheless, there are some exciting developments – like the Feminist GND discussed by Frances Roberts-Gregory in a chapter in this volume (see also Daniel and Dolan 2020) – that are pushing the conversation in the right direction.

There is power in a message of “good hope”

In her opening remarks at the launch of the Global Alliance for a Green New Deal in July 2021, UK MP Caroline Lucas noted that “none of us are prepared to limit our imaginations to simply tinkering around the edges and creating a world that is not quite as bad as the one we have now.” Similarly, Naomi Klein (2019) argues that the GND can provide “a shared destination – somewhere distinctly better than where we are now. That kind of shared mission is something our late capitalist culture badly needs.”

There is evidence in the academic literature to support these sentiments. Milkoreit (2017) argues that “imagination lies at the heart of social change” and that,

Explicit visions of desirable (sustainable) and undesirable futures are necessary to motivate and guide any kind of change, but might be particularly important for triggering transformational change – a process of fundamentally altering the structure and character of a given system.

(see also Paterson 2020)

Apocalyptic framings of a future of 3°C or more of warming abound (Bendell 2018; Wallace-Wells 2020). However, such visions are more likely to lead to “doomerism” or “bad despair” than to spur action (Foust and O’Shannon Murphy 2009; Robbins 2020). Similarly, techno-optimist utopian visions of a post-carbon world fall into the trap of “unvarnished daydreaming in the face of deeply structural problems” or “bad hope” (Robbins 2020: 5). We argue that the GND avoids excessive pessimism and excessive optimism by embracing what Robbins calls “good hope” and “good despair,” in that it acknowledges “terrible realities, uneven injustices, and structural barriers, while moving towards revolutionary change” (2020: 5).

This mix of realism and optimism or “critical utopianism” is on full display in the short films produced by *The Intercept* and *The Leap*, *A Message from the Future* and *A Message from the Future II: The Years of Repair* (Howley 2020). The first film, narrated by AOC and animated by Molly Crabapple, opens decades in the future with the Congresswoman riding a bullet train from New York to Washington, D.C. She looks back to the “decade of the Green New Deal” (2020–2030) that brought about everything from a solar-powered smart grid to universal health and child care, and publicly funded election campaigns. While most of the future that is imagined in the film is positive, there is an acknowledgment that climate-related disasters still occurred along the way, such as Miami being permanently submerged. Howley (2020) argues that

[l]ike all meaningful political art, the critical utopianism articulated through this provocative intervention is not simply a political-economic critique of the recent past, nor is it a dire warning for our precarious present. It is an animating force toward realizing a more sustainable future.

The second film is more somber, imagining another pandemic in 2023 as well as articulating more clearly how difficult the struggle will be to arrive at the destination presented in the first film. Nevertheless, it is still hopeful. As one of the film’s creators, Avi Lewis (2021), explains, it provides “a map drawn in the colours of a liberatory imagination. And so we also imagine the treasure on that map: the territory under repair.” Surely this kind of message is more likely to ignite a social movement than soulless calls for “net zero by 2050,” which only seem to inspire those working in the PR departments of large corporations.

What should unite us, but hasn’t always been made explicit

Naomi Klein (2019) notes that it was “really just one line in the Leap (Manifesto)” that caused a huge amount of uproar in Canada about the proto-GND proposal; the “no pipelines” line that ruled out the building of any further fossil fuel infrastructure. The AOC–Markey GND Resolution in the US avoided this particular confrontation by not explicitly targeting the fossil fuel industry. Greenpeace USA was quick to point out its concerns with this approach (Redman 2019), as was the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), which argued that “the most impactful and direct way to address the problem is to keep fossil fuels in the ground” (IEN 2019). Given that AOC participated in the Standing Rock resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline, the omission of any call for supply-side climate policies in the Resolution would seem most likely to have been an attempt to “make the proposal more politically palatable for many of the Democrats’ presidential contenders in 2020, as well as for labor groups that compose a powerful portion of the party’s base” (Colman 2019) rather than a rejection of the keep-it-in-the-ground movement (see also Roberts 2019).

However, only a few years later it is clear that supply-side policy approaches are increasingly moving into the mainstream (Gaulin and Le Billion 2020; Piggot, Verkuijl, van Asselt and Lazarus 2020). President Biden cancelled the Keystone XL pipeline on his first day in office, and a growing number of countries have started to ban certain forms of fossil fuel extraction (e.g., fracking, offshore oil). Over 2000 academics, including more than 100 Nobel laureates, have called on governments to sign a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. And in August 2021, Denmark and Costa Rica took a step in this direction by forming a Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, calling on other countries to fix a date to phase out oil and gas production

and to stop giving permits for new exploration. As such, it no longer seems as necessary as it might have in 2018 to sideline supply-side policy to make the GND “politically palatable.” Furthermore, as fossil fuel extraction and infrastructure projects disproportionately impact Indigenous and racialized communities, it is inconsistent and unconscionable for Green New Dealers to remain silent on the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

Bernie Sanders’ GND (2020) notably embraced a strong suite of supply-side policies, including banning offshore drilling, mountaintop removal coal mining, fracking, imports and exports of fossil fuels, as well as ending fossil fuel extraction on public lands and new permits for fossil fuel infrastructure. Furthermore, prominent writers on the GND do not shy away from advocating for such proposals. For example, Aronoff et al. (2019) argue that “Focusing exclusively on demand avoids attacking fossil fuel companies’ core product, and more importantly fossil political power, head-on. That’s a mistake a radical Green New Deal won’t make.”

What we are still figuring out

As is evident even in the above discussion about what unites Green New Dealers and what might be strategically omitted from some GND proposals, there are tensions within the movement. Schlosser (2021) has suggested that the differences between various GND proponents are irreconcilable because “even if they all hold rapid decarbonization as the end goal, they turn on very different understandings of what constitutes politics, social transformation, and what is or is not ‘radical.’” However, the plurality of perspectives is, to some extent, a good thing – the GND needs to be a “big tent” because we can’t possibly achieve a socio-economic transformation on the scale required if everyone stays in their own preferred policy camps. It should be instructive to the movement that there are very few disagreements among centrist and right-wing opponents of the GND, who all argue with one voice (even if with different motivations)¹ in favor of carbon pricing. What Green New Dealers need, then, are processes for working through disagreements and seeking common ground. We would note that there has already been an impressive amount of good will demonstrated by, for example, the Red Nation (2021) presenting its Red Deal not “as a counterprogram to the GND, but rather going beyond it” and prominent degrowthers proposing a Green New Deal *with degrowth* (Mastini et al. 2021) rather than launching further debates on the Green New Deal vs. degrowth.

In our view, the key issues that Green New Dealers will have to grapple with in coming years are: (i) how to pay for it; (ii) how much we can rely on technology; (iii) whether to explicitly or implicitly embrace degrowth; (iv) decolonization; and (v) working within or against capitalism.

How to pay for it

The rise of the GND in US policy discourse has been closely associated with the ascent of Modern Money Theory (MMT). In brief, MMT suggests that countries with sovereign control of their currencies can never run out of money (Kelton 2020). Following this logic, the appropriate question is not whether a government can “raise enough money” to pay for a GND, but what constraints on real productive resources (labor, technology, etc.) exist, and what spending limits are required to control inflation (Galvin and Healy 2020: 4). In Chapter 2 of this volume, Yeva Nersisyan explains this approach further and applies it to a costing of the US GND.

While MMT is increasingly popular, many GND proponents do not base their proposals on it, focusing instead on initiatives that can raise finance, such as progressive taxation (e.g., higher corporate taxes, wealth and luxury taxes) (Schroeder 2021). Naomi Klein (2019) has also proposed an international transaction tax to get a fairer share of the financial sector's massive earnings. While taxes of one sort or another are common in many GND proposals, there is not universal acceptance of this approach. In 2019, French economist Thomas Piketty and the former Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis engaged in a back-and-forth over whether a European GND should be funded through taxes (Piketty's view) or a system of public green banks (Varoufakis' view; Brown 2019).

Green New Dealers also argue that resources can be redirected from other areas of government spending (Eaton 2021). While we suspect that there is universal agreement within the movement on the need to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies (which were estimated to be US\$5.9 trillion in 2020: see Parry, Black and Vernon 2021), reducing or eliminating spending in other areas is more contested. The US Green Party's 2012 GND platform proposed cutting the military budget in half. The Red Nation (2021) goes much further in its proposal to divest from the military, police and prisons, freeing up \$1 trillion in the US that could be reinvested in a Red Deal.

Importantly, much of the discussion about how to pay for the GND occurs within the Global North. The issues of funding GNDs in the Global South are even more complex. In addition to discussions about climate reparations (see below) there must be consideration of the constraints that the current system of global economic law places on countries in the Global South. As Muchhala (2020) articulates,

[a] systemic reassessment of the norms and rules governing fiscal discipline, deficit financing and macroeconomic reporting is critical to salvage public financing for public systems if pandemic recovery, let alone a scaled up financing push for a Global Green New Deal, are to actualize.

Gallagher and Kozul-Wright (2019) propose numerous changes to the current multilateral economic system in their Geneva Principles for a Global Green New Deal.

Technology

There is no credible GND proposal in the world that does not see a critical role for renewable energy technologies, like solar and wind power, in the transformation of our economy from fossil-fuel-dependent to low-carbon. However, there is disagreement in GND discussions about the extent to which we can continue to grow the renewable energy sector indefinitely, given the impacts on communities and environments in the Global South where essential materials for renewable technologies are extracted (Riofrancos 2021; see also chapter by Kolinjivadi and Kothari, this volume), and the substantial land-use footprint of turbines and solar farms (Capellán-Pérez, de Castro and Arto 2017; Palmer-Wilson et al. 2019). The question of the extent to which we can rely on renewable energy technology must also be informed by recent research that suggests that the growth in renewable energy has not displaced fossil fuels but instead has expanded the overall amount of energy that is produced (York and Bell 2019).

Investments in efficiency measures can certainly help with reducing overall energy consumption; however, there are limits to what can be achieved and the potential for rebound effects. The technology issue is thus closely connected to the growth issue (see further below)

and the discussion of the need to move toward “private sufficiency” and “public luxury” (Monbiot 2021). For example, should a GND heavily subsidize the automotive industry to spur the rapid uptake of electric vehicles, or focus primarily on expanding and improving public and active transportation options? Bernie Sanders’ GND (2020) tried to do both, including US\$2.09 trillion in grants to low- and moderate-income families and small businesses to trade in their fossil fuel-dependent vehicles for new electric vehicles, as well as investments in electric trucks for shipping, electric buses, and other upgrades to public transportation. Green New Dealers will have to find an appropriate balance between private and public transportation solutions, and it will be important to get the messaging around the importance of “fewer cars” not just “electric cars” right.

When it comes to other forms of technology, it is less clear what Green New Dealers agree to be appropriate. Should a GND include investments in nuclear power? Authors from the influential US think tank Data for Progress say “yes” (Carlock and Mangan 2018), whereas more than 500 non-profit organizations in the US say “no” (Green New Deal Letter 2019). What is the role of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) – is it an essential technology or a tool of the fossil fuel industry to delay meaningful action on climate change? What about biomass, large-scale hydro, and negative emissions technologies? Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is to examine them through the lens of the key principles of the GND. Professor M.V. Ramana and Schyler Edmunston (2020) argue, for example, that when considering nuclear, it is clear that the technology fails to live up to the objectives of the GND: it can’t be scaled up quickly, it doesn’t create a lot of jobs, and at both the point of uranium extraction and waste disposal, it disproportionately harms Indigenous communities.

Embracing degrowth (implicitly or explicitly)?

Since the publication in 1972 of *The Limits to Growth*, there has been a division between those in the environmental community who view economic growth as harmful to the environment, and those who argue that economic growth can be harnessed to achieve environmental objectives (i.e., “green growth”). In recent years, the degrowth movement, which argues for a move away from an overriding preoccupation with GDP growth in the Global North, has flourished, particularly in Europe. The degrowth movement shares many of the same objectives as the GND movement. However, as Eaton (2021: 7) points out,

GND proposals would initiate large public investments, that, at least in the short term, would build out a tremendous amount of infrastructure...Whether [this] could be reconciled with no growth or degrowth economies is a question these movements have largely side-stepped.

One positive aspect of imagining a GND that centers investments in care work and “pink collar” jobs in education in health (discussed in the chapter by Robinson in this volume) is that it lessens the dependency on the renewable energy sector alone for job growth and relies largely on existing institutions and infrastructure.

Several prominent scholars have argued for a green growth approach in the GND and suggested that the growth produced by the GND justifies the spending required for it (Pollin 2018, 2019; Stiglitz 2020). Others have acknowledged that while some growth may occur at the outset of a GND as a result of the influx of government funding into green sectors, it is neither necessary nor desirable in the long-term (Aronoff et al. 2019; Pettifor 2019). In addition to deciding where to land in this debate (which is discussed in further detail in

the chapter by Schor and Tienhaara, this volume), Green New Dealers will have to decide whether to be explicit about their views on economic growth, or instead to equivocate for strategic/political reasons. Unfortunately, degrowth is often misconstrued as a form of eco-austerity and critiqued by those concerned about the well-being of the working class in the Global North. Therefore, an explicit linking of the degrowth and GND movements could potentially hurt the prospects for a large-scale political mobilization. At least in North America, where the degrowth movement has yet to reach the mainstream, focusing on positive messages about jobs, public luxury, and “time wealth” (achieved through work-time reduction), rather than encouraging less consumption, is likely to be a more effective strategy for Green New Dealers. The one exception to this is when the target for reduced consumption is the wealthy: taxing the rich is a policy that has widespread public support in Canada and the US.

Decolonization

Perhaps the most important critique of the GND is that it has, thus far, only paid “lip service to decolonization” (Red Nation 2021). This critique has two distinct but related strands. First, there are concerns about how the GND incorporates the views and interests of Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN 2019) in the US did not support the AOC–Markey GND Resolution because it would “leave incentives by industries and government to continue causing harms to Indigenous communities.” Eaton (2021: 7) argues that even though there is interest in decolonization among Green New Dealers, “Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and the return of land” are “still marginal to the GND” (Eaton 2021: 7). We would argue that while this is certainly an area where more work needs to be done, there is now growing attention to indigenizing the GND and recognition within the movement of the importance of Indigenous knowledge about conservation, biodiversity, and reimagining the relationship between humans and nature. Winona LaDuke provides insights into what an Indigenous-led GND could look like in her chapter in this volume.

Second, there is a sense that the GND “has largely been trapped in national imaginations” (in the Global North), while “climate change is global and therefore its solutions, too, must be global” (Paul and Gebrial 2021). Scholars have highlighted the risk that GNDs could usher in “a new era of ‘green colonialism’” (Paul and Gebrial 2021; see also Táíwò 2019; Sturman and Heenan 2021 and chapter by Kolinjivadi and Kothari, this volume).

Many Green New Dealers appear to have recognized the shortcomings of nationalist GND discourse, and there are numerous proposals for a global GND (Varoufakis and Adler 2019; Fawcett 2019). Climate debt payments or “climate reparations” to the Global South have emerged as a key proposal in writings about the need to decolonize the GND (Kaboub 2020; Muchhala 2020; Táíwò and Cibralic 2020; Ajl 2021; Red Nation 2021) and was also flagged by UK MP Caroline Lucas (2021) at the launch of a global alliance of lawmakers working on the GND. Clearly, while there has been progress here, there is still much to be done to expand on these proposals and to identify realistic pathways to implementing them.

Working within or against capitalism

Sturman and Heenan (2021: 152) point out that the GND has “come under fire from the left as a vehicle for the continuation of capitalism in crisis.” Ajl (2021), who takes a clear anti-capitalist stance, sees a rather more diverse field of GNDs that variously act as “plans for preserving, strengthening, remolding, attacking, or abolishing capitalism.” Certainly,

the Red Deal is explicitly anti-capitalist, proposing a “full-scale assault on capitalism, using Indigenous knowledge and tried-and-true methods of mass mobilization as its ammunition” (Red Nation 2021).

However, most Green New Dealers are more ambiguous about their position on capitalism. There are certainly many who identify as eco-socialists, but there are also green Keynesians and those who reject all the “isms.” We believe that the absence of explicit calls to abolish capitalism in the majority of GND proposals has more to do with pragmatism than a belief that “green capitalism” is sustainable in the long run. In particular, the urgency of responding to the climate crisis in a very short timeframe means that choices have to be made about which battles to prioritize. Eco-Marxist John Bellamy Foster describes the predicament well:

We cannot deal with the climate crisis, much less the overall planetary ecological emergency, in an effective way while conforming to the logic of a globalized capitalist economy. But we currently live in such an economy, and we have a very short time in which to respond to climate change. So, it becomes a question of immediately choosing to steer society toward putting people and nature before profits, as opposed to what capitalism does, i.e., putting profits before people and nature. We have to go against the logic of the system even while living within it.

(Quoted in Triantafyllou 2019)

Noam Chomsky has similarly argued that “a simple consideration of time scales reveals that the existential issues must be considered within the framework of state-capitalist systems” (Chomsky and Pollin 2020: 56). Stilwell (2021: 166) adds to this that, “[w]ishing for a different starting point is not helpful” and that, “the adoption of a GND would be just the start of a journey of socio-economic change, not an end point.” The important question then becomes not whether the GND challenges capitalism head-on, but whether it opens “the possibility of moving subsequently to more radical transformations as the process develops” (Stilwell 2021: 166).

On this last point, it is important to note that Green New Dealers increasingly emphasize the need for an expansion of public ownership, particularly in the energy sector (see further the chapter by MacArthur, Hoicka and Das, this volume), but also in a wide range of other areas. For example, Vansintjan (2020) calls for GNDs to create “libraries for everything,” from tools to seeds. Further, a major GND policy piece in the US focuses on expanding as well as decarbonizing public housing (Cohen et al. 2019, 2021). Expansion of public ownership and cooperative forms of ownership offers a potential pathway to a post-capitalist system even if they are not framed as anti-capitalist initiatives.

Several chapters in this volume address capitalism and the GND in greater depth, particularly those by John McCollum and Benjamin Selwyn.

Outline of the book

There are two key aims of this volume. The first is to explore significant conversations that we believe will contribute to the development of the GND narrative. The second aim is to decenter the US in GND discourse, because the ecological crisis is, after all, global. The contributors to come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and some take a purely scholarly approach, while others adopt a more activist lens. While we, the editors, would consider ourselves advocates² of the GND, many authors in the volume express a significant amount of skepticism about either the narrative itself or about specific GND policies and proposals.

We find all of the critiques presented by the authors to be constructive and helpful in driving the further refinement of the GND narrative.

We begin in Part I by exploring the political economy of the GND.

In Chapter 1, Ann Pettifor – one of the original members of the British Green New Deal Group – argues that the green movement missed an important target at birth by failing to engage with, challenge, and disarm the entrenched power of Wall Street and the sector’s support for the fossil fuel industry. The GND has helped to change this, but Pettifor expresses concern that in the US, President Biden is still conceding too much power to the private authority of Wall Street institutions.

In Chapter 2, Yeva Nersisyan turns to the question of the affordability of the GND. She argues that the MMT approach allows us to reorient the conversation away from what is unimportant (finance) to what is essential (real resources). She suggests that taking this approach leads to completely different conclusions about both the affordability of the GND and the macroeconomic challenges that need to be tackled to make it possible.

In Chapter 3, Ray Galvin argues that central banks have an important role to play in monitoring possible inflationary and other structural economic effects of the substantial amount of government spending that GNDs entail. Central banks can sell or buy government (and other) bonds to stimulate or dampen inflation and can be required to trade bonds to the favor of green or at least climate-neutral enterprises. However, Galvin cautions that there may be resistance to such an approach from financiers who argue for complete independence of central banks from political/democratic control.

In Chapter 4, John McCollum provides a critique of the GND from an ecological Marxist perspective. He highlights three key concerns: that the GND will expand the “treadmill of production;” that the GND will widen the “metabolic rift” between the Global North and Global South; and that an expanded state bureaucracy could boost a new round of capitalist power, threatening to turn the GND into a crutch for capital, to the detriment of both equality and environment. McCollum stresses that his critique is meant to be constructive and to help the movement avoid poorly conceived GNDs that “could threaten the entire enterprise.”

In Chapter 5, Benjamin Selwyn continues with the theme of capitalism, but focuses on the need for a GND for agriculture to combat environmental degradation, social inequality and labor exploitation. Selwyn identifies a number of areas for discussion and political action, such as the reorientation of state subsidies, workers’ rights, agrarian reform, the decommodification of food, agroecology, possibilities for urban agriculture, the application of new technologies, and rewilding.

In Chapter 6, Juliet B. Schor and Kyla Tienhaara discuss the relationship between degrowth and the GND. They argue that the type of policies advocated by degrowth proponents – job guarantees, worktime reductions, wealth caps or taxes, etc. – also address inequality and are a natural fit for GNDs. They focus on how a shorter working week could be incorporated into GNDs.

In Chapter 7, Todd Tucker and Timothy Meyer turn to the role of the global legal infrastructure in facilitating or hindering GNDs and sketch out an approach to modernize the current rules. They outline changes to the World Trade Organization rules and new uses of domestic trade remedy laws. In their view, there is currently an opportunity to remake and green an international trade and investment architecture that is already in crisis.

In Part II, we turn to issues of justice (economic, gender, racial) and democracy.

In Chapter 8, Joanna Robinson discusses the possibilities of a combined Green New Deal/COVID-19 recovery plan that prioritizes economic and climate justice by focusing on creating decent, well-paying jobs in low- or zero-carbon sectors of the economy. In a

context where the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the reality of social and economic injustice in our communities globally, Robinson calls for a plan that is truly transformative and justice oriented and supports the well-being of people.

In Chapter 9, Josiah Rector provides some historical lessons for Green New Dealers about how the original New Deal perpetuated environmental inequality in Detroit, Michigan, between the 1930s and the 1960s. Rector argues that the linkage between the New Deal and racial discrimination was historically contingent rather than inevitable, and that a racially just Green New Deal is possible.

Winona LaDuke puts forward, in Chapter 10, a bold proposal for an Indigenous-led, women-led GND: the Sitting Bull Plan. In addition to calling for respect for Indigenous knowledge (e.g., in the management of forest fires), she provides practical solutions such as a new material economy built around hemp.

In Chapter 11, Frances Roberts-Gregory describes the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal, an evolving policy platform and ecofeminist manifesto that provides innovative and cross-cutting perspectives on how policymakers, activist organizations, and civil society should plan for greener, regenerative, and care-fueled futures for all. She argues that any GND that fails to center solutions devised by feminists and BIPOC communities will continue to exacerbate global inequality, as well as the rights of nature and human rights abuses.

Julie L. MacArthur, Christina E. Hoicka, and Runa R. Das take up the concept of energy democracy and the lessons it holds for our understanding of GNDs in Chapter 12. They argue that GND proposals lacking significant democratization components are unlikely to be deeply transformative and thus more likely to reproduce (or even intensify) existing socio-economic cleavages.

In the final chapter in this section, Vijay Kolinjivadi and Ashish Kothari argue that the ecological ramifications of colonialism and continued global dependence on cheap labor and resources have gone unnoticed in calls for GNDs. They conclude that centering ecological reparations, decolonization, and deliberative democracy is key to a truly just transition.

Many of the chapters in the first two parts of the book refer to the US context. The AOC-Markey Resolution and Bernie Sanders' GND have without a doubt been inspirational to many and have generated a rich literature on what the GND is and what it could be. Specific proposals for a GND for Housing and a GND for Public Schools have also demonstrated that umbrella proposals covering the entire economy are not the only path to achieving the GND. However, there has been much less attention given to how the GND has been articulated and implemented in other political contexts (see, however, Cohen and Riofrancos 2020 on the GND in Latin America). For this reason, Part III aims to shine a light on the GND in practice outside of the US.

In Chapter 14, Vincent (Yijiang) Huang proposes a centrally funded and locally administered Chinese Green Job Guarantee to eliminate China's 24.27 million in urban unemployment while also improving infrastructure, addressing environmental degradation, and preserving traditional culture. Huang argues that the program would pay for itself through increased GDP growth.

In Chapter 15, Kyla Tienhaara, Sun-Jin Yun, and Ryan Gunderson examine both of South Korea's GNDs. The first (in 2009) focused overwhelmingly on a controversial project to dam Korea's four major rivers and had a minimal impact on greening Korea's economy. The second (2020) is socially and environmentally superior to its predecessor, but still involves support for projects with questionable environmental outcomes and places too much faith in the possibility of green growth.

In Chapter 16, David Adler and Pawel Wargan critically examine another existing platform – the EU Green Deal. They argue that far from being a pathbreaking vision for an

ecological future, the EU Green Deal is a historic effort to greenwash Europe's political and economic status quo. Importantly, they highlight that the lack of involvement of the labor movement in the push for a GND enabled EU policymakers to craft an agenda that was green on the outside, but hollow on the inside.

In Chapter 17, Daniel Bailey and Elena Hofferberth trace the political and economic development of the UK's version of the GND, from its conception shortly before the global financial crash of 2008 to the calls to Build Back Better during the COVID-19 pandemic and outline the ways in which its development has been shaped by the numerous dysfunctions and pathologies of contemporary British capitalism.

In Chapter 18, Seth Klein examines the call for a Made-in-Canada GND. He explores some of the unique Canadian challenges: while the overall economy is not heavily dependent on the extraction of fossil fuels, certain regions are, and the highly decentralized nature of the Canadian federation presents special barriers to effective action. But Klein explains how a robust just transition plan "that leaves no one behind" could help to overcome such challenges.

In the final chapter, Christopher W. Gibson considers another site for GNDs to emerge: the city. Numerous municipal GNDs have popped up in the US in recent years. However, Gibson argues that the financialization of urban production and governance can hinder environmental reform efforts by local governments. Ultimately, he argues that in pursuing a GND, we must be cognizant of the need for financial reform and adaptation because financial structures can prefigure the outcomes of well-intended social and environmental planning.

We recognize that there are numerous other issues and case studies that are deserving of inclusion in this volume. Indeed, we sought out chapters on GNDs in Africa, Latin America and Australia. Unfortunately, as privileged as many are in the academic sector, the pandemic still took a heavy toll, and several authors had to withdraw from this project to focus on more pressing issues. While we were sorry to lose the insights of those scholars in these pages, we see this Handbook as only the beginning of a conversation that we hope to continue with an ever-widening assemblage of scholars, activists, and policymakers in the years to come.

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Notes

- 1 In June 2021, *Unearthed*, the investigative journalism branch of Greenpeace, released a recording of an ExxonMobil lobbyist explaining that the company had backed a carbon tax in an effort to stall more serious measures to combat the climate crisis (see further Carter 2021).
- 2 See Green (2020: 152) on why "As climate scholars, it is our professional responsibility to engage in climate politics and use our expertise to serve as advocates, to identify the political causes of climate inaction as well as solutions to overcome them."

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