
CLIMATE JUSTICE
CHARTER
INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

Climate Justice Charter

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Join the Climate Justice Charter Movement!

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Building Human Solidarity to Sustain Life

CLIMATE JUSTICE CHARTER MOVEMENT

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PART 1

About this Guide

This guide serves to deepen your understanding about climate change and the people's alternative, climate justice. We start by presenting a background to the charter, thereafter some of the climate science, to help communities and activists understand the urgency of the crisis. We then present a short list of key terms (a glossary) for deeper understanding of some of the main ideas used in climate justice movements today. Finally, we present the charter, with some explanatory notes, illustrations and statistics.

This guide is a tool for introducing communities to the charter and deepening climate justice activists' knowledge about the crisis, but also to help us understand that there are people's alternatives which are working and need to be strengthened.

Background to the Charter

This Climate Justice Charter emerges out of six years of campaigning, during the worst drought in South Africa's history, by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre. It has been informed by grassroots input from water stressed communities, the media, labour, faith based communities, youth, climate scientists, academics, women's organisations, environmental and social justice organisations, as well as, think pieces by leading activists. A climate conference held in November 2019 consolidated a draft which was then placed online for public comment. A final round of public input was provided at a Climate Justice Assembly held on 16 June 2020. This document is the outcome of this process of dialogue and climate justice resistance.

Understanding Climate Change[1]

What is Climate Change?

Climate refers to the long-term changes of weather patterns that affect our lives on a daily basis. Climate scientists study and measure these changes. The long-term averages of atmospheric and ocean variables assist with determining whether any trends in climate can be detected over time. If averages are taken over a sufficiently long period of time (twenty years or longer), variability in climate caused by aspects such as El Niño and La Niña events should even out, so that the climate remains more or less stable. However, if systematic trends in climate can be detected, we would know that something fundamental is changing in the earth's climate system. While a changing climate can be due to natural processes such as changing amounts of solar radiation or volcanic eruptions, there is very strong evidence that climate

change over the past century and a half (since the start of the Industrial Revolution) is due to the use of oil, coal and gas.

Southern Africa: A designated climate change 'hot spot'

The southern African region is more vulnerable to climate change compared to other parts of the word, for three reasons. First, it will be exposed to comparatively 'stronger' climate change. The southern African interior has warmed at about twice the rate of global warming over the last five decades, and climate models suggest that this pattern of above-average regional warming will continue for the rest of the century. Second, it lacks 'coping capacity'. Southern Africa is made up of developing countries which do not yet have very sophisticated disaster management systems and infrastructure, nor money to spend on climate adaptation and our economies are very sensitive to changes in the climate (agriculture and tourism industries). Thirdly, southern Africa is a dry and warmer region that is not only projected to become drastically warmer, but also drier. When a dry and warm region becomes even drier and warmer, the options for climate change adaptation are limited.

What extreme weather impacts can South Africa expect?

With 3°C of global warming, the increase in multi-year droughts and heat-wave duration and frequency is projected to be so severe that it may contribute to the collapse of both the maize crop and cattle industry in large parts of southern Africa. Although southern Africa is likely to become generally drier under future climate change, and it is plausible that extreme rainfall events will occur more frequently across the region.

Implications of Climate Change for South Africa

The chain of impacts resulting from extreme climate events are messy and complex. For example, although agriculture accounts for a relatively small contribution to economic output in South Africa, the impacts of unfavourable climate are felt by a large number of people, via agricultural employment, as well as by rising food prices

and hunger. Other examples, include extreme rainfall flooding impacting poor communities living next to rivers.

Responding to Climate Change

Responses to climate change include both mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation is "a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases”[2], while adaptation is “the adjustment process to actual or expected climate and its effects."[3] Mitigation and adaptation pathways are not politically neutral. They have to be about 'transformation' in the personal, practical and political spheres of our lives. The focus is on changing the design of practices that are fundamentally making us vulnerable to climate risks in the first place. Examples of transformations may include transitioning to socially and community owned renewable energy, enhanced access to climate jobs and building a new food system based on food sovereignty system.

Glossary

Agroecology/ Agroecological: means an ecological approach to agriculture that views agricultural areas as ecosystems and is concerned with the ecological impact of agricultural practices. Agroecology is a science that is innovating on traditional farming knowledge that works with nature. Agroecology also embodies a political approach, employed by small-scale food producers as a way of life, and as a means to bring about social, economic and environmental justice as part of food sovereignty.

Climate Jobs: are jobs that are decent, reduce the causes and impacts of climate change, and often provide secure vital services, such as energy, sanitation and water.

Commons/commoning: refers to life enabling resources such as water, land and bio-diversity that belong to and contributes to the needs of a whole community. Sharing such resources democratically is about safeguarding the commons and is called commoning.

Co-operative: refers to an autonomous association of persons who come together voluntarily to meet their common economic and social or cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise organised and operated on co-operative principles;

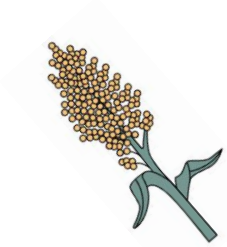
Deep Just Transition: represents a transition from a carbon-based society to a low or zero carbon society but in a manner that limits the negative impacts on workers and communities. It seeks to transform energy, food, transport and all major social systems to ensure we sustain life. The key issue is that industry must bear the burden of the transition not workers and communities.

Ecosystem: includes all the living things – humans, animals and plants – in a particular area and how they relate with each other and to the non-living environment such as the earth, sun, soil, climate, atmosphere.

Eco-social: relating to the connection between ecology and society, and encompassing people, architectures, landscapes, soils, food crops, and bacteria.

Eco-mobility is the practice of developing and managing local areas and cities that supports practical, low pollution, and environmentally friendly mobility by shifting away from motorised transportation towards walking, cycling, public and collective transport

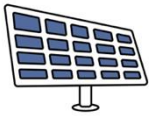
Extractivism: this is the process of removing natural resources from the earth through mining for sale on the market, usually paired with an economy that is reliant on those natural resources and their extraction.



Food Sovereignty: is the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through methods that work with nature. It is also about people's right to control their own food and agricultural systems.

Fossil fuels: a fuel (such as coal, oil, or natural gas) that is formed in the earth from dead plants or animals over hundreds of thousands of years.

Industrial revolution: The first industrial revolution was the onset of a shift in the processes of manufacturing in the West, during the 18th century. This shift caused an intensification of the use and burning of coal to fuel the factories and steam engines.



Renewable energy: energy from a source that is not depleted when used such as the sun or wind or even from the sea.

Universal Basic Income: is a publically funded payment or transfer of a financial resource that each person within a country receives regularly. The payment is not means tested, and can include documented immigrants and refugees. In South Africa we refer to this also as a basic income grant.

Zero waste: refers to the philosophy that encourages the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused. No trash is sent to landfills or incinerators. Zero waste is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary; and guides people to change their lifestyles and practices to emulate more sustainable natural cycles where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

PART 2: The Climate Justice Charter

1. For Climate Justice Now

As Africans, we live together on a vast and beautiful continent where the human story began. All of us are linked to the first human who walked upright, dreamed, thought and co-existed with plants, animals, rivers, oceans and forests. Today this common humanity and its future is in serious danger. South Africa cannot ignore this challenge. The continued use of oil, gas and coal to power our economy and society is making our world unliveable for all life.

The Earth is being damaged by this system that puts profits before life. Every year, temperatures are rising with disastrous consequences. With a 1-degree Celsius increase in planetary temperature since the start of the industrial revolution, everything is changing fast: increasing extreme weather shocks (droughts, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, heat waves), ecosystem collapse, sea level rise, together with major stresses on the Earth's systems. We are sad because a future with a stable climate is being lost. Our recent drought has taught us that lesson. We are angry because our rulers are not listening. The inequality and suffering of our people, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, has worsened. Yet, we are hopeful because climate science is on our side. Like the science of Covid-19, climate science is calling for caring action now. This Charter is a call to all who care about human and non-human life to act together in advancing a pluri-vision – of people's dreams, alternatives and desires for a deep just transition.

Mines, refineries, waste incinerators, airlines, cement industries, and cars have brought pollution, illness, poisons and suffering to our communities. Chemical-based and export agriculture contributes to various diseases. Yet we have rallied. With lessons learned about these harms and the importance of the life enabling commons (land, water, biodiversity, energy, earth system and cyber sphere), we continue to

advance our commitment to justice, anchored in people's power. Hence, we consciously choose to end the war with nature.

More climate shocks and ecological crises will result in more suffering (and more pandemics), for the majority, particularly workers, the poor, people with disabilities, landless and the vulnerable. These are not simply natural disasters but failures of leadership. As we defend the web of life and live with climate breakdown, we seek to end race, class, gender and ecological injustice. We cannot let grassroots women and children be the shock absorbers of this crisis, like before and during Covid-19. Invisible care work in households and sacrifices by women in poor communities contributes to blunting the edge of suffering while male domination and violence continues. A carbon free society and effective life supporting systems mean emancipation for all, including for future generations, from this eco-cidal system. This is the struggle of our time and our historical task as South Africans, as humans and as part of the wider living earth community.

2. Goals of the Charter

This Charter aims to:

2.1 **Advance an awareness that we thrive and co-exist on one planet.** Earth is a common home for all species. Thus, we seek to affirm our role and responsibilities as guardians of our planet's ecosystems and the delicate web of life it supports.

2.2 **Inspire a break with the thinking that caused the crisis and that reinforces the obsession with growth, progress and domination.** The power of humanity is constrained by the limits, cycles, tipping points and boundaries of all ecosystems. More of the same thinking that harms Earth, is forcing it to react with a power we cannot match.

2.3 **Reconnect with an Earth-centred conception of what it means to be human.** Nature is endless, and we are just one small part of it. We have to appreciate that every element of an ecosystem has an intrinsic value and must be respected.

2.4 **Deepen cooperation**. We thrive most as humans when we express solidarity, share, live slowly, are free, affirm our needs and preserve the foundations of our life world. The time to challenge and end the selfish, greedy, competitive, violent and conquering conception of the human has arrived.

2.5 **Overcome the crisis of corporate-captured political leadership,** which is incapable of thinking beyond the short term, 'business as usual' games and which fails to understand the root causes of the problems. We reject their false solutions that prolong the use of carbon and perpetuate the unjust life destroying system.

2.6 **Strengthen our democracy**, constitution and transformative constitutionalism, by claiming our rights and building united people's power, as we confront the climate emergency and worsening socio-ecological crises.

3. Principles for Deep Just Transitions

Every community, village, town, city and workplace has to advance the deep just transition to ensure socio-ecological transformation. The following principles shall guide the alternatives, plans and processes towards a deep just transition in our society:

3.1 **Climate justice:** Those least responsible must not be harmed or carry the cost of climate impacts. Hence the needs of workers, the poor, the landless, people with disabilities, grassroots women, children and vulnerable communities have to be at the centre of the deep just transition. The benefits of socio-ecological transformation must be shared equally.

3.2 **Social justice:** Climate justice is social justice. Confronting all forms of discrimination and oppression as it relates to race, class, gender, sex and age, to secure climate and social justice.

3.3 **Eco-centric living:** To live simply, slowly and consciously, in an eco-centric way, which recognises the sanctity of all life forms, our inter-connections and enables an ethics of respect and care.

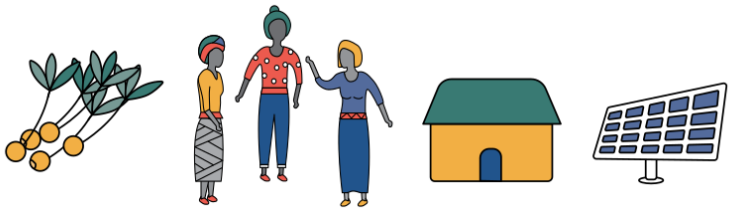
3.4 **Participatory democracy:** All climate and deep just transition policies must be informed by the voices, consent and needs of all people, especially those facing harm.

3.5 **Socialised ownership:** In workplaces and communities, people's power must express itself through democratic control and ownership, including through democratic public utilities, cooperatives, commoning, communal ownership and participatory planning, including participatory budgeting, in towns and cities, to ensure collective management of the life enabling commons and systems.

3.6 **International solidarity:** Everyone's struggle is a shared struggle to sustain life. In the context of worsening climate shocks, international solidarity is central to the deep just transition as it serves to unite all who are struggling for emancipation and for a post carbon world.

3.7 **Decoloniality:** Colonial, neo-colonial and imperial domination are driving us towards extinction. This is based on the worship of extractivism, technology, finance, violence and markets. We will actively delink from this system as we affirm an emancipatory relationship between humans and with non-human nature rooted in our history, culture, knowledge and the wider struggle of the oppressed on planet earth.

3.8 **Intergenerational justice**: Care for our planetary commons and ecosystems is crucial for intergenerational justice; to secure a future for our children, youth and those not yet born.



4. Systemic Alternatives for Transformative Change

We face many crises but the climate crisis is the most dangerous. Through addressing the climate crisis, which affects everything, we can also advance solutions to all socio-ecological crises and more generally end the war with nature. Systemic alternatives are necessary to address the causes of climate change, its risks and pressures for systems collapse.

There are people's alternatives to fossil fuels, which can meet our basic needs, enhance our capacity to deal with climate disasters and prepare us to regenerate life-supporting systems. Such systemic alternatives have been imagined and are part of people's struggles to decarbonise societies now as part of the deep just transition. We are committed to advancing such alternatives and democratic systemic reforms from below.

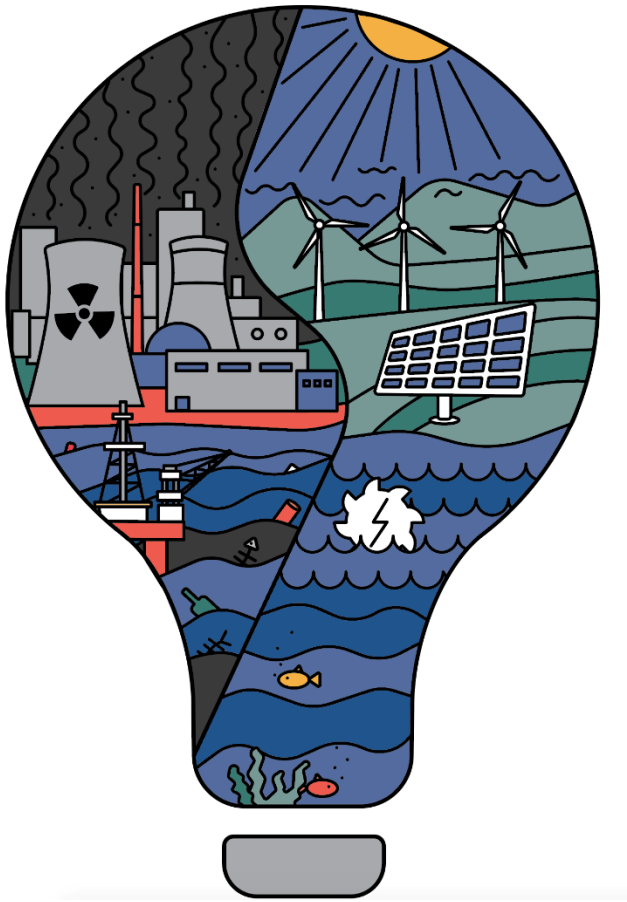
These alternatives are grassroots solutions to very real challenges faced in our world now.

4.1 Democratic and Deep Just Transition Plans

Top-down approaches to the deep just transition assume people cannot think for themselves and do not have answers. Together, every community and workplace needs to develop a deep just transition plan. This should be done in a democratic manner to enable an energy transition to decarbonise, whilst meeting essential needs, and advancing systemic alternatives, goals and principles as set out in this Charter.

Decision making processes and policies are often taken at the state level, without sufficient participation and consent from the people

4.2 Socially Owned and Community-Based Renewable Energy through a Rapid Phase-Out of Fossil Fuels



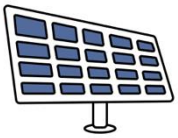
Our dependence on coal, oil and gas has to be ended as it is accelerating climate breakdown, ultimately leading to an unliveable world. Nuclear energy is dangerous and costly. Instead, we will advance socially owned and community based renewable energy systems (such as solar, wind, hydro and tidal power), supported by participatory budgeting and incentives (such as feed in tariffs) for our workplaces, homes and communities. Such energy technologies must be industrialised in South Africa, using renewable energy. Efficient use of energy and technology will be crucial

in this transition. Divestment from fossil fuels, an end to fossil fuel subsidies and an end to extraction (such as fracking, more coal mines and offshore extraction) are imperative. All big energy generators such as Eskom and Sasol have to commit to deep, just transition plans, to secure the interests of workers, affected communities and future generations.

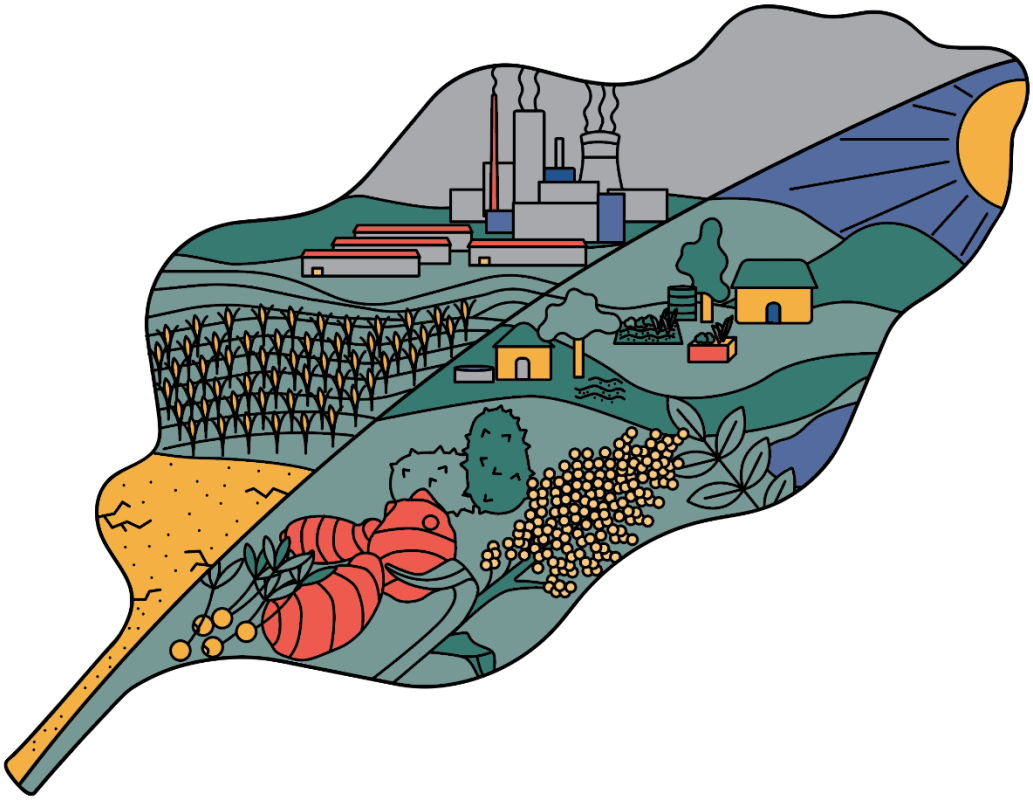
Fossil fuel burning such as coal, oil and gas have been a huge driver of the climate crisis and has caused a 1°C increase in global temperatures. There have also been a number of other impacts[4]. The increase in global average temperatures has a knock on effect and is the cause of devastating weather shocks such as increased intensity and frequency of hurricanes, floods, droughts and other extreme weather events.

The extraction of these fossil fuels does not only strip the land of its natural nutrients, it also affects the delicate balance of wildlife in the area. Extraction and burning also causes water pollutions due to the runoff of chemicals into water sources. These processes are also use a lot of water.[5]

The pollution from the burning of fossil fuels is also very harmful to people's respiratory systems, and many die from pollution every year. South Africa is number 38 on a list of 98 countries, globally ranked for air pollution[6]. The World Health Organisation estimates that around 20 000 people are killed a year by pollution in South Africa[7].



4.3 Feed Ourselves through Food Sovereignty



The current industrial food system produces hunger, uses water inefficiently, destroys nature, releases carbon and is generally unhealthy. Commercial fishing has destroyed marine ecosystems and undermined the rights of subsistence fishers. Every community must prioritise small scale, agroecological farming to meet local needs. The right to food must give food producers, small scale subsistence fishers, informal traders and consumers the power over their own food commons systems to ensure that culturally appropriate and nutritious food is available to all. Moreover, biodiversity, control of seeds and resources for production need to affirm the importance of indigenous knowledge, local markets, control of the water commons, the eco-social function of land, and good health. Big farms need to be

deconcentrated to ensure land justice, but in a manner that is fair, strengthens reconciliation and builds solidarity.

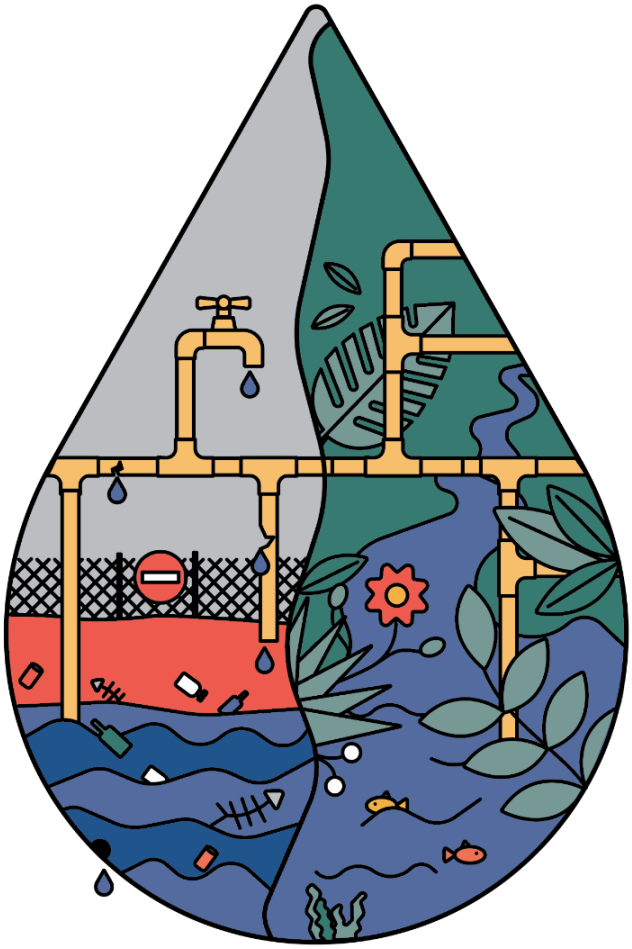
Industrial agriculture is a particular way of producing food that is on a large and commercial scale; it is often characterised by mono- cropping, the extensive use of chemicals and pesticides, the use of heavy duty machinery, the use of genetically modified crops and more. Commercial agriculture is responsible for up to 30% of emissions globally, because the amount of machinery and energy used to produce and distribute food has a significant impact on the environment. The mono-cropping causes the decline of soil fertility, reduces the amount of nutrients in the soil, which then in turn increases in the need for more chemicals.

The extent of hunger in South Africa ranges, and is often underreported. According to Stats SA, in 2017, around 6.8 million people in South Africa experienced hunger, while 20% of households had inadequate access to food.[8]

Under Covid-19, hunger has worsened: The National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM) conducted during the South African lockdown, had devastating conclusions. The study was done with 7000 households, and found that 47% of these households stated that they had run out of money for food in April 2020 as opposed to 21% of households the year before lockdown[9].

The food system impacts directly on Obesity and malnutrition: South Africa has a malnutrition burden among its under-five population. In 2016, the national prevalence of under-five overweight was 13.3%. The national prevalence of under-five stunting was 27.4%, which is greater than the developing country average of 25%. South Africa's adult population also face a malnutrition burden, 25.8% of women of reproductive age have anaemia, and 12.6% of adult women have diabetes, compared to 9.7% of men. Meanwhile, 39.6% of women and 15.4% of men have obesity.[10]

4.4 Democratise the Water Commons



Water is controlled by a few while many are in desperate need. Industrial farms, mines, coal generated electricity, sugar and timber plantations are some of the major users of water. As a public good, water needs to be conserved by all and it must be protected from pollution. Furthermore, water use has to be democratically planned and effectively regulated while affirming citizens' rights to consume this scarce and precious resource. Water and sanitation infrastructure must be upgraded, managed

and monitored to ensure efficient use. Water savings from phasing out coal generation and big industrial scale farming will enhance the water commons. A water conscious society has to be promoted.

In South Africa, the national government is the custodian of water, and has the responsibility to make sure the water in rivers, lakes and groundwater is protected. They then allocate water to the local municipalities who then sell water to people and industry.

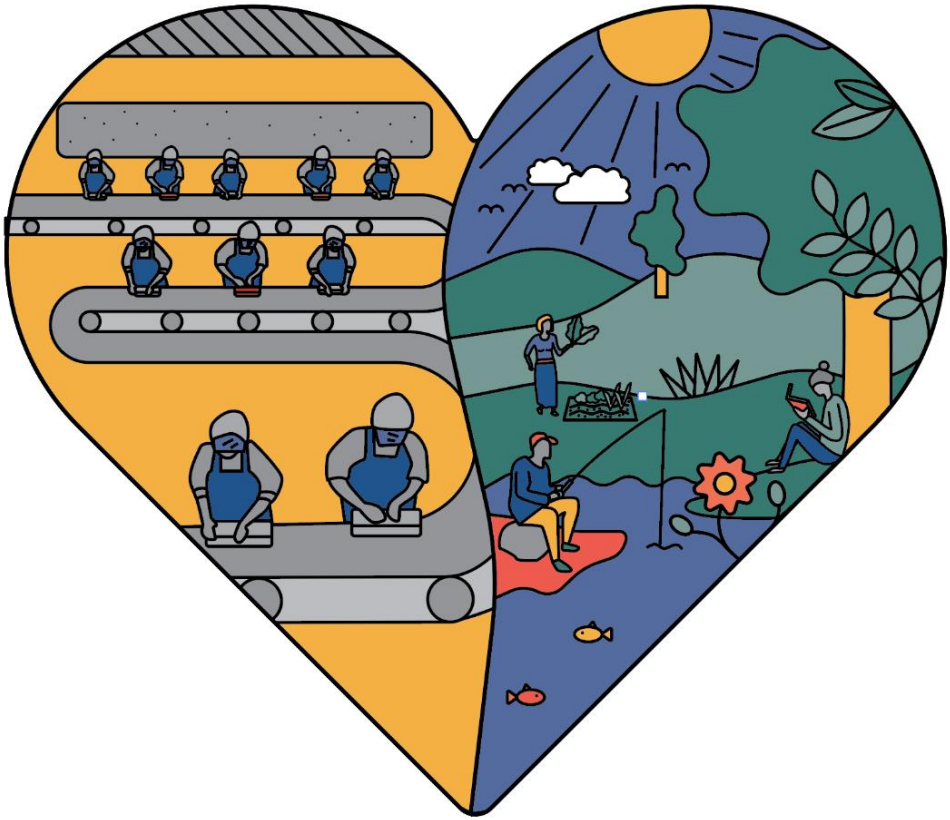
At the moment, 98% of our water is already allocated, the majority of it going to commercial agriculture who do not use efficient water saving growing methods such as agroecology. In a drought prone country, already experiencing a severe and prolonged drought, just having 2% of available water, up for distribution, failing infrastructure and a changing climate, it is clear that the politics around water needs to change[11].

Privatisation of water in South Africa is also a problem, there are around 500 public dams, and around 5000 private dams on private property.

South Africa is a water scarce country, with many communities experiencing water stress. 25% of our rivers are endangered due to human activity and a changing climate, and close to 65% of wetlands are in danger due to human activity, pollution and changing climate.

Although numbers vary, and often governments will claim they have provided access to water, but the definition of access varies. According to a 2016 StatsSA report, only 46.4% of households, less than half had access to piped water in their homes[12].

4.5 Enjoy Life through Working Less



Work for everyone as the means to survive and earn income is no longer possible. Unemployment, low paying jobs and long working hours harm society. In a heating world, working hours must be reduced, at least to a four-day week. Decent, zero carbon climate jobs must be guaranteed and supported by collective, values-based and eco-centric approaches to production, consumption, financing and ways of living through the solidarity economy. Such an economy is based on needs and democratises economic power. Together with a universal basic income grant system (UBIG) complementing existing public goods, all workers can be protected in the transition required and society more generally will have a cushion. The UBIG will generally promote human cultural flourishing in a post work society.

The capitalist system exploits labour and exploits the environment, it puts profit before people and planet, meaning that jobs which contribute to the climate crisis such as mining, commercial agriculture and cement making are still desirable as long as they bring in profits.

With increasing temperatures and changing conditions, increased crises, the climate crisis is going to make it impossible for a lot of those jobs to continue, causing devastating unemployment.

In South Africa, with rampant inequality (10% of income earners have 65% of national income) and some of the highest levels of unemployment, the need for social security and a more people and nature centred economy is needed.

In the third quarter of 2019, unemployment in South Africa was at 29.1%[13]. The lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on unemployment, according to a National Income Dynamics CoronaVirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM), around 3 million people have lost their jobs during the lockdown period.[14] Currently unemployment stands at about 10 million people.

4.6 Eco-mobility and Clean Energy Public Transport Systems

The car industry carries a major responsibility for undermining clean energy public transport systems and for wasteful investment in expensive road infrastructure. These harms can be brought to an end with greater support for walking, bicycles, clean energy motor bikes, horses and donkeys as eco-mobility modes of transport. Cities and towns also need to be car free and provide infrastructure for eco-mobility. Every community needs to be integrated into a mass transit system involving buses, trains and trams running on renewable energy and hybrid technologies based on local eco-manufacturing. The transportation of goods must also shift to rail. Non-electric cars based on fossil fuels must be phased out. Air and sea transport must also be decarbonised or limited.

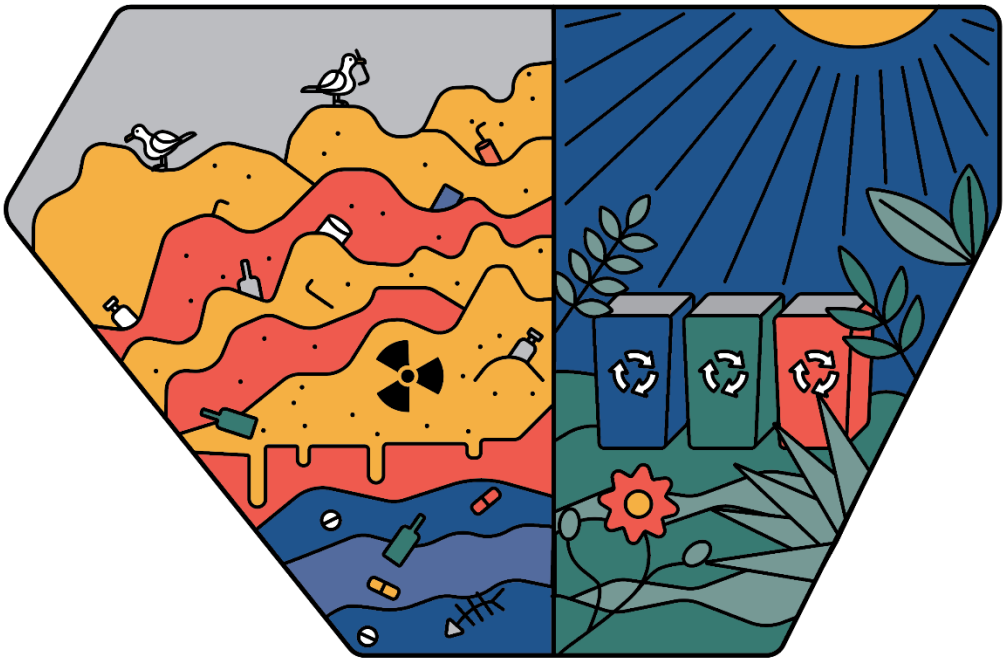
Air travel causes emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The burning of jet fuel also releases other gases into the atmosphere, in addition to carbon dioxide which can react with the existing gases in the atmosphere, these chemical reactions can contribute to climate change.

According to some research, emissions from flying may triple by the year 2050, if the culture of flying continues[15].Research differs, but there is consensus that flying does, in some way have an impact on climate change, and is responsible for up to 5% of global warming, with increasing flying, this number will only increase[16].

The public transport system, as with most systems in South Africa is still heavily reliant on a carbon driven industry, with a portion of the population that also relies on the use of private cars.

According to the government's Green Transport Strategy for South Africa (2018-2050), the transport sector contributes around 10.8% of total emissions in South Africa .[17], in addition there are indirect contributions to emissions such as the refining and the transportation of fuels.

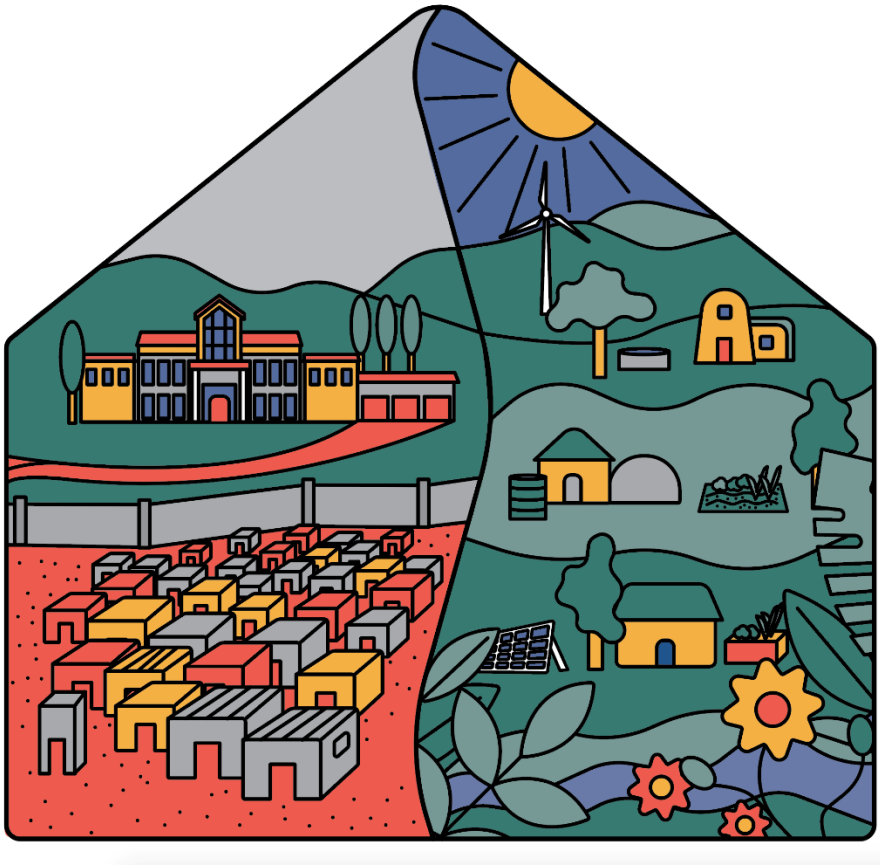
4.7 Zero Waste and Simple Living



Mass consumption of commodities and 'celebrity lifestyles' are resource intensive, wasteful and carbon centric. Moreover, landfill sites, incineration of waste and pollution of ecosystems are harmful. Zero waste closes the loop through recycling, reuse, solidarity economy principles and sustainable design in our economy so that there is less (or zero) extraction of raw materials. Certain technologies, like single use plastic, have to be banned. Together with simple living, we can live with minimal resource and carbon footprints.

According to the Association for Water and Rural development (AWARD), South Africans generate roughly 54.2 million tons of general waste each year, with only around 10% of that recycled or used for other purposes, with an overwhelming majority going into landfills and dumps[18].

4.8 Eco-social Housing, Buildings and Transition Towns



Many existing homes are not designed to deal with climate extremes. Moreover, many are still homeless in our society while the rich have golf courses. We need to retrofit existing buildings and homes to handle more heat and weather extremes. Similarly, new homes must be designed as part of eco-communities, villages, towns, municipal rental schemes and cities where construction methods use natural materials, have minimal impact on the environment and provide for eco-social land needs of individuals as part of a community. Such needs are for housing, agroecological food production, sustainable water use, biodiversity, child rearing and

culture. Cement is not used in this context given its huge carbon footprint and has to be phased out as a building technology.

Currently in South Africa, there are no official statistics documenting the extent of homelessness in South Africa. However, according to Statistics South Africa in the General Household Survey of 2013, 13.6% of the population reside in informal dwellings. Recent estimates of homelessness conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council puts the number of homeless people in the country at 200 000[19].

4.9 Beyond Mainstream Economics

The assumptions that economics makes about human behaviour, nature, profits, markets, commodities and growth is destroying everything. Mainstream economics merely justifies the wealth for a few, their destructive use of resources, and resulting pollution and carbon emissions. Our economies have to serve our needs as socio-ecological beings and the needs of ecosystems. We need an economics that takes into account ecological footprints, happiness, well-being, the resilience of ecosystems (through regular audits), the commons, and planetary boundaries. Our economics must be orientated around concepts and tools that assess the state of all living creatures and ends the harm to humans as well as non-human nature. This

should serve as the basis of agenda setting, policy, resource allocation and democratic planning.

The current measure of growth in the global arena is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It looks at the total value of goods and services per annum, and measures this against market prices to determine growth. It does not measure the harms to nature (like the destruction of eco systems) and to society from pollution including carbon emissions. Moreover, creativity, happiness, the natural environment, care work etc., are not taken into account in this measure of growth[20].

According to the IMF and World Bank's 2019 figures, South Africa has the 35th and 36th highest GDP in the world respectively. In contrast, South Africa is 109th on the United Nations Ranking of Happiness between 2017 and 2019.

South Africa also experienced the 34th steepest decline in its happiness between 2008 and 2019,[21] meaning we are unhappy.

4.10 The Rich Must Pay their Ecological Debt:

The wealthy in our societies have consumed resources excessively, negatively impacted on ecosystems, and have huge carbon footprints. They owe us all an ecological debt and have to carry the financial burden of the deep just transition. This means a climate debt tax for the rich; high taxes on airline travel, private jets, luxury vehicles and electric cars; a progressive carbon tax targeting polluting corporations not phasing out carbon fast enough; and climate justice tariffs on carbon criminal corporations and governments. Workers need to leverage pension

and provident funds, through worker control, to ensure the deep just transition meets their needs and support the creation of a national cooperative bank to assist workplaces, communities and households with the socially owned renewable energy transition and the realisation of deep just transition plans.

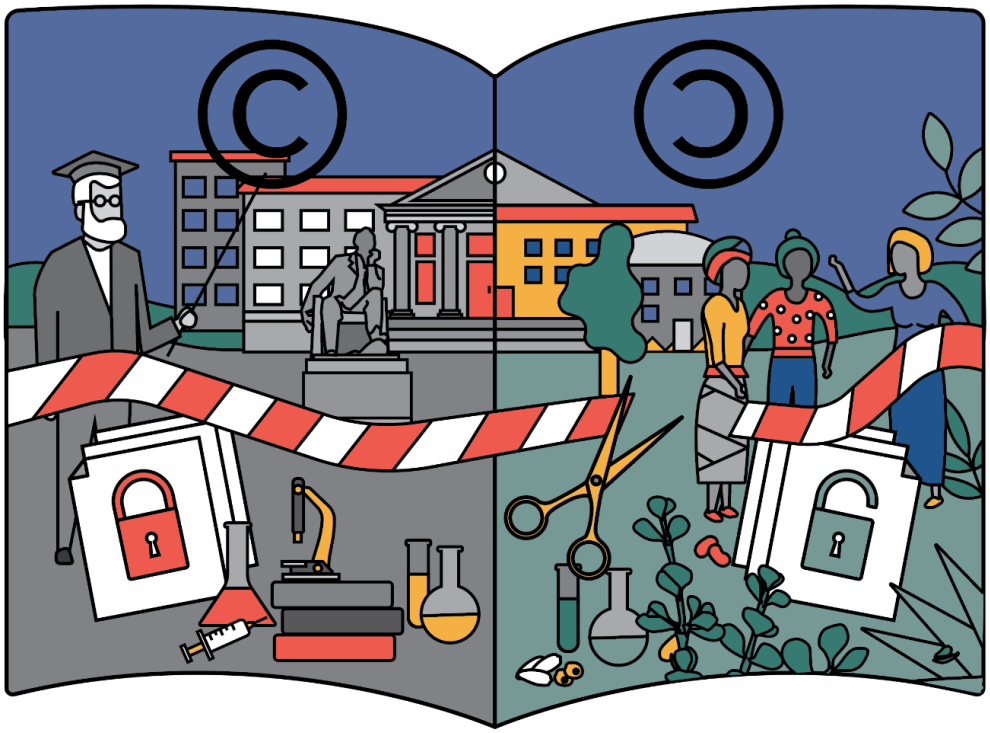
Public finance also needs to be harnessed from eco-taxes, penalties for pollution, withdrawing subsidies to fossil fuels, and other progressive taxation sources.

International research shows that the more affluent in our society consume more resources and have larger carbon footprints. According to a 2015 Oxfam report, the richest 10% of people produce half of the world's carbon emissions. [22]

There are trillions of worker money saved in pensions funds (more than R4-trillion in accumulated reserves)[23]. Some of this money can be used to enable the just transition in communities and workplaces.

The fossil fuel industry is still heavily subsidised by the government[24]. Since 2008, government subsidies have ranged between US$454 million and US$ 2.09 billion per year[25].

4.11 Knowledge is Crucial for Survival



There is a big knowledge gap in society regarding the worsening climate crisis. We have to draw on different knowledge systems to raise public awareness and survive. Indigenous knowledge has powerful resources to assist us and it has to be retrieved, learned and respected. Earth system science, including climate science, is essential to inform the public about the climate crisis and its challenges. Climate science as people's science has to be complimented by lived experience based on observing and learning from ecosystems. Given the complexity of climate change, research and innovation to ensure systemic transformation and to advance the public interest must be supported. Universities and schools must take these knowledge challenges on board.

Scientific and western knowledge systems are valued in the global system. Often, the indigenous, adaptive and embedded knowledge systems are not taken into account or valued, instead imported solutions are being applied to local climate problems. Often, imported techno-fixes that use excess energy and production power are seen as more useful than natural solutions.

Looking at the latest surveys carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council on the public's attitude to indigenous knowledge, the overwhelming majority of South Africans support its use. For example, 66% of South Africans believe that indigenous knowledge systems offer lessons that can benefit everyone, and 76% felt that the government should do more to support communities involved in indigenous knowledge systems, small businesses using indigenous knowledge systems, and should generally spend more protecting indigenous knowledge systems[26].

4.12 Emergency, Holistic and Preventative Healthcare:

Inequality in healthcare means climate harms will bring injustice, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. We need workable, accessible and responsive public healthcare systems to meet people's needs and address the health challenges that come with climate heating. Such healthcare systems must be capable of dealing with emergencies, psychological trauma, diseases and new epidemics. Holistic care and a preventative orientation at the grassroots have to be strengthened.

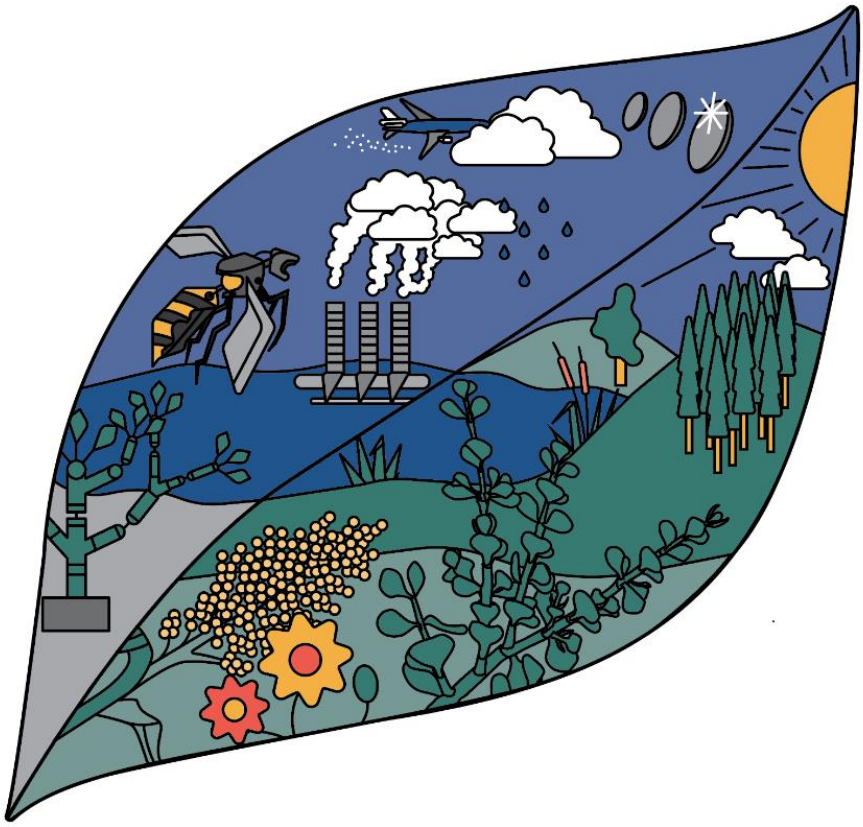
The climate crisis, due to the weather shocks it causes has already resulted in death and injury, but the climate crisis is also expected to cause a rise in infectious disease. Malaria, respiratory diseases from pollution and health concerns due to malnutrition and pollution are expected to increase.

The rise in temperatures causing prolonged droughts can also put extra pressure on precious resources such as water and food, which could lead to conflict. There are also other issues that will increase with temperatures rising, such as mental health concerns.

A market-based health care system is harmful to both human life and the environment, and does not have the capacity to deal with the current health needs, or evolving health needs. Because a market based health care system is driven by profit and privatisation, the needs of people are not centered[27].

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has endorsed universal health coverage as an achievable policy goal for middle-income countries, finding a positive correlation between population coverage and life expectancy, and a negative relationship between out-of-pocket payments and life expectancy. It identifies health spending, education and environmental protection as making the key contributors to life expectancy gains in OECD countries between 1990 and 2013[28].

4.13 Rights of Nature and Natural Climate Solutions:



Our oceans have been polluted, forests destroyed, land stolen and biodiversity loss increased, all due to the pursuit of profit. If we are to survive, all living creatures need to be respected. All life and all ecosystems on our planet are deeply intertwined and need to exist, persist and regenerate their vital cycles. The rights of nature approach recognises the intrinsic value of all non-human life forms. Moreover, nature has its own solutions to climate change from which we can learn. Such solutions include conservation, restoration and land management activities that increase carbon storage across forests, wetlands, grasslands, coastal ecosystems and agro-ecological farm lands. Community-led biodiversity registers are crucial to protect and advance natural climate solutions.

The climate crisis will not be avoided, and its effects will not be remedied within the system which created it. Capitalist solutions to the climate crisis will not work, and will only entrench inequalities because it will still be done with profit making in mind.

Technological advancements and *technofixes* will not meet the needs of people, will not solve the climate crisis and will only reinforce notions of over production and over consumption and increased energy use

The solution to the climate crisis is complete system change and a shift in thinking, the solutions are in nature[29]. Studies show that the implementation of natural climate solutions such as forest protection, improved land management and water conservation, can using conservative calculations provide 37% of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed through to 2030 for a 66% chance at holding global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius per annum[30].

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4.14 Climate Conscious Media

The media is not informing the public adequately about climate change. It needs to take the science of climate change more seriously and inform the public about the climate crisis, policy issues and the systemic alternatives required. Climate news has to be mainstreamed in radio, television and print media.

The South African media, except for a handful of dedicated climate reporters, and some dedicated climate columns, have failed to adequately report on the climate crisis. They are not doing a good enough job of reporting on the carbon pollution, the impact of weather shocks on the people and the economy.

A survey trying to understand what the level of climate change literacy in the country is, established that 54% of south Africans had never heard of climate change. The reason for poor reporting can be attributed to a number of things, one of this is that climate reporting in South Africa is not given adequate resources in various newsrooms, this means that many of them don't even have dedicated climate reporters, meaning climate shocks such as droughts and major storms are not linked to climate change, but rather reported on in isolation. It must also be noted that there is, to some extent climate denialism that has infiltrated the South African media[31].

Media Monitoring Africa undertook a monitoring activity of climate change, analysing South African media content on the topic from January, 2014 to December, 2019. The findings from the research show that since 2018, there was a significant increase in the number of articles written on climate change. The year 2019 alone, had a total of 8,870 articles published, which was a substantial increase from the 4,885 recorded in 2018. On the other hand, the article count for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 did not exceed 1000 articles per year. This exponential increase in the number of articles seems to coincide with a marked increase in the coverage of young activists in environmental issues. This statistic shows that young activists were a big part of putting climate change on the agenda and getting the cause to be covered by the media, yet this still has to permeate through to mainstream media[32].

5. Towards a People Driven Climate Justice State

The South African state has to become a climate justice state that recognises the climate emergency, whilst strengthening our democracy. It has to be guided by the vision, goals, principles and people-led systemic alternatives contained in this Charter and all its climate policies must be aligned to realise this Charter. More specifically, a climate justice state will also:

5.1 Enable participatory planning for deep just transitions from below.

5.2 Develop public finance mechanisms such as a public climate insurance fund and green bonds, provide a climate crisis mandate to the Reserve Bank, re-orientate all public and private finance institutions to support the deep just transition and advance the tax proposals in this charter.

5.3 Ensure progressive regulations that will curtail the destructive logic of capital, place limits on corporations, and importantly, place a ban on any future fossil fuel extraction.

5.4 Decarbonise all state practices and achieve a zero-carbon footprint in all its activities;

5.5 Administratively and constitutionally redesign state structures as parts of the country become unliveable.

5.6 Prepare the country for rising sea levels and take appropriate measures as part of participatory planning.

5.7 Strengthen local government to have enhanced powers and democratic planning competencies to deal with the climate crisis.

5.8 Develop institutional capacity through a people-led climate disaster management system, which includes a national fire service, fully functional public hospitals, rapid response emergency teams, increased capacity for the weather services and disaster management infrastructure.

5.9 Promote research and innovation to deepen systemic transformation for deep just transitions from below, actively raise public awareness and ensure all public institutions are climate justice leaders.

5.10 Reduce all wasteful spending, end corruption and professionalise the state bureaucracy by appointing the best people in the country to serve in government. A truly non-racial and women led bureaucracy must be created.

5.11 Advance a climate justice orientation in its international relations, including renewing radical Pan-Africanism, through promoting: a climate justice position amongst African governments to demand climate debt reparations from the global north as part of a Climate Justice Deal; climate justice sanctions against carbon criminal states; solidarity towards refugees and migrants; research; systemic alternatives; renewable energy pooling; climate disaster response capabilities; and call for an 'End To Fossil Fuel Treaty' in the UN system that benefits African governments.

6. People's Power for Commoning and a Climate Justice Deal for South Africa

A climate justice future can only be achieved through the power of a united people. We have learned this through the struggle against colonialism, apartheid and neoliberalism.

Power lies in different parts of society, in the systems we build, the organisations and movements that we are part of, and in the street politics we do. People's power has to be at the forefront of defending the living commons which sustains us and future generations.

Human beings are an adaptable and flexible species. We understand the causes of the climate crisis and we have democratic, transformative and just solutions to prevent our extinction. This Climate Justice Charter is a signpost; a trumpet call, to move all of us in the direction of system change now and for a Climate Justice Deal

that ends the suffering of the most vulnerable and oppressed. Such a people led initiative will ensure that we address the multiple crises confronting the country while affirming the hope of the many expressed in this Charter. Let's take a stand for a caring society and unite, in South Africa and through international solidarity, before it is too late.

Forward to the Climate Justice Charter and Deep Just Transition to Sustain Life!

Further reading and tools

Book:

The Climate Crisis: South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives: http://oapen.org/search?identifier=1000474

Activist Guides/ Tools:

Water Sovereignty Activist Guide: https://www.safsc.org.za/building-peoples-power-for-water-sovereignty-activist-guide/

People's Food Sovereignty Act: https://www.safsc.org.za/peoples-food-sovereignty-act/

Seed Saving Activist Guide: https://www.safsc.org.za/seed-saving-activist-guide/

Land Justice Activist Guide: https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Land-Justice-Guide-2019_Final-compressed.pdf

Food sovereignty for the right to food - Activist Guide http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Food-Sovereignty-for-the-Right-to-Food-Activist-Guide-compressed.pdf

Building a Solidarity Economy Movement - Activist Guide http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SEM-guide.pdf

Worker Cooperative Activist Guide https://copac.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Worker-Coop-Guide-Final-Web-Version1.pdf

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