

# Climate barbarism: Adapting to a wrong world

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In the next few decades, it is possible that all we talk about will be the weather. Nowadays, the discussion on climate change tends to be about the effects of it on our landscape and living conditions, on whom to blame, and how best to mitigate it. These discussions are becoming stale. We all know where it comes from, what it does, and how to stop it—but we are stuck in a political and social-economic order that makes it nearly impossible to change anything in a serious way without a radical shift of priorities. One way to get out of this deadlock is to rethink the problem both morally and politically.

The subfield of climate ethics has been mostly concerned with two issues: (1) what principles of justice should underlie negotiations between states over how best to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects (Caney, 2005, 2014; Bell, 2010; Gardiner, 2004; Jamieson, 1992, 2005; Moellendorf, 2015; Shue, 2014), and (2) to what extent do individuals have moral duties to change their own behavior to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2005; Jamieson, 2010; Hiller, 2011; Schwenkenbecher, 2014; Cripps, 2013; Fragnière, 2016; Godoy, 2017). While interesting, these questions fail to address the novel moral challenges that climate change places on human beings in the present. By temporally and spatially disassembling cause and effect, perpetrator and victim, as well as intention and action, climate change challenges conventional normative accounts of what it means to be a person, that is, to be accountable to others, to be responsible for harm, to be blameworthy, even to have choices that matter (Gardiner, 2006, 2011; Jamieson, 2014; Page, 1999). Rawlsian, utilitarian, and Kantian ethical frameworks are not enough; we need a new way of thinking the human under conditions of climate catastrophe (Jonas, 1984), one sensitive to our dependence on particular ecological parameters for human flourishing, parameters currently being destroyed in the so-called “Anthropocene.”

The buzzword of the “Anthropocene” has been circulating through social theory like a wildfire ever since a few stratigraphers proposed this term in the 2000s to mark a new geological epoch, one defined by the markings of human beings on the very sediment of the planet (Steffen et al., 2007). A few critical theorists (Malm & Hornborg, 2014) have pushed back against the use of term, arguing that it wrongly identifies all of humanity, that is, *Man* as such, for irreversible destroying the ecological parameters of the Holocene epoch. Is the human species as a whole really the agent of this ruin, as some claim, or does it make sense to categorially distinguish different kinds of human relationships to

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nature within the species, and if so, what is the criterion for such distinctions? That is to say, what are we to make of clashing epistemological, metaphysical, and anthropological perspectives toward the environment when judging the validity of the Anthropocene concept? Along with Malm and Hornborg (2014), I believe that an antagonistic theory of the development of human social relations refutes any generalization of universal species attributes in regards to the environment. And yet, contrary to them, there is still a room for a philosophical theory of the Anthropocene, not as a causal-empirical account of human domination of the ecosystem, but as normative account of what it means to live together on a fragile planet.

But how can we act together in the Anthropocene, given the status of permanent crisis, emergency, and catastrophe? There is a common belief that genuine awareness and acceptance of the existence of anthropogenic climate change (as opposed to either ignorance or denial) automatically leads one to develop political and moral positions which advocate for collective human action toward minimizing suffering for all and adapting human societies toward a fossil-free future. This is a mistake. Against the idea that scientific awareness of the facts of climate change is enough to motivate a common ethical project of humanity toward a unifying good, I argue that climate change awareness can just as well equally motivate heightened divisions of humanity into anti-egalitarian, xenophobic, class-differentiated zones of competitive survival (Klein, 2019a; Parenti, 2011; Taylor, 2019). I call this climate barbarism, and seek to explain its conceptual grounds.

This article has two parts: the first is a critique of the narrowness of climate ethics, and the second is a contribution to climate politics. The aim in the first half is to show the deep connection between the fossil economy and climate change, a structural connection which renders individual market-based solutions not only inadequate, but ideological. Here, I am mostly building on other ecological Marxists, and criticizing some tendencies in climate ethics. In the second half of the article, I move up a level of analysis and focus on the various political-economic conjunctures of state action and capitalist dynamics that are emerging in response to climate change. Based on a reading of Mann and Wainwright's *Climate Leviathan* (2018) alongside some recent comments by Naomi Klein (2019a), I argue that we should take more seriously a hybrid political form of adaptation to climate change which fully accepts its brutal reality, but denies any form of solidarity in response. By conceptually clarifying this possibility as a real threat, we will hopefully be more prepared to identify it in the future, so as to avoid it.

## 2 | AGAINST CLIMATE ETHICS

Let me start by reviewing several common ways of framing the issue of climate change:

1. Climate change presents us with the largest "collective action problem" in human history (Gardiner, 2011).<sup>1</sup>
2. Anthropogenic climate change—including global warming, ocean acidification, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, and increased extreme weather events—is the product of excessive emissions of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, as well as mass deforestations over the last 200 years, primarily by industrialized, rich countries (Shue, 1993; Maslin, 2014; IPCC, 2014, 2018).
3. Individuals in rich countries, and especially rich individuals in rich countries, are disproportionately responsible for a huge amount of carbon emissions, historically and currently. Their giant carbon footprints are results of wasteful consumer choices (see the articles in Gardiner et al., 2010). Half of the carbon in the atmosphere today was put there in the last 30 years, mostly serving the demand of wealthy citizens of the global north (Ritchie & Roser, 2017; Wallace-Wells, 2019).
4. The use of fossil fuels to energize our planet—especially through the burning of coal, oil, and gas—is the primary driver of the explosive rise in carbon dioxide emissions (Maslin, 2014).
5. To maintain a livable planet without catastrophic losses, the rise in global temperature should be kept to 1.5°C, or 2°C maximum (IPCC, 2014, 2018). But given the emissions trajectory we are on right now, such targets are nearly impossible.

6. Nevertheless, most policy makers, economists, and philosophers believe that the most realistic, efficient, and effective strategy to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts is to implement a fair carbon tax, to cap and trade emissions on the global market, to incentivize individuals to consume ecological products, to give credits for businesses to develop and use sustainable technologies, to pool resources to fund adaptation projects worldwide, and to push for more public investment in green jobs (Stern, 2008; Broome, 2012; United Nations, 2015; Ocasio-Cortez, 2019).

Now, most of this is true, but none of it is very helpful in solving the climate crisis. Why?

This common framing of the problem—as one of consumer choices and carbon footprints, individual emissions and carbon taxes, collective action problems and market solutions—fails to consider any structural drivers of climate change as rooted in our economic form of life. It assumes that one can separate the climate crisis from its material basis in how the global economy functions, in how goods are produced and distributed today, and for whom. It ignores the vast differences in power between those who have to drive to work to make money to pay for their food, rent, phone bill, mortgage, insurance, health care, and children, and those who live off the rising value of their assets, returns on capital, and financial investments. In particular, such framing disregards how capitalist firms are structurally compelled by competition to maximize profit for their shareholders no matter the consequences for the planet.

What drives this compulsion? It is not the desire to satisfy the needs of others, nor is it based on some moral value one upholds or social norm one feels obligated by. None of these are enough to explain the disciplining effect of the market on all actors *across* the spectrum of income, labor, and wealth. Despite the vast inequalities of power between those at the bottom and those at the top of the social hierarchy, *none* are free to act against the dictates of the price signal without being punished by the whip of poverty or bankruptcy.<sup>2</sup> This signal is not the cause but the effect of a structure of social domination produced by those who are themselves dominated by it. For the source of the quasi-autonomous movement of commodities, money, and capital in society is nothing other than the historically specific form of value-producing labor to which human beings are subordinated by an “impersonal, nonconscious, nonvolitional, mediate form of necessity characteristic of capitalism” (Postone, 1993, p. 127). This impersonal compulsion to subject one’s activity to the form of value to meet one’s needs constitutes an abstract social structure with its own internal logic which renders the individual wills of human beings superfluous (see Postone, 1993; Heinrich, 2012; Bonefeld, 2014).

Swallowing up and spitting out natural resources and human bodies without regard for their fate is the *sine qua non* of this economy, this broken metabolism of human beings with nature (Debord, 1971; Mattick, 1976). To “care” is already a sign of something gone wrong, an exogenous influence on the inner drive of capital to valorize itself. That is why institutionalizing minimal regulations against the wholesale destruction of human capacity has only been accomplished on the corpses of working-class struggles, which are always capable of being overturned; and institutionalizing minimal regulations against the brazen disruption of ecological conditions of planetary habitability has barely been achieved at all. Nothing has been able to stop the penetration of the productive apparatus deeper into the depths of human subjectivity and nonhuman nature. Every failure to ward off the subjection of some realm of existence to the imperative of value reveals the negative outlines of an alternative future, one barely keeping the flame of critical theory alive.

This structure of abstract social domination—that is, “the domination of people by abstract, quasi-independent structures of social relations, mediated by commodity-determined labor” (Postone, 1993, p. 126)—is enabled by particular social property relations that separate human beings from their conditions of existence and mediate them through the forms of the commodity, money, and capital, all of which are but fetishized expressions of the alienated social power of human beings confronting them as external forces, enforced by a system logic of generalized exchange, private property, and market dependency. In other words, the relations of human beings with each other and their natural conditions of existence in capitalism is determined by the historically specific mediation of value-producing labor which constitutes a structure of social domination whose lever escapes the control of even those who benefit from it most.

As private producers compete on a global market for profits, they are forced to develop new cost-cutting measures and utilize labor-saving technology, ultimately leading to general overcapacity, sales gluts, and crises, while investors are constantly seeking higher returns in financial speculation, in real estate, in asset-backed securities, in anything that can raise the value of their capital faster and higher than others. There is no stopping of this circuit except through stopping the specific form of labor which reproduces it. Whether in the home or the office, the car or the factory, the restaurant, port, library, mine, hospital, farm, field, construction site, market, university, store, call center, bank, or hotel, whether gendered or racialized in specific ways, whether formal or informal, paid or unpaid—it is the continuous subsumption of human activity into value-producing labor which both undergirds and exposes the elementary structure of capitalist social relations.

The ceaseless consumption of human labor power and natural resources in the production process produces not just commodities but a specific temporal relation between past and future, one which obliterates the capacity to pause the circuit of capital, to take stock of time, as every finished cycle of production only restarts another one on an expanded scale. The hyperaccelerated timeframe of accumulation renders impossible the ability to attend to the rhythms and regenerative capacities of both the natural world and the human person. The immediate aim of any private producer is simply to outcompete other firms who themselves must outcompete other firms in a treadmill effect which itself flattens history into a unilinear directional dynamic centered around the reduction of labor costs, the development of labor-saving technology, the proliferation of new property and asset forms, the consolidation of capitals, and the cut-throat competition for market share. Since the production of needs are hostage to the vicissitudes of the business cycle, the health of the company truly is the health of society, *as long as there is no other option for human beings to meet their needs outside the market.*

In the last two decades, a new field of scholarship has emerged bringing together such elements of critical theory and ecology. Whether discussing the “metabolic rift,” the “second contradiction,” “world-ecology,” “ecosocialism,” or “degrowth,” quite an impressive debate has emerged in regards to the relation between capitalism and nature, crisis and ecology, growth and sustainability, as well as climate change and the accumulation of value. Alongside the “ecological Marxism” of Bellamy Foster (2000), Clark et al. (2010), Burkett (2014), Moore (2015), Malm (2016), and Saito (2017), I hope to contribute a “social form” analysis of climate change. Inspired by Theodor Adorno (1973), Alfred Schmidt (1971), and Moishe Postone (1993), I argue that a critical theory of climate change should move beyond the moral condemnation of “greedy” individuals and corporations for ruining the planet, and instead approach the question from the perspective of *social form*, that is, the specific ways in which the *form-determinations* of capital, value, money, and the commodity practically invert our relation to ourselves and nonhuman nature (in this regard, see O’Kane, 2018; Cassegård, 2017, 2021). Climate change, on this account, is not a separate catastrophe from others—such as the crisis of biodiversity, the sixth mass extinction, the proliferation of pandemics like Covid-19, deforestation, ocean acidification—but part of an ongoing ecological rift of the social metabolism with nature, itself determined by the specific logic of capitalist accumulation and the real subsumption of human labor under the form of value. It is this abstract, impersonal form of domination—expressed in the insuperable market imperative to produce for value and not for need—created by human beings yet set against them, which holds sway over the fate of the climate, and thus, the fate of human life. A critical theory of climate change is then a critique of the society which is compelled by its own social logic to destroy its own natural conditions of existence. The emancipatory potential of this ecological critique lies in how it focuses our attention on the social totality within which climate change unfolds, thus pointing, albeit negatively, to an alternative form of life beyond it.

Climate ethics—as the specific subdiscipline of ethics which develops normative principles and policy proposals in regards to how to deal with the novel human condition of anthropogenic climate change—has been hampered by assuming that the market functions as an *opportunity* for voluntary agreements between free human beings for the benefit of all, instead of as an *imperative* one submits to for lack of an alternative (Wood, 2002, 2012; Brenner, 1986, 2007).<sup>3</sup> The *differentia specifica* of capitalist social relations is the universal market dependency of its members, that is, the fact that all members of society are forced to play by its rules at pain of hunger, homelessness, jail, or death. This is not to elide the moral and material differences between those who live off their labor and those who

live off exploiting others, but rather to say that both are stuck in a game whose rules escape their individual control. To not exploit human labor and material nature, to *not* destroy the planet for the sake of profit is, thus, completely irrational from the perspective of all those who must conform to the a priori conditions of market experience to exist as socially validated, economically functional citizens. Granted this “opportunity,” it is no wonder that society as a whole has “chosen” to follow the rule of profitability over that of sustainability. One of these rules is not like the other.

To break free of the compulsion to act in the interests of capital regardless of one’s beliefs requires more than having the right values and norms, the right principles and policies. Neither is it simply solved by progressive taxes or carbon credits, or even a redistribution of basic goods, since the normative problem is not simply unequal access to goods but social domination by a form of impersonal rule (Roberts, 2017). Against the background of overall market dependency, the system of universal private labor and generalized commodity exchange appears on the surface as a realm of pure liberty, in which formally free and equal owners make voluntary contracts with other owners to buy or sell commodities, such as labor power, means of production, and natural resources to produce and reproduce the world in which we live, day in and day out. One’s beliefs about money and property are irrelevant since they are practically validated in these social practices (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; Heinrich, 2012). Value—or the objectification of socially necessary labor time privately produced and socially validated in exchange—marks the rule of things over humans, or the rule of things via humans. The forms of appearance of value in commodities, money, and capital are real abstractions whose effects shape social reality behind the backs of politicians, employers, consumers, shareholders, stockbrokers, urban planners, and philosophers. The universal abstract drive to produce more, to expand business, to keep working, to seek profits, to increase output or gain market share is a direct result of pressure from competition, which is itself an expression of the systematic dependency of private owners of the means of production on purchasing their inputs and selling their outputs on the market. This market dependency is systematic, impersonal, general, and cannot be solved via better ethics guidelines for businesses.

What I am trying to describe here at a theoretical level is one of the defining features of capitalism as a social form, the condition that human beings are compelled to adapt their behavior and life plans according to abstract determinations of value to survive and thrive, a social logic that is only tempered by working-class struggles which allow for less market dependence for meeting one’s needs. This tendency may be more pronounced in some ways now, as welfare states have been rolling back their social safety nets for decades, but it is not something new. There is, of course, immense variability in one’s vulnerability to market whims depending on one’s country of birth and class location, but I want to say something more than that. Rather, there is a disciplinary logic to the market that compels both the propertiless and the propertied to act according to its rules of reproduction (Clegg, 2020).

To stay competitive, firms must use the most efficient technologies, the cheapest sources of energy, and the most exploitable labor—without regard for externalities or social costs like pollution, climate change, or inequality. Whether by burning coal, oil, or natural gas; by using cars, planes or ships; by transporting goods or people; or by cutting down forests or extracting fossil fuels, the deliberate choice to continue releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide every day and dangerously heat the planet is adamantly *not* a lifestyle choice for most of humanity. Most individuals have no control whatsoever over the enormous amounts of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere each day, no matter what any motivational speaker might say about our “power to change the world” or “reduce, reuse, recycle.” Let me repeat that: the majority of human beings on the planet have absolutely no *meaningful control* as individuals over the amount of carbon that is emitted every single day. Rather, it is the result of institutional structures put in place to demobilize citizens from ever having a choice at all in the structure of the economy (Mair, 2013; Slobodian, 2018). Freedom of choice is the most highly cherished and protected liberal value of our time, and that freedom is sacrosanct as long as it does not choose against the liberal economy itself (Bonefeld, 2017). To think that individual consumers are somehow to blame for the climate catastrophe for their “choices” is to already give up the possibility of collective action and accept an ideological picture which ignores the production of those choices in the first place, which, not uncoincidentally, lets governments and fossil fuel companies off the hook.

The compulsion to grow and accumulate value to survive entails more resource use and more energy, thus, exacerbating the drivers of climate change, that is, fossil fuel combustion and deforestation. As Andreas Malm summarizes in his incisive book *Fossil Capital* (2016):

At a certain stage in the historical development of capital, fossil fuels become a necessary material substratum for the production of surplus-value...they are utilized across the spectrum of commodity production as the material that sets it in motion. (p. 288)

In a capitalist economy based on fossil fuels, a sum of money ( $M$ ) is used to purchase commodities ( $C$ ) including labor power ( $LP$ ) and means of production ( $MP$ ), which run on fossil fuels ( $F$ ) as energy, releasing  $CO_2$  as a byproduct in the production ( $P$ ) of new commodities ( $C'$ ) which are sold for more money ( $M'$ ) than the initial sum. The general formula for fossil capital is thus:

$$M - C(L + MP(F)) \dots P \dots CO_2 \dots C' - M'$$

The systematic incorporation of fossil fuels as energy into the production process renders the release of carbon dioxide intrinsic to the atmosphere as no longer a byproduct but an integral aspect of the economy itself. Explaining the dynamic of fossil capital, Malm writes:

The more capital expands, the larger the volumes extracted and combusted; integral to the *Stoffwechsel*, fossil fuels are now subjected to productive consumption in ever-growing quantities ... Since fossil energy now fuels the perpetuum mobile of capital accumulation, always igniting itself anew as a driving fire that never goes out, the cycle continues indefinitely... Fossil capital, in other words, is self-expanding value passing through the metamorphosis of fossil fuels into  $CO_2$ . (pp. 288–9)

Ecologically destructive production is not exogenous to the production of value but intrinsic to it.<sup>4</sup> The drivers are structural, baked in to a set of economic conditions which force producers to compete for the cheapest, most efficient, most productive labor, raw material, technology, and energy. This is not ecology but anti-ecology, a “universal appropriation of biophysical resources, insatiable in its appetite, starting and ever continuing with energy” (p. 326). The result is a death sentence for any ecology of sustainability, habitability, and human-natural flourishing.

This outcome is not the result of a few bad individuals and large carbon footprints; if you change the CEO of Exxon-Mobil, it will not make the slightest difference. If you build more electric cars, but the demand for cars keep rising anyways, it will not make a difference. If you increase the use of solar and wind technology, but fossil fuel companies still extract, refine, and sell dangerous amounts of gas and oil from the earth, then it will not make a difference. On top of the empirical inadequacy of these measures, there are also serious ecological and human rights issues in trying to maintain current levels of production and consumption with simply swapped out renewable sources, particularly, in terms of the mining and extraction of rare earth metals (Hickel, 2019; Bernes, 2019). Moreover, just calling for “reduction” in general is also pointless, as the issue is not simply about having *less* stuff, but having *more* control over what is produced in the first place (Barry, 2020). Yet moral and political philosophers—along with journalists, politicians, activists, NGOs, oil companies, and lobbyists—continue to overemphasize the role that individual consumers play in bringing about climate change, and thus, in their ability to stop it (see Huber, 2019).

Why do they continue to do this, especially in light of such ineffective results? Why can't they see the pointlessness of this approach? What, one can ask, compels them to do so? It would be tempting to answer: their paycheck. But this cannot be the answer. This is not simply a methodological constraint of philosophy but a deeper, dare say ideological blindness to the history of conflictual social change as the lever of emancipation (Malm, 2021; Fraser, 2021). The turn toward a focus on individual responsibility for environmental problems has long been documented (Maniates, 2001). The constant reappearance of individual consumers as the locus of concern is, thus, itself an expression of the political

failure to challenge any structural drivers of climate change (Malm, 2020). Of course, as Dan Boscov-Ellen argues, “at a certain level of analysis, climate change is indeed caused by individuals as they travel, consume, and navigate daily life in a fossil-fueled world” (Boscov-Ellen, 2020, p. 164). However, he continues:

by focusing on consumption and emissions, many philosophers make ordinary citizens of wealthier nations the primary antagonists of climate change – a framing that dovetails perfectly with the long-standing (and successful) efforts of liberal governments and corporations to individualise responsibility for systemic ills, even as they single-mindedly pursue growth. (p. 164)

That is to say, the moral and political paradigm that isolates individual consumption as the main cause of global warming and advocates reducing individual emissions as the solution is itself a morally disingenuous way of avoiding responsibility for climate change at the highest levels of power, of shifting the focus away from those structures which predetermine the very architecture of individual choice and displacing it onto the result of that structure: the isolated consumer citizen who is only allowed to choose through his or her consumption (see Young, 2011). Moreover, Boscov-Ellen continues,

the overemphasis on footprints teaches us ‘to think of consumption as determined by “lifestyle choices” rather than socially enforced logics’ and teaches us ‘to consider the drivers of planetary crisis as grounded in the aggregations of “people” and “consumption” rather than in the systemic dynamics of global capitalism’. (2020, p. 165; citing Moore & Patel, 2017, p. 204)

This is a structuralist account, but not a determinist one. Structural forces exist beyond the power of individuals to change them. But they are not beyond the power of social groups to challenge them. The structures are, after all, products of ourselves, separated and opposed to us. They can always be changed, but not without changing ourselves into something else as well, a collective power. Kafka once said, there is plenty of hope, just not for us. I would amend it to say—there is a plenty of hope, just not on our own!

In other words, individual choices are constrained by social structures much larger than them, and these structures need to be confronted head on to change the outcomes. For climate change, this means that not only must the demand side of the equation be transformed, but also the supply. Whereas demand-side policies focus on incentivizing consumers to change their energy use and behavior through market mechanisms, supply-side policies can focus on constricting the freedom of energy producers and other owners of productive assets in the first place (Mendelevitch, 2018).

But to go after the suppliers of fossil fuels requires serious political power and transnational labor mobilization, as these are some of the biggest companies on the planet, with budgets larger than most nations. Furthermore, the suppliers of fossil fuels are not destroying the planet because they are irrational monsters, rather they are rationally searching for maximum profits and increased shareholder value like any other company which needs to grow and stay competitive to survive. Furthermore, governments which support these companies are not evil, rather they depend on the wealth and taxes of these companies for maintaining their constituencies. These companies and politicians will never vote themselves out of power—they need to be forced out. To do so requires massive interventions into the market of distribution *and* production—including expropriation, decommodification, socialization, regulation, capital controls, and more (Blumenfeld, forthcoming). Anything less is capitulation.

The relentless mining and burning of fossil fuels is not the result of some choice by humanity as a whole, or consumers in general, or even just wealthy nations. That framing of the problem cannot distinguish between those who are actively profiting off the destruction of our planet and those who are just trying to survive in it. Global warming is rather the systemic consequence of an economic drive to produce and distribute goods as cheaply as possible for the highest returns, which practically means, burning fossil fuels whatever the cost is (Malm, 2016). These are the basic



dynamics of fossil capitalism, which determines how we reproduce our lives, and cannot be simply consumed or taxed away (Brenner, 1986, 2007; Wood, 2002).

Capitalism is the most dynamic economic system ever created: ruthlessly revolutionizing the means of production, destroying old industries and investing in new ones in search of profits all over the world, incorporating everyone and everything into its orbit, monetizing every object, every relation, every activity. The state-backed force of the market breaks down old traditions and barriers, connecting everyone and everything in a single web of relations. Capitalism, in short, “creates a world after its own image” (Marx & Engels, 1848, 488). There is truly no outside anymore.

And yet, it has not and cannot solve the climate crisis. Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently said that climate change cannot be mitigated without a “transformation in the structure of global economic activity” (Krogstrup & Oman, *IMF Working Paper*, 2019).<sup>5</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as well is starting to say this, as are many scientists, activists, environmentalists, and even some economists (IPCC, 2018). Nevertheless, the solutions proposed are woefully inadequate to the task at hand (see Mann & Wainwright, 2018, Ch. 5). It is as though the entire edifice of fossil-fuel-dependent cheap production and distribution of commodities for the sake of profit can be incentivized away through a simple tax. As if taxes have ever stopped the wealthy from doing what they want. Furthermore, such taxes, when implemented, are usually offloaded onto poorer sections of the population.

For example, during 2019, in Iran, Chile, Ecuador, France, and Zimbabwe, so-called climate-friendly policies like rising fuel prices provoked some of the most massive, violent demonstrations in decades. Are the enraged protestors simply fools for not knowing what is good for them? Of course not, they are just people who need to drive to work to survive, because there is no free public transport, because work is their only means of existence, because why should they pay to fix what they did not break? Any climate policy that separates social justice from natural science, that separates economics from political economy, or crudely put, class from climate, is doomed from the start.

Global greenhouse emissions are directly correlated with global growth rates (Hickel and Kallis, 2020). Per capita rise in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is correlated with per capita rise in GDP growth. The only years in recent history in which carbon dioxide in the atmosphere did not rise was immediately after the 2008 economic crisis, which slowed global production, shut down industries, stopped the construction boom, and threw millions out of work.<sup>6</sup> But once the economy started growing again, emissions shot right back up to make up for any lost time.

It would seem then that the only historically proven solution to reducing the rate of carbon emissions and, thus, hopefully limiting global warming to 1.5° would be to immediately stop the economy, to create a global economic crisis, but this time, a permanent one. But to even say that is regarded as ridiculous, way outside the mainstream of acceptable opinions.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, given that the market-based approaches have all failed, maybe it is time to think a bit more radically, beyond capitalist realism and the endless discussion of costs and benefits, trade-offs and synergies, targets and footprints.

Take, for instance, a few of the suggestions proposed by ecologist Andreas Malm in a 2017 article called “Revolution in a Warming World” (2017):

1. Enforce a complete moratorium on all new facilities for extracting coal, oil, or natural gas.
2. Close down all power plants running on such fuels.
3. Draw 100% of electricity from non-fossil sources, primarily wind and solar.
4. Expand mass transit systems on all scales, from subways to intercontinental high-speed trains.
5. Limit the shipping and flying of food and systematically promote local supplies.

All of these are absolutely necessary policies to curb global heating to within the boundaries of 1.5°C or at least 2°C, and yet they are absolutely unrealistic in a global capitalist order without massive disruptions to the classes of those whose assets would be threatened, and thus, to the financial architecture of the world. None of this will happen through carbon taxes, emissions trading, or even good-willed policy proposals from pragmatic technocrats. This requires real social power, class power, from grassroots social movements, environmental movements, labor



movements, and from all who want to see a livable, just future. This would create a real “transformation in the structure of global economic activity,” and bring along with it, plenty of enemies.<sup>8</sup>

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has shown us just how fragile and interdependent our societies really are, how utterly dependent we are on our supposedly “mastered” nature. The pandemic has confronted nations, societies, organizations, companies, families, and individuals with immense challenges, hardships, and needless suffering. Is it possible to learn from this catastrophe about how to confront climate change? The answer is ambivalent (Malm, 2020). On the one hand, the lockdowns have shown us that drastic measures can be taken by states to quickly shutter the economy if needed (Tooze, 2021). If that is possible, then why not shutter fossil fuel companies, private jets, cruise ships, luxury consumption? On the other hand, an ecological and democratic response to climate change must be public, shared, open, and collective, in short, the opposite of a lockdown.

The question is then: can we separate the shutdown from the lockdown? Is it possible to shutdown economic sectors without locking people in, to close toxic production while at the same time opening up new forms of public life, common use, and social engagement? I think so. Confronting climate change cannot be left to experts, politicians, or economists, while everyone else stays at home, isolated, carrying on as before. Rather, a just climate politics must incorporate the broad public in a collective project of social, cultural, and aesthetic transformation which rethinks how we produce, consume, live, and move on the planet (Davis, 2010; Boscov-Ellen, 2020). To challenge the structural drivers of climate change and not just its morbid symptoms requires an intergenerational, sustainable, responsible, even joyful relation to each other and nature (Soper, 2019).<sup>9</sup>

What that looks like cannot be left to policymakers, businessman, or scientists alone, but is rather a question for all of us. Now imagine the future. What do you see?

1. Do you see an ecosocialist utopia, in which renewable energies, public transport, low-carbon housing, and dense, green urban environments provide the context for a full and sustainable life, free of mindless drudgery?
2. Do you see a neoliberal green fantasy world, in which the wealthy eat synthetic meat in their solar-heated castles, and drive electric cars in their green villas, and the rest of humanity works four jobs in the gig-economy just to pay for health care?
3. Do you see an ecofascist world in which nation states close down borders, promote economic protectionism, mobilize xenophobia, and pit races and nations against each other in a survival of the fittest?
4. Or do you see a continuation of the present, business-as-usual, where the slow violence of unequally distributed climate change impacts continues to stretch out into the indefinite future, in which the cascading crises of sea-level rise, famine, heat death, droughts, and floods present horrors for some, and business opportunities for others?

These four futures are all present right now as real possibilities (Frase, 2016; Buck, 2019). It is up to us which one we want to live in.

### 3 | CLIMATE BARBARISM

Enough climate ethics, time for climate politics. In this section of the article, I review four possible political and economic responses to climate change, all of whose elements already exist in the present. This speculative account of possible climate futures, however, has a gap in its account, one which I identify as *climate barbarism*, that is, the possibility of a cruel adaptation to climate change. This regressive option demands more clarification, which I provide below.

According to Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright (2018), there are four potential global political responses to climate change, each of which expresses a different conjuncture between state sovereignty and global capitalism. These four social formations are split along two axes: planetary sovereignty versus anti-planetary sovereignty, and capitalist versus non-capitalist (see Figure 1).

	Planetary Sovereignty	Anti-Planetary Sovereignty
Capitalist	Climate Leviathan	Climate Behemoth
Non-capitalist	Climate Mao	Climate X

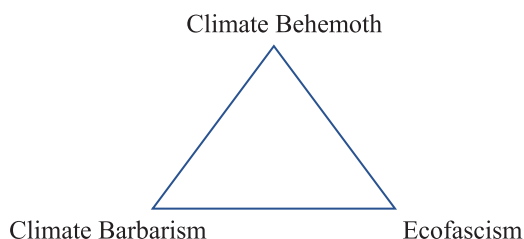
**FIGURE 1** Four potential social formations

The planetary capitalist response to climate change they call *Climate Leviathan*, which they see as the most likely scenario going forward. In short, Climate Leviathan names the strategy of global capital adapting to a warmer world so as to maintain free markets, the circulation of commodities, cheap labor, high consumption, and economic growth. This is the path of the Paris Agreement, the UN frameworks, the WTO, IMF, and G8. In homage to Hobbes, Climate Leviathan designates the new form of sovereignty emerging in response to the climate emergency. This sovereign structure reflects an agreement among the wealthiest and most powerful nation states to coordinate climate policy through transitional institutions which maintain their hegemony while offsetting the costs and burdens to the poor and future generations. Whether green neoliberalism or green Keynesianism, this is the path of green capitalism, a capitalism conscious of the need to organize itself globally to manage the ecological threat to its financial bottom line.

The anti-planetary capitalist response, which Mann and Wainwright fear the most, is called *Climate Behemoth*. This possible social formation intensifies nationalism, protectionism, climate denial, racism, xenophobia, social Darwinism, and international conflict. In this scenario, sovereignty does not expand to the planet to confront climate change, but contracts to the protected space of one's own borders. Climate Behemoth is a global state of nature against Leviathan's world order, unregulated anarchy to their managed globe. This social formation incorporates radically different interest groups, like wealthy elites and poor working-class populations, to block any climate policy that would impact jobs, industry, growth, "our way of life," fossil fuel profits, and the economy as such. Combining scientific denialism with economic protectionism, this anti-liberal deglobalized response to climate change reasserts national sovereignty as the only legitimate source of authority and protection in a world of diminishing returns. Scapegoating immigrants, fortifying borders, withdrawing from international treaties, and protecting domestic companies and workers are Climate Behemoth's main policies. In this pathway, the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels are ramped up to the maximum for the good of *our* economy, irrespective of its disastrous effects on the planet, on others, on the future, and on ourselves.

The planetary non-capitalist response, which they see as possible but unlikely, they call *Climate Mao*. With reference to China in particular, this potential form of sovereignty reflects a conjunction between a strong authoritarian state and a massive revolutionary subaltern class ready to act decisively and effectively on a world stage to tackle climate change outside of market mechanisms and capitalist institutions.<sup>10</sup> Climate Mao reflects a sovereign power which has a clear and immediate interest in radically mitigating climate change since its population is disproportionately affected by extreme climate events, droughts, floods, fires, and famines. As a major geopolitical force, Climate Mao would unite the global south and the noncapitalist bloc to implement climate measures from above that circumvent fossil capital and Euro-American hegemony. No more futile UN meetings and G8 gatherings about climate, this is mitigation through the brute force of state power.

The anti-planetary non-capitalist response, which they politically support but also pessimistically doubt, is called *Climate X*. This pathway names the unknown trajectory of a radical democratic politics from below which does not sacrifice local communities and transnational solidarity on the altar of economic growth or national sovereignty. Climate X names whatever it is that would meaningfully transcend capitalism and tackle climate change without displacing the costs onto the poor, the future, and the nonhuman. Combining grassroots forms of communal adaptation with democratic experiments in sovereignty, Climate X brings together climate activists, scientists, farmers, care workers, indigenous communities, urban ecologists, democratic socialists, and all those who struggle for a just and equitable



**FIGURE 2** Three kinds of cruel adaptation [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

carbon-free way of life here and now. This unnamable future is alive in the present in the form of anti-pipeline protests, climate justice movements, degrowth ecology, agrarian land reform, solidarity economies, and more.<sup>11</sup> Whether it can unite into a formidable force to overcome the power of Climate Leviathan is unknown.

In their insightful analysis, Mann and Wainwright focus mostly on Climate Leviathan and why it is likely to prevail, but they also spend ample time on the non-capitalist possibilities of Climate Mao and Climate X. What they tend to skip over is the dangerous power and potential of Climate Behemoth, a somewhat murky concept that needs some more precision to be useful. This is worrisome precisely because at present Climate Behemoth appears likelier to obtain rather than Climate Leviathan. Instead of using their specific term, one explicitly tied to the political theories of Hobbes and Schmitt, I will develop the concept of “climate barbarism,” a phrase used by Naomi Klein in some of her recent writings. But even that term is not specific enough, for we also must distinguish between climate barbarism in general and ecofascism in particular. Climate barbarism is a useful concept for grasping the general tendency toward anti-egalitarian climate politics, but it is too broad a concept to capture the specificity of particularly brutal ideologies of climate despair, like ecofascism. Thus, there are three concepts that need to be elaborated: climate behemoth, climate barbarism, and ecofascism. What do these concepts mean and how are they related? (see Figure 2).

Recall that Climate Behemoth names a form of anti-planetary, capitalist sovereignty in response to climate change, one that unifies neoliberal climate denial from elites (for the sake of protecting fossil capital) with anti-environmental, xenophobic resentment from poor and working-class populations (for sake of protecting their “dirty” jobs from environmental policy, globalization, refugees, or whatever scapegoat). While these forces are still real and powerful, their ideological coherence along the lines of climate denialism has been shattered. In the last 2 years alone, the reality of climate change has imposed itself more and more forcefully and convincingly on all parts of the population due to increased and seemingly constant extreme weather events, explosive IPCC reports, and a continuous stream of articles, books, movies, stories, and podcasts. More scientists and journalists are speaking out, more politicians and activists are taking a stand, and even more CEOs, bankers, and investors are signaling the end of fossil fuels. Perhaps the most powerful wakeup call has come from the uprising of the future generations themselves, that is, the youth, in the form of “climate strikes” and mass protests every Friday for almost 2 years now. This story is well known and needs no recounting (Klein, 2019a; Thunberg, 2019).<sup>12</sup>

In short, climate denial is no longer socially acceptable, and moreover, *no longer necessary*. One can now accept the irrefutable truth of climate change without giving up one’s love of fossil fuels or hatred of immigrants. Just because one understands the reality of climate-induced migration and the suffering of “climate refugees,” for instance, does not mean that one is now willing to accept them.<sup>13</sup> Welcome to the new climate world, where action on climate change is by no means “progressive,” “left,” or “radical”. Whether framed in terms of overpopulation or austerity, community or identity, safety or necessity, this kind of ecological politics is a terrifying development and should be a wake-up call for all those who believe in the basic value of universal human solidarity. This resolutely anti-egalitarian, regressive, reactionary transition from climate denial to climate acceptance should be theorized, on my account, as a shift from climate behemoth to climate barbarism. Unlike climate behemoth, this political response accepts the reality of climate change, but not the needs of others.

What is climate barbarism? One of the clearest articulations of this concept comes from Naomi Klein:

Climate barbarism is a form of climate adaptation. It is no longer denying that we have begun an age of massive disruption, that many hundreds of millions of people are going to be forced from their homelands, and that huge swathes of the planet are going to be uninhabitable. And then, in response to that, rather than doing all the things that are encoded in the UN Convention on Climate Change, which recognizes the historical responsibility of many of the countries that happen to have a little more time to deal with the impacts of climate change—are insulated both by geography and relative wealth—instead says, look, we simply believe we are better, because of our citizenship, because of our whiteness, and our Christian-ness, and we are locking down, protecting our own, pulling aid (2019b).

For Klein, this indifference toward vulnerable populations outside one's borders (or at the margins within one's borders) has been present for a while in the USA and UK, but it is now particularly ruthless given the West's historical responsibility for climate change. Climate barbarism recognizes climate change and adapts to it by withdrawing from any obligations to others, outside of one's own preferred in-group, the boundaries of which can always be narrowed further and further in cascades of violence and disregard. It says: "This is why we need to cut foreign aid, because we don't have enough money to help these other people, we need to help our own" (2019b). For Klein, this forces a choice upon us all, namely, "are we going to live up to the rhetoric of equality and the idea that we actually believe people are of equal value by right of being alive on this planet? [...] Or are we going to double down and get monstrous?" (2019b)

The suggestion here is that climate change puts to the test deeply held liberal beliefs in equality, dignity, and human rights, such that one can no longer abstractly profess them as ideals without acting upon them in reality. In short, you either adapt your behavior or become a hypocrite—no more beautiful souls. But who is the "we" that Klein invokes here? The liberal public, civil society, the global North, humanity as such? It seems to be all those who subscribe to liberal values and live in wealthy countries, places that climate migrants would seek to enter. This "we" seemingly transcends race and class divisions, urban and rural splits, and all other sorts of antagonisms burrowed within the structures of liberal democratic states.

In another interview, Klein puts it even more succinctly: "We are seeing the beginnings of the era of climate barbarism. We saw it in Christchurch, we saw it in El Paso, where you have this marrying of White supremacist violence with vicious anti-immigrant racism" (2019c). Klein is referring to acts of domestic terrorism in Christchurch, New Zealand and El Paso, Texas in 2019, the perpetrators of which expressed concerns about environmental degradation and climate change on the one hand, and far-right ideology, White supremacy, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant hostility on the other. These horrific acts of violence are certainly symptoms of climate barbarism, yet they should be further specified as expressions of ecofascism. In an interview from November 2019, Klein distinguishes more precisely between these two. Whereas climate barbarism refers to governmental policies of anti-solidaristic climate adaptation, ecofascism names a specific far-right ideology that rationalizes White supremacist violence by invoking imminent ecological collapse and scarce natural resources. She notes:

What I'm calling climate barbarism is de facto what is happening at the borders. Politicians know [climate change is] real whether or not they deny it. [...] They have used the specter of the invading "other" as a unifying force for their political project. This is a form of climate change adaptation that we're seeing with these barbaric practices, such as the construction of concentration camps, whether they're in Texas, in Libya, or off the shore of Australia in places like Nauru or Manus; this has been the story of the decade. (2019d)

Ecofascism, in contrast, is a bit different—more brutal, local, radical. It is an "articulated ideology" in which a "sector of the far Right is no longer denying climate change and is using the reality that we are entering a period where more and more people are going to be on the move as a rationale for extreme violence." (2019d) The fear of the "climate refugee" is, thus, added to the *context of delusion* in which Muslims, Jews, racial minorities, leftists, and cultural elites are all colluding in destroying White civilization, and thus must be destroyed.

In *On Fire*, Klein writes about the rising threat of ecofascism after the Christchurch massacre. She worries that ecofascism as an ideology will emerge more frequently as a rationalization for violent action if we fail to live up to our “collective climate responsibilities” (2019a, p. 45). According to this account, the less universal is the policy for mitigating and adapting to climate change, the more popular ecofascism will be as an alternative ideology for a particular in-group. And in the same book, with reference to US policies which deny climate aid to vulnerable countries in the global south, she notes:

Let there be no mistake: this is the dawn of climate barbarism. And unless there is a radical change not only in politics but in the underlying values that govern our politics, this is how the wealthy world is going to “adapt” to more climate disruption: by fully unleashing the toxic ideologies that rank the relative value of human lives to justify the monstrous discarding of huge swaths of humanity. And what starts as brutality at the border will most certainly infect societies as a whole. (p. 50)

Climate barbarism takes place “at the border,” whereas ecofascism happens within it. Ecofascism, then, would be something like internalized climate barbarism: xenophobia and hate not toward those outside who want to get in but to the “other” inside, those who take what should belong to “us.” These are classic expressions of racism and resentment toward “undeserving” parts of the population—phenomena which spike every time the economic pie is seen as shrinking, which, in fact, it is (see Benanav, 2020; Smith, 2020). With a deepening climate crisis and a major recession looming, and no transformative options on the table, this negative strategy of “adaptation” will only be intensified.

But ecofascism is not just a recent side-effect of barbaric climate policies. Ecofascism—or far-right ecology in general—is not some strange blend of intrinsically incompatible worldviews. Rather, it has a long history and developed political vocabulary and ideology (Biehl & Staudenmaier, 1995). It builds from theoretical and political traditions which take seriously ideas such as sustainability, protection of nature, localism, bioregionalism, autonomy, veganism, decolonization, and even indigeneity (Taylor, 2019). Such concepts may seem to be inherently progressive or even left wing, but that is an illusion. Nothing about the focus on “locality” or “place,” for instance, entails egalitarian principles, beliefs in justice, fairness, or even liberal values. To protect nature, respect locality, and support autonomy can (and does sometimes) mean protecting homogeneity from difference, local community from foreign residents, hierarchy from equality, gender roles from feminism, heteronormative families from queer identity, male authority from deliberative democracy, ethno-nationalism from multiculturalism, racist ideas from antiracist action.

To challenge ecofascism then cannot just entail warding-off climate barbarism from infecting society, in general, as if the danger was not already inside. And to challenge climate barbarism then cannot just involve criticizing anti-immigrant border policies. Almost all border policies around the world are structurally “anti-immigrant,” some more than others. What makes climate barbarism specific and deadly is its potential as a real political strategy of *adaptation* to climate change. This strategy neither can be confronted on the epistemological grounds of climate science versus climate denial, nor even on the moral grounds of human rights versus national sovereignty, but only on the grounds of political and social power that can articulate an alternative economic and ecological vision of the future, and actually fight for it. By promoting real visions of social transformation that benefit all those whose labor and time make the world turn, and penalizes those who make it burn, the threat of climate barbarism and ecofascism may just be avoided.

One conclusion of these preliminary thoughts is that climate barbarism should be theorized at the same level of abstraction as Climate Behemoth, that is, as a coherent political-social form of sovereignty emerging in the present in response to climate change. Climate barbarism would cut across Climate Behemoth and Climate X, as anti-planetary but ambivalent about capitalism, and it would not be characterized by climate denialism.<sup>14</sup> Rather, it is precisely the reality and acceptance of climate change that justifies their nationalistic, social Darwinism, which can manifest both at the state level of immigration policy and foreign aid and at the local level of popular resentment and White supremacist terror. This scenario should be taken as seriously as the other scenarios of transnational green capitalism, unipolar climate authoritarianism, and grassroots social ecological utopianism.

One may ask, what is the status of this discussion of climate barbarism? Is it a claim about what might happen in the next 30 years, or just an exercise in hypothetical speculation? On my account, it is a plea to confront the possible political-social conjuncture of climate change acceptance and action in regressive, anti-egalitarian forms. There are elements and tendencies of it here and now, as cited above, but it is unknown which way the world will turn. Some scholars have already begun to map out the contemporary landscape of far-right responses to climate change in the present (Malm & Zetkin, 2021), and I hope this article contributes to that work in the realm of political and social philosophy. By taking this possibility more seriously, we will be better prepared to identify it, to distinguish it from emancipatory forms of climate response, and confront it. In that sense, it is a bit like trying to distinguish emancipatory from reactionary forms of anti-capitalism, so as to not fall prey to the latter. Climate barbarism may be a tempting option for some, which is why we should be clear about it now, so as to recognize it, and fight it, before it is too late.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> On why climate change should *not* be thought of as a collective action problem, see Mann and Wainwright (2018), pp. 103–108, and Aklin and Mildenerger (2020).
- <sup>2</sup> Of course, the effects are much worse for those “without reserves” than those with them.
- <sup>3</sup> While there are exceptions, it is incredibly hard to find critical perspectives in climate ethics outside the liberal mainstream focus on market-based solutions, consumer behavior, technological investment, and principles for fair emission trading. Capitalist realism is seemingly insuperable. For instance, Dale Jamieson and Stephen M. Gardiner are two climate philosophers whose own work should lead them to more radical conclusions, but they dare not make the leap.
- <sup>4</sup> Can the production of value be decoupled from ecological destruction? Can renewable energy technologies save capitalism from destroying its own environmental presuppositions, and even allow for a decarbonized, dematerialized, and sustainable mode of production? That is the new green snake oil being sold today, which somehow thinks that the material throughput of current levels of production can stay the same with only a few different inputs, and everything will be fine. While individual countries can reduce their carbon emissions through outsourcing their production, this is obviously not a global solution.
- <sup>5</sup> What does the IMF mean by such a phrase? While phrase is left open, it probably means prudential macroeconomic shifts in central bank monetary policy and green fiscal policy. But of course, to change the content of the value flows does not necessarily transform the “structure” itself.
- <sup>6</sup> Emissions also fell drastically in 2020 during the initial global shutdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, but rebounded strongly a year later.
- <sup>7</sup> One can rephrase this: is it possible for the idea of degrowth, for instance, to become socially acceptable in a capitalist society based on the growth imperative? Could we imagine the idea of “limits to growth” and even possibly a degrowth ideology taking hold at the level of professed opinion, without affecting the structural conditions that that compel firms to grow? Can there be such a split between opinion and reality? Perhaps we should be on the lookout for political attempts to domesticate degrowth into an ideology of adaptation to austerity, instead of a social program for ecological transformation.
- <sup>8</sup> What about a planned economy of primarily state-owned enterprises? Though it may have more leeway to decide on where to invest, a planned national economy in a capitalist globalized world will inevitably be forced to compete with other firms, and thus, become more efficient, and productive in its output, and thus, grow to survive. The aim cannot be to compete on a global market with capitalist firms, a losing battle, but to find a way to not compete at all. On the concept of state capitalism today, see Alami and Dixon (2020).
- <sup>9</sup> In this respect, one can look at the numerous proposals concerning Just Transition, Energy Democracy, and the Green New Deal, all of which center *public* and *worker* participation, control, and ownership in the transition to a decarbonized economy. For one example, see Aronoff et al. (2019).
- <sup>10</sup> Climate Mao may seem more and more attractive in a world where less and less is accomplished to mitigate climate change. The idea is that if a big enough state acts unilaterally, it can have major effects on the global geopolitical balance, who may adapt to the force of the biggest player. Yet the idea of a massive revolutionary subaltern class pressuring the state to act decisively in its name, instead of provoking the state to suppress them through massive violence, seems premature.
- <sup>11</sup> Whether something like a Green New Deal should be considered part of Climate X or Climate Leviathan depends on how capitalist or anti-capitalist one imagines it to be. Similarly, one can also ask about the place of the labor movement in the struggle against climate change. Is there an inherent tension or even antagonism between the objectives and interests of the labor movement and the anti-planetary non-capitalist response? One can imagine a strong labor movement defending fossil fuel jobs against their green shut down, but more likely is a fragmented response by labor unions to changing global conditions that may transition workers to green jobs or may just leave them behind, as deindustrialization has already shown.

- <sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note, however, how successful governing elites and various capitals have been in diverting public attention from the links between industrial agriculture and COVID-19 (see Malm, 2020). The current crisis, thus, constitutes a major defeat for the climate movement, insofar as that movement has been unable to convey the singular ecological crisis of capitalism at the root of both the pandemic and climate change.
- <sup>13</sup> For a critique of apocalyptic narratives of “climate refugees,” see Bettini (2013), p.69: “[T]he fact that an issue is depicted as a catastrophe can in certain cases even facilitate its reinsertion into the frame of normality. The fear mobilized by apocalyptic narratives on C–M [climate-induced migration] can act as the traumatic element favoring a (re)normalization of the issue, passing from *denial* to *trivialization*, from *impossible* to *real* element of BAU [Business-as-Usual], to be managed by governance instruments. Narratives on C–M that foresee hordes of wild, destitute barbarians menacing the wealthy, do not necessarily imply that something ‘radical’ will be done. These alarmist narratives may eventually provide legitimacy and consent to political options that do not avoid disruptive ecological changes but rather frame these outcomes as unavoidable ‘part of the game.’ As a source of legitimacy for policies that deal with climate change without affecting the social, ecological and economic relations that set the scene for anthropogenic climate change.”
- <sup>14</sup> Whereas climate barbarism names a distinctively capitalist form of adaptation to climate catastrophe, ecofascism can take both capitalist and anti-capitalist forms. The critique of reactionary anti-capitalisms, including antisemitism and conspiracy theory, is more needed than ever.

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