

## Maintaining Momentum after Copenhagen's Collapse: Seal the Deal or "Seattle" the Deal?\*

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The Copenhagen Accord that U.S. President Barack Obama persuaded leaders of the BASIC countries—Brazil, South Africa, India and China—to sign at literally the climate summit's last minute on December 18, 2009 is a telling reflection of the limits to top-down "global governance" and instead suggests the potential for bottom-up transformation. The deal followed extremely harsh police repression against nonviolent protesters outside the Bella Center. Inside, Denmark's conservative ruling party leaders set up a "Green Room" process where 26 countries were cherry-picked to represent the world. When even that small group deadlocked—allegedly due to Chinese intransigence and the overall weak parameters set by the U.S., the five leaders—Obama, Lula da Silva, Jacob Zuma, Manmohan Singh, and Wen Jiabao, attempted a face-saving last gasp at planetary hygiene.

Even this weak Accord failed on its own terms, missing its first deadline, on January 31, 2010 for signing on and declaring cuts for carbon emissions, leaving UN climate chief Yvo de Boer to concede that deadlines were "soft."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Obama's strategy meant the World Trade Organization's divide-and-conquer political style would become the norm for UN climate negotiations—if indeed the UN remains a site of negotiation. More likely, the G20 will take over this process, starting with the expected G8 decommissioning near Toronto in June 2010, a development that would be to the obvious detriment of climate victims, especially in Africa and on small islands.

Instead of 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon in the atmosphere as "required by science" (as the popular advocacy phrase goes), the Copenhagen Accord signatories' promised 15 percent emissions cuts from 1990 levels by 2020 could in reality translate into a 10 percent increase once carbon trading and offset loopholes are factored in. The result would be 770 ppm by century's end, which scientists say will cook the planet. Nine of ten African peasants will not be able to produce food if the 2°C mark is breached, according to UN experts. Hence the repeated accusation that Obama and Zuma "sold out" their rural Luo and Zulu relatives on behalf of their economies' fossil fuel industries.

Process aside, the Accord's content was nearly universally condemned for four reasons:

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\* This paper draws from participant insights taken from presentations to seminars and workshops in December 2009-January 2010 at Leeds University's "Democratization in Africa" conference, the Roskilde University Centre for International Studies in Citizenship, Democratic Participation, and Civil Society, the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society in Durban (supported by the South African National Energy Research Institute), the San Francisco-based Movement for Climate Justice-West, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, and the Gyeongsang University Institute for Social Studies (supported by Korea Research Foundation Grant KRF-2007-411-J04602). Special thanks to the late poet-activist Dennis Brutus, whose idea it was in mid-2009 that Copenhagen be "seattled."

<sup>1</sup> As *New York Times* reporters remarked, "Just a month after world leaders fashioned a tentative and nonbinding agreement at the climate change summit meeting in Copenhagen, the deal already appears at risk of coming undone." John Broder and Elisabeth Rosenthal, "U.N. Official Says Climate Deal is at Risk," *The New York Times*, January 20, 2010.

- ◆ Emissions cuts, which imply a catastrophic 3.5°C increase by the end of the century, are completely inadequate. They also include options for vague “pledge and review” commitments and, even worse, offsets so that Northern polluters can outsource the cuts.
- ◆ There are no clear sources of financing nor explicit commitments to pay the North’s “climate debt” to the South, estimated at \$400 billion per year by 2020.<sup>2</sup> The debt is owed for taking too much environmental space and doing massive climate damage, which is already resulting in 300,000 premature deaths annually and expected to escalate much more quickly as climate chaos worsens.
- ◆ The Accord departed from Kyoto Protocol and Bali Action Plan principles, which set out much more ambitious targets for richer countries than poorer countries.
- ◆ The Accord contains no legally binding components or compliance mechanisms.

Most significant was Obama’s refusal to lead the North to make 45 percent emissions cuts and offer payment of the climate debt, and instead engage in a process of leadership so flawed that 350.org leader Bill McKibben charged that “he blew up the United Nations.”<sup>3</sup> Economist Jeffrey Sachs also accused Obama of abandoning “the UN framework, because it was proving nettlesome to U.S. power and domestic politics. Obama’s decision to declare a phony negotiating victory undermines the UN process by signaling that rich countries will do what they want and must no longer listen to the ‘pesky’ concerns of many smaller and poorer countries.” The idea that the UN is too unwieldy for climate talks surfaced repeatedly in subsequent weeks. The Accord is “insincere, inconsistent, and unconvincing,” Sachs continued, “unlikely to accomplish anything real. It is non-binding and will probably strengthen the forces of opposition to emissions reductions.” Moreover, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s “announcements about money a decade from now are mostly empty words. They do not bind the rich countries at all.”<sup>4</sup> As Naomi Klein summed up, the Accord is “nothing more than a grubby pact between the world’s biggest emitters: I’ll pretend that you are doing something about climate change if you pretend that I am too. Deal? Deal.”<sup>5</sup> George Monbiot compared the deal to the 1884-85 Berlin negotiations known as the “Scramble for Africa,” which divided and conquered the continent.<sup>6</sup>

The African Union was twisted and u-turned to support Zuma’s capitulation by the man appointed its climate leader, Meles Zenawi. In September, the Ethiopian dictator claimed, “If need be we are prepared to walk out of any negotiations that threatens to be

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<sup>2</sup> World Development Movement, “Facts Behind the Climate Finance Figures,” December 18, 2009, online at: <http://www.wdm.org.uk/facts-behind-climate-finance-figures>.

<sup>3</sup> Bill McKibben, “With Climate Agreement, Obama Guts Progressive Values, argues McKibben,” December 18, 2009, <http://www.grist.org/article/2009-12-18-with-climate-agreement-obama-guts-progressive-values/#comments>.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, “Obama as Climate Change Villain,” December 21, 2009, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/sachs161>

<sup>5</sup> Naomi Klein, “For Obama, No Opportunity Too Big to Blow,” *The Nation*, December 21, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> George Monbiot, “Scramble for the Atmosphere,” *The Guardian*, December 19, 2009.

another rape of our continent.”<sup>7</sup> But he didn’t walk out. He walked off his plane in Paris on the way to Copenhagen, into the arms of Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>8</sup> The fateful side deal, according to Mithika Mwenda of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, is “undermining the bold positions of our negotiators and ministers represented here, and threatening the very future of Africa.” Not only did Zuma and Zenawi surrender on emissions cuts, but also on demanding full payment of the North’s climate debt to the South. “Meles wants to sell out the lives and hopes of Africans for a pittance,” said Mwenda. “Every other African country has committed to policy based on the science.”<sup>9</sup> Climate damage to Africa will include much more rapid desertification, more floods and droughts, worse water shortages, increased starvation, floods of climate refugees jamming shanty-packed megalopolises, and the spread of malarial and other diseases. Ironically, Obama’s and Zuma’s own Luo and Zulu relatives in rural Kenya and KwaZulu-Natal will be among the first victims of the Accord.

The BASIC climate “compradors” did, however, begin to face opposition from within. For example in India, Centre for Science and Environment director Sunita Narain argues that her government’s negotiators

are the same people who would stymie any real action on environmental improvement in the country. They will oppose fuel efficiency standards, tax on big cars, or tough penalties for polluters. But they will still talk glibly about low-carbon economies. They will of course, dismiss out of hand, any discussion on the need for “radical” and out-of-the-box solutions for equity and sustainability. These, they will tell you, are mere evangelical thoughts of some fringe activists. The men think and act differently. These are the promoters of the Accord in India. And I believe they do so, because for them, firstly, the Accord provides the perfect solution—talk big about change, but do little at home. The U.S. has provided a perfect formula—it promises us the right to pollute, because it wants to legitimize its own pollution. Secondly, it promises that we can get a place on the high table of polluters. And as powerful conspirators, this will mean that we need to do little ourselves, but instead push the price of change on the less favored—the poor of India or the poor anywhere else in the world. It’s an open offer to protect, not our right to development as we have been demanding—the rich countries pay for our transition to low-carbon economies. But a simpler proposition: we give you the right to pollute (at least for now). The other proposition is equally seductive. To the countries, which are not yet polluters (from Ethiopia to Maldives), the Copenhagen Accord says we will give money to keep you pliant and agreeable. This is why the Accord promises some fictional money to poor vulnerable countries. It’s a perfect formula, designed to please all. There is only one hitch: we will all have to forget the climate change crisis and the hazards and impacts that will grow.<sup>10</sup>

Judged not only by Copenhagen’s crash but by the rise of the G20 (economics) and BASIC (climate) groupings, the global-scale climate governance ship appears to be sinking. So, too, is the climate’s supposed private sector lifeboat, carbon trading.

## Legislative Gridlock and the Sinking Carbon Trading Ship

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<sup>7</sup> A. Ashine, “Africa Threatens Withdrawal from Climate Talks,” *The Nation* (Nairobi), September 3, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> John Vidal, “Copenhagen: Head of African Bloc Calls on Poorer Nations to Compromise over Climate Funding,” *The Guardian*, December 16, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Trusha Reddy, “From African Walk Out to Sell Out,” *Climate Chronicle*, December 18, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Sunita Narain, “Move over boys and girls, the men are here: the future of climate negotiations and why India wants the Accord,” *India Environment Portal blog*, January 12, 2010, online at: <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/blog/move-over-boys-and-girls-men-are-here-future-climate-negotiations-and-why-india-wants-accord>.

Recall Obama's January 2008 promise:

We would put a cap-and-trade system in place that is as aggressive, if not more aggressive, than anybody else's out there... So if somebody wants to build a coal-powered plant, they can; it's just that it will bankrupt them because they're going to be charged a huge sum for all that greenhouse gas that's being emitted. That will also generate billions of dollars that we can invest in solar, wind, biodiesel and other alternative energy approaches.<sup>11</sup>

Nothing of the sort was attempted. The main legislation pushed by Congressmen Henry Waxman and Edward Markey and Senators John Kerry, Barbara Boxer, Joe Lieberman, and Lindsay Graham during 2009 did not auction but instead gifted the right to pollute to those firms with historically high emissions records, foregoing the billions Obama pledged would flow to alternatives. As Virginia Congressman Rich Boucher explained, the combination of new subsidies to the coal industry and massive offsets, which reduce pressure to cut emissions at the source, meant that the Waxman-Markey bill that passed in the House of Representatives in June 2009 "strengthens the case for utilities to continue to use coal."<sup>12</sup> Remarkably, the bill also strips the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of its authority to regulate greenhouse gases. As a result, the U.S.' emergent climate justice movement opposed the legislation, and only the major environmental groups put resources into pressuring the Senate to adopt similar legislation.

Having thus spent his first year in office moving around some deckchairs with Congress' assistance, Obama, the captain of this Titanic, began 2010 by heading directly towards the closest iceberg: the USS Senate. The shock election of Republican Scott Brown to fill Edward Kennedy's Massachusetts seat in late January—ending the filibuster-proof Democratic majority—was telling and perhaps decisive, because the climate debacle was center stage. Brown campaigned partly on the basis that he will reject cap-and-trade legislation currently pending in the Senate. His election confirms the most likely outcome from Capitol Hill: gridlock. Given Congressional power relations and the destructive nature of legislation on the table, this outcome is, frankly, welcomed by many U.S. grassroots environmentalists as well as by leading climate scientist James Hansen.<sup>13</sup> In the face of the ineffectual, pork-laden legislation, ecosocialists and other radical environmentalists may find more fruitful alternatives in the EPA's ever-stronger regulatory potential and opportunities to intervene against climate-destroying projects at utility regulatory boards and local planning

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<sup>11</sup>Barack Obama, "The Opinion Shop: An Interview with Sen. Barack Obama," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 17, 2008, available online at: [http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/opinionshop/detail?blogid=42&entry\\_id=23562](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/opinionshop/detail?blogid=42&entry_id=23562). The full debate with McCain is reviewed in Patrick Bond, "The State of the Global Carbon Trade Debate," *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2008, pp. 89-106.

<sup>12</sup>Hank Hayes, "Boucher Seeks Change in Cap-and-Trade," *Times News*, August 29 2009, online at: <http://www.timesnews.net/article.php?id=9016458>.

<sup>13</sup>James Hansen, "Sack Goldman Sachs Cap-and-Trade," December 7, 2009, online at: [http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2009/20091207\\_SackGoldmanSachs.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2009/20091207_SackGoldmanSachs.pdf). Even the less harmful Senate bill offered by Maria Cantwell and Susan Collins includes trading, and offset provisions (albeit limited) aim for emissions cuts that are as weak—4 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, when science requires 45 percent cuts—as the other bills, and hence have no climate justice movement support, nor even major mainstream environmentalists' sign-on.

commissions. In December, the EPA issued an “endangerment” finding against carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas pollutants using the Clean Air Act.

The major bills are being pushed by Kerry, the senior Massachusetts senator who failed in a 2004 presidential campaign bid against George W. Bush. Kerry felt the need to ally with the conservative Democrat-turned-Independent (but pro-Republican) Lieberman, his 2004 running mate, and the very conservative Republican Graham. To lure deserters from the Senate’s substantial climate-denialist or climate do-nothing camps, the bill they are pushing in 2010 is full of subsidies to the coal, oil, gas, and nuclear industries. It also remains based on a carbon trading strategy that rewards polluters for historic emissions and allows an inadequate domestic emissions cap to be “offset” with purchases from other countries. This ill-gotten windfall was intended to partly fund U.S. promises in Copenhagen to begin giving \$100 billion a year for climate change mitigation by 2020, an offer that many in the South rejected, since it is part of a market scam rather than genuine climate debt payments.

The entire carbon trading apparatus—worth nearly \$140 billion in volume last year and, had Copenhagen succeeded, projected to grow to \$3 trillion in annual trades by 2020—is now in question. Experience with the main pilot project, the European Union’s Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), gives no confidence that carbon trading will result in reduced emissions. After five years of operation, the ETS has not cut emissions, though it has sent vast profits from consumers to utilities, fossil fuel firms, and financial intermediaries. Although there are contending viewpoints, with energy market consultant Point Carbon projecting a price rise in 2010 to €18 per metric ton, for a number of reasons, it is just as likely that the price of ETS-traded pollution allowances will decline further in 2010. One key reason is investor uncertainty about the UN process. Second, too many allowances were given out, deflating their value. Third, “hot air” credits from Eastern Europe (due to deindustrialization since 1990) may be dumped onto the market since there is a question whether they will have any value after Kyoto expires in 2012.<sup>14</sup> The failure of the Copenhagen Accord to confirm financing was a major blow to the market, which crashed by 10 percent between December 17-21, when it appeared there would be no legitimacy granted to a global carbon trading regime. By early 2010, a metric ton of carbon traded at €13, a 60 percent discount from mid-2008 highs of around €30. The ETS was itself delegitimized in September 2009 when the UN’s main verification contractor was disqualified for repeated procedural violations<sup>15</sup> and again in December when Europol discovered that up to 90 percent of trades in some E.U. countries were flagrant tax scams.<sup>16</sup>

—Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 here—

Yet in spite of its proven failure, carbon trading was still central to Copenhagen’s aims and promised “adaptation finance” (in place of the U.S. refusal to acknowledge climate

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<sup>14</sup> John McGarrity, “Global Climate Effort ‘in Slow-Motion Collapse,’” Point Carbon, January 19, 2010; Paddy Gourlay and Andrew Allan, “Brussels Clamps Down on CER Leak,” Point Carbon, January 26, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Danny Fortson and Georgia Warren, “Carbon-Trading Market Hit by UN Suspension of Clean-Energy Auditor,” *Business Times*, September 13, 2009, online at: [http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry\\_sectors/natural\\_resources/article6832259.ece](http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/natural_resources/article6832259.ece).

<sup>16</sup> “Tax Fraud Costs E.U. Carbon-Trading System Billions,” *The Telegraph*, December 7, 2009, online at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/copenhagen-climate-change-confe/6778003/Copenhagen-climate-summit-Carbon-trading-fraudsters-in-Europe-pocket-5bn.html>.

debt). If the Kyoto Protocol Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) ratio remained at its current level of about 6 percent of the carbon market, by 2020 the anticipated \$3 trillion market would yield \$180 billion in annual “financing” from North to South—incidentally, far more than Clinton’s promised \$100 billion. The proposal to use “market mechanisms”—at a discounted rate—to finance adaptation was harshly criticized not only by activists but by the more enlightened negotiators from vulnerable states: the Association of Small Island States, Africa, and Latin America’s Bolivarian leaders. In the end, only the latter prevailed with tough politics, as financial blackmail seduced many others to agree on December 19 to “note” the U.S.-BASIC Accord (although only 20 countries had formally signed on as partners by mid-January 2010). Surprisingly, the Mauritian and Ethiopian heads of state who were once so tough in their rhetoric ultimately folded and joined Obama’s side. Where, then, does that leave oppositional grassroots politics?

### **Radical Environmental Politics**

One theory, offered in *Counterpunch* ezine by anarchist activists Tim Simons and Ali Tonak, is that Copenhagen is a site of defeat for radical climate politics, because, they claim, “the attempted resurrection of this movement, known by some as the Global Justice Movement, under the banner of Climate Justice” failed the tests of critical analysis and militant practice.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, critical analysis and militant practice are important for any current and future fusion of red and green internationalism. Zapatismo in 1994 may be the first sighting of the solidarity that came to characterize the Global Justice movement’s inspiration and horizontal capacities. Likewise, Climate Justice might date its origins to Accion Ecologica’s pathbreaking work in Ecuador at roughly the same time. These two political projects were conjoined in Bali, Indonesia when Climate Justice Now! emerged outside another failed UN Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. That crucial moment stitched together global justice and radical environmental activists. Since then, the growth of climate justice politics has been not merely the rebranding of existing radical networks but instead has witnessed a new red-green movement across borders that by most accounts will necessarily be anti-capitalist if it addresses the problem with the seriousness required.

Simons and Tonak dispute that the climate justice movement can address the climate crisis at its roots, because, they argue, its insistence on climate debt payments promotes “the financialization of nature and the indirect reliance on markets and monetary solutions as catalysts for structural change.” Yet Climate Justice Now! and the main Copenhagen activist network, Climate Justice Action (and before them the Durban Group for Climate Justice, which began in October 2004), are explicitly against commodification of the atmosphere, strenuously opposing carbon trading and offsets.

Indeed on climate debt, the best of the older Jubilee South debt/reparations language merged with Accion Ecologica’s “Ecological Debt” demands, culminating in the insistence of \$400 billion per annum by 2020, a figure that has been rising dramatically as we

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Simons and Ali Tonak, “How NGO Bureaucrats and Greenwashed Corporations are Turning Nature Into Investment Capital,” *Counterpunch*, January 8, 2010, <http://www.counterpunch.org/simons01082010.html>, and my full reply is Patrick Bond, “Why Climate Justice Did Not Crumble at the Summit,” *Counterpunch*, January 12, 2010, <http://www.counterpunch.org/bond01122010.html>.

learn more about the damage ahead. If articulated fully, climate debt should cover not only the damages done by climate change but also finance the South's transcendence of extreme uneven development associated with the world economy's export-oriented operation. Payment of climate debt damages and "adaptation" financing—if done properly—would ideally permit (and compel) the Global South to delink from all manner of relations with the world economy that damage both the exporting economy and the climate: fossil fuel extraction, agricultural plantations and associated deforestation, export-processing zones, vast shipping operations, and foreign debt that forces further attempts to raise hard currency, which in turn reinforce the exploitative relationships that keep these countries in such poverty. Climate debt is not, therefore, a "simple claim," as Simons and Tonak allege; it's potentially a complex challenge to capitalism's internal logic of commodification and neoliberal policy expansion.

Simons and Tonak charge that climate justice "demands for reparations justified by the notion of climate debt open a dangerous door to increased green capitalist investment in the Global South." Yet the door has been wide open since 1997, when mainstream greens adopted the Kyoto Protocol's CDM strategy as a North-South financing vehicle. Climate debt analysis does the exact opposite: it delinks reparations obligations from market mechanisms. In short, to promote climate debt does not require the climate justice movement to promote CDMs or other existing financing strategies that tie the South more deeply into Northern-controlled circuits of capital. On the contrary, the climate debt demand is why climate justice activists legitimately argue the South could and should halt export-oriented agriculture, extraction of minerals and petroleum, cheap manufacturing platforms and metals smelting, mass-produced consumer imports, further debt, further migrant labor supplies, further Foreign Direct Investment, further aid dependency, etc.

Moreover, climate debt is about reparations to people who are suffering damages by the actions of Northern overconsumption of environmental space—damages that can be proven even in courts, as the Alien Tort Claims Act has proven useful in the U.S. for some of the Niger Delta plaintiffs against Shell recently and for apartheid victims. This does not mean, as Simons and Tonak further claim, that "Climate debt' perpetuates a system that assigns economic and financial value to the biosphere, ecosystems and in this case a molecule of CO<sub>2</sub>," and that "Everyone from Vestas to the Sudanese government to large NGOs agree on this fundamental principle: that the destruction of nature and its consequences for humans can be remedied through financial markets and trade deals and that monetary value can be assigned to ecosystems."

Yet even if Simons and Tonak's political conclusion is wrong, their resistance to quantification of nature is understandable and commendable. Yet it is also irrelevant here, particularly given the climate justice movement's hostility to—and track record fighting—carbon markets. Under capitalism, after all, everything gets commodified, and the optimal climate debt narrative involves recognizing this problem to insist on explicit compensation for damages done by climate chaos to the South (especially islands, Africa, Bangladesh, and other vulnerable sites), and then to make a rough estimate of this damage. The point is both financing compensation (for "adaptation"—i.e., survival) and disincentivizing further climate damage by penalizing the polluters.

Climate debt analyst Joan Martinez-Alier responds to this kind of critique by acknowledging that “although it is not possible to make an exact accounting, it is necessary to establish the principal categories and certain orders of magnitude in order to stimulate discussion.”<sup>18</sup> Once discussion is generated about the damages done to climate victims in the global South (including their inability to use the environmental space that is occupied by the North), next comes the logical demand for reparations. To refuse on principle to make any kind of quantification, as Simons and Tonak do, is to refuse to acknowledge that damage is being done—and then to refuse to halt it. That is Washington’s position, as was stated repeatedly by Obama Administration officials in Copenhagen.<sup>19</sup>

Simons and Tonak also claim the movement “obfuscates internal class antagonisms within states of the Global South in favor of simplistic North-South dichotomies.” This is a danger, of course, and always has been in internationalist politics. But against that danger, dynamic climate justice movements are emerging to challenge national elites (and the transnational corporations they front for) in Brazil, India, South Africa, and most other major global South sites. Simons and Tonak worry about “the pacification of militant action resulting from an alliance forged with transnational NGOs and reformist environmental groups who have been given minimal access to the halls of power in exchange for their successful policing of the movement.” But against the danger of demobilization, Climate Justice Now! arose specifically because the existing Climate Action Network on environmental NGOs was inadequate, compromised, and ideologically confused. Moreover, in Copenhagen, some of the most militant South-based transnational movements—e.g., Via Campesina and Oilwatch affiliates—showed they are able to negotiate the inside-outside space with power and grace. So, too, did the climate justice movement’s major formal NGO network, Friends of the Earth, which worked to undermine elite legitimacy within the Bella Center and as a result were evicted. Simons and Tonak allege that the climate justice movement’s “solidarity with the Global South” was conflated with “a handful of NGO bureaucrats and allied government leaders.” There are certainly some in the climate justice movement who would put the North-South contradiction ahead of internal class conflict as a priority for struggle, a tension that is openly recognized and has been the source of frank debating as this broad global movement is organized quickly, without secretariats and enforced norms, values, and processes.

This is, after all, a movement in its early stages. If the long tradition of protests for democracy and social justice in Mexico are any guide, and if Cancun in 2003 and the 2006 Mexico City march of 10,000 against the World Water Forum (just as illegitimate a body as those deciding the climate future) are precedents for internationalism, then it will be

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<sup>18</sup> Joan Martinez-Alier, “Marxism, Social Metabolism and Ecologically Unequal Exchange,” paper presented at the Lund University Conference on World Systems Theory and the Environment, September 19-22, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> On the question of climate debt, chief U.S. negotiator Todd Stern said: “the sense of guilt or culpability or reparations—I just categorically reject that.” Bolivian ambassador to the United Nations Pablo Solon replied, “Admitting responsibility for the climate crisis without taking necessary actions to address it is like someone burning your house and then refusing to pay for it. We are not assigning guilt, merely responsibility. As they say in the U.S., if you break it, you buy it.” Stern’s aversion to “culpability” translates into rejection of his own government’s straightforward “polluter pays” principle as well as the foundational concepts of the Superfund, which was created to clean up toxic waste dumps across the U.S. See Government of Bolivia Ministry of International Relations, “Press Release: Bolivia responds to U.S. on climate debt,” Copenhagen, December 11, 2009.



worthwhile to again descend on another climate summit in Cancun in November 2010 and again at a follow-up in South Africa a year later to battle so that climate justice issues will be raised forcefully—including big emissions cuts, big climate debt repayment, and the decommissioning of carbon markets. And when the governing elites refuse the demands of science, environment, and, most of all, radical Southern social movements, which will be there in much greater numbers than in Copenhagen, then the momentum will have decisively shifted away from the centrist NGOs and mainstream environmentalists who aim to band-aid rather than transform the system.

Simons and Tonak would have preferred climate justice activists to confront “the hyper-green capitalism of Copenhagen, the massive effort of companies such as Siemens, Coca-Cola, Toyota, and Vattenfall to greenwash their image and the other representations of this market ideology within the city center.” But the world’s climate justice movements are indeed targeting both the corporates directly (especially at the oil/coalface in the Niger Delta, Ecuador, Australia, Europe, Alberta, West Virginia and San Francisco) and the national and multilateral executive committees of the bourgeoisie who go to COPS. There are, of course, major environmental organizations—WorldWide Fund for Nature, Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resource Defense Council, and even the Sierra Club and Greenpeace—which have strong corporate connections. These were most pernicious in the case of the TckTckTck marketing campaign, which asked Copenhagen leaders to “seal the deal.” The climate justice movement, in contrast, aimed to “seattle the deal,” and generated the political principles, analysis, strategies, tactics, and alliances to do so.

Hence it is indeed logical for climate justice activists to declare victory at Copenhagen and make plans for future-scale politics that move progressively closer to the home base, whether in the North or South:

- ◆ At the global scale, continue to make demands—albeit unwinnable in the foreseeable future given the adverse balance of forces in the UN and G8/G20—for:
  - huge emissions cuts (45 percent of industrial economy greenhouse gases by 2020),
  - climate debt payments (increasing to \$400 billion a year by 2020), and
  - the decommissioning of carbon markets.
  
- ◆ At the national scale, continue to make demands—also unwinnable in most settings, where due to adverse power balances, unacceptable legislation and/or gridlock are most likely—for:
  - a 45 percent cut in carbon emissions by industrial economies by 2020, climate debt payments, and carbon market decommissioning, along with massive state investments in transformed, decentralized energy systems, transport and infrastructure, and
  - semi-industrialized economies (e.g., especially BASIC) to make both cuts to reverse their growing fossil fuel addictions and public investments in appropriate energy, transport and infrastructure, and in some cases (e.g. South Africa) pay a climate debt to poorer neighbors, while rejecting CDMs and offsets.

- ◆ At the national scale, in countries that have national environmental regulatory agencies, challenge the institutions to restrict greenhouse gas emissions as dangerous pollutants (for example, as in the U.S. after lawsuits and direct action protests against the EPA).
- ◆ At regional/provincial/state/municipal scales, engage public utility commissions and planning boards to block climate-destructive practices and projects.
- ◆ At local scales, find point sources of major greenhouse gas emissions, power consumption, or excessive transport, and raise consciousness and the cost of business-as-usual through direct action and other pressure techniques.

Organizing and consciousness-raising are critical, perpetual steps, just as hotly contested as the right to protest in Copenhagen. To illustrate, an intense struggle over interpreting carbon trading in the U.S. played out partly through a nine-minute popular educational film, *The Story of Cap and Trade*, launched a week before the summit. In its first two weeks on YouTube and Vimeo, the film recorded 400,000 hits, in the process attracting strong opposition from mainstream environmentalists wedded to the promotion of cap and trade.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, to confirm that activism would be the main antidote to polluters and carbon traders, the most effective response to the post-Copenhagen hangover came from radicals stretching from Australia to Africa to the Andes to the Amazon to Appalachia to Alberta.

- ◆ On December 20, on a bridge leading to the world's largest coal port, in Newcastle, Australia's Rising Tide activists blocked a train for seven-and-a-half hours, with 23 arrests.
- ◆ In South Africa, groundWork, Earthlife, and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance demanded that the state electricity utility, Eskom, "keep the coal in the hole" by protesting at Durban and Johannesburg tariff hearings in

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.storyofcapandtrade.org> made by Annie Leonard's organization The Story of Stuff and Free Range studies with partners Climate Justice Now! and the Durban Group for Climate Justice. There were three repellent reactions: climate denialists who endorsed the film's critique of cap and trade (which they incorrectly view as a big government tax); the mainstream environmental movement's policy specialists who had worked for a dozen years to build support for cap and trade; and the carbon traders themselves (see cites and a rebuttal at Patrick Bond, "Green Market Punks," *Counterpunch*, December 17, 2009, online at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/bond12172009.html>). Another reaction was imitation: the Environmental Defense Fund—a large, corporate-financed Washington NGO—issued a film, *Facts about Cap and Trade*: [http://ga3.org/campaign/cew\\_facts/forward](http://ga3.org/campaign/cew_facts/forward) (which originally carried the same title as Leonard's). But aside from borrowing the style, copying some of the graphics and citing some of the same studies, Nat Keohane's film did not acknowledge the widely-known problems of the cap and trade legislation (offsets, giveaways not auctions, nuclear/coal/gas subsidies, derivatives and speculation, and the terribly inadequate emissions cuts, not to mention the evisceration of EPA regulatory authority). It was released at just the point in late January 2010 when political pragmatism suggested that Capitol Hill was a no-go zone for climate legislation, the day after the Massachusetts Senate upset. This effort seemed to prove the *Story of Cap and Trade's* main point, i.e., that the Washington-insider political strategy served mainly as a distraction to those genuinely interested in tackling climate change.

January.

- ◆ Farther up the Atlantic Coast, Niger Delta oil was kept in the soil by the Port Harcourt-based NGO, Environmental Rights Action, which explicitly links local destruction to global climate chaos, and through sabotage of oil extraction by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, which ended a two-month ceasefire by attacking a Shell and Chevron pipeline six hours after the Copenhagen Accord was signed.
- ◆ In the Andes, Bolivian President Evo Morales announced he will host a major strategy conference of the world's ecosocial climate justice movements from April 20-22, 2010.
- ◆ In the Amazon, Quito-based Accion Ecologica's work with indigenous people to protect the Yasuni National Park required renewed solidarity in January when Ecuador's President Rafael Correa threatened to authorize drilling in June (Correa also tried to put Yasuni into the carbon markets). Environmental and indigenous people have instead demanded that more countries join Germany, which has pledged \$50 million per year, in paying their climate debt so that Ecuador's leaders can justify leaving the oil in the soil.
- ◆ In Appalachia, the Climate Ground Zero activists of West Virginia have, according to a December 19 report by Vicki Smith, "chained themselves to giant dump trucks, scaled 80-foot trees to stop blasting and paddled boats online into a 9 million gallon sludge pond. They've blocked roads, hung banners, and staged sit-ins. Virginia-based Massey Energy claims a single three-and-a-half-hour occupation cost the company \$300,000."
- ◆ In Canada on December 20, 2009 anti-tarsands environmentalist Ingmar Lee climbed a flagpole at the British Columbia parliament to protest carbon crimes by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, provincial Premier Gordon Campbell, and their ally Tzeporah Berman from the corrupted NGO ForestEthics, following an action in London at the Canadian High Commission, where Camp for Climate Action activists offered solidarity to Alberta's indigenous Canadian tarsands victims by cutting down the maple-leaf flag, drowning it in crude oil, and then locking down on an upstairs balcony.

Opportunities abounded for climate justice activism following Copenhagen, as leading U.S. forces in San Francisco carried out various protests—at Senator Boxer's office, Chevron headquarters, City Hall, and the Danish consulate—as well as teach-ins in December-January. In New York on January 13, a carbon trade conference was subject to a protest by scores of Climate Camp activists.

So if only two useful things were accomplished in Copenhagen, they were the unveiling of Pretoria, Delhi, Beijing, and Brasilia as willing criminal accomplices to the Washington/Brussels/Tokyo/Melbourne/Ottawa axis, and the rise of Climate Justice Action, Climate Justice Now!, 350.org, and parallel movements whose hundreds of

thousands of protesters swarmed the streets of the world's cities. The next question is whether, before the next fiasco in Cancun in November-December 2010, the latter can cancel the former. We all depend upon an affirmative answer.