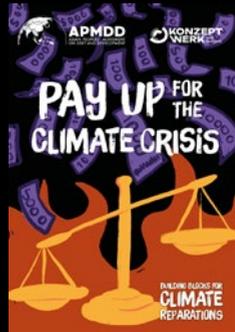
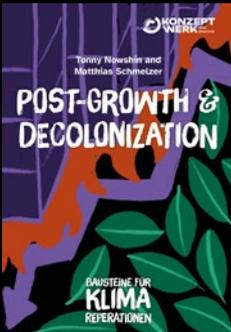
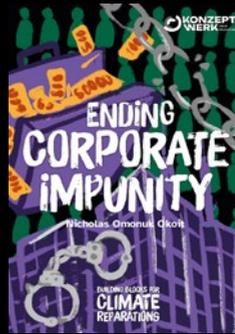
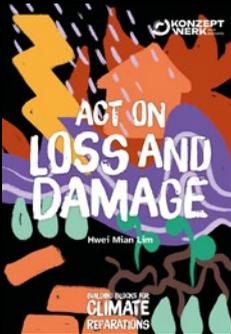


Tonny Nowshin and
Matthias Schmelzer

POST-GROWTH & DECOLONIZATION

BAUSTEINE FÜR
KLIMA
REPERATIONEN

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CLIMATE REPARATIONS



All fact sheets are available for free download at www.knoe.org/bbfc

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CLIMATE REPARATIONS IN A NUTSHELL

WHY DO WE NEED CLIMATE REPARATIONS?

The climate crisis is profoundly unjust. It is not a crisis that affects everyone equally, nor one that everyone has caused.

4 On one side are those historically and structurally responsible for it: countries, corporations and individuals that have benefited – and continue to benefit – from greenhouse gas-intensive production, consumption and economic growth. Germany, for example is responsible for around 3% of global historic emissions¹, despite making up 1% of the world's population. It has built immense wealth and technological capacity through centuries of industrialization and colonial exploitation, and it possesses the financial means to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

On the other side are those who bear the brunt of the crisis: communities, countries, and ecosystems in the Global South that have contributed least to the problem. Cameroon, for instance has produced only about 0,2% of historic global emissions², yet faces devastating impacts – from floods and droughts to the loss of livelihoods and biodiversity – without the sufficient resources to respond or recover.



When we talk about Climate Reparations it is essential to recognize that the injustice is not limited to unequal emissions. Germany's wealth, stability and high standard of living are inseparable from the historic and ongoing exploitation of countries like Cameroon* - through colonialism, extractivism, unfair trade relations and neocolonial economic structures. The raw materials, labour and resources extracted from colonial regions have directly fuelled Europe's industrialization and accumulation of wealth, while leaving formerly colonized nations structurally disadvantaged, indebted and dependent.

Cameroon's vulnerability to the climate crisis is, therefore, in turn, not merely the result of natural conditions. It is the outcome of historically produced inequalities – the result of centuries of dispossession, resource extraction and deliberate underdevelopment. The same systems that caused the climate crisis continues to shape who suffers from it and who profits from it.

The line between those who suffer from the climate crisis does not run only between rich and poor countries. It also runs within societies, along class divisions, gender hierarchies, racialized structures and other intersecting forms of oppression. Marginalized groups – including women, Indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized communities, people with disabilities, and low income households – are often both the least responsible for emissions and the most exposed to climate harms.

5

* In this case there is even a direct connection since Cameroon used to be a German Colony. For more information on the relationship of the two countries through a climate justice lens see: www.knoe.org/thedamagedone

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CLIMATE REPARATIONS

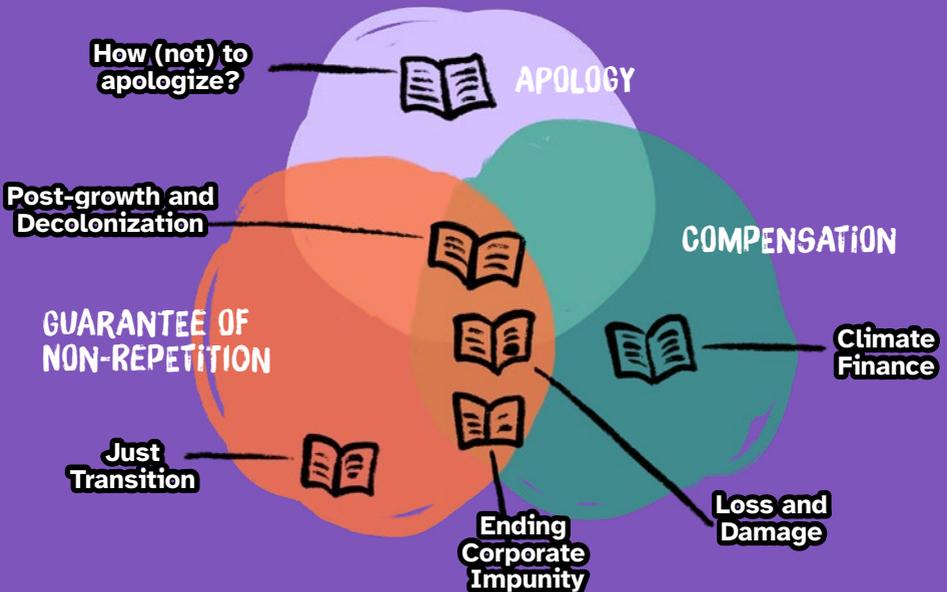
Climate reparations are therefore neither charity nor aid, they are

- necessary to stop further injustices and ensure accountability and repair by redistributing resources, power and decision making to those most affected,
- a tool to address the root causes of the crisis – historical responsibility, structural inequality and systemic exploitation,
- the centrepiece of climate and global justice, a prerequisite for a healing process between the Global South and North.

According to Maxine Burkett³, climate reparations must at least include three core elements: “an apology, compensation and a guarantee of non-repetition”. An apology acknowledges the harm done and accepts responsibility for it. Compensation - whether monetary or through other forms of material redress – gives tangible or symbolic weight to that acknowledgement. The guarantee of non-repetition, perhaps the most transformative element, commits the perpetrating parties to structural changes that prevent the continuation or repetition of the injustice.

To make these elements more concrete, we identified 6 building blocks for climate reparations that explain how these could look like in practice, in Germany and beyond (see figure).

6



ABOUT THE PROJECT

Looking at the current state of civil society, we believe that climate reparations are the missing link in a comprehensive understanding of climate justice. Despite growing awareness of the connection between the climate crisis, colonialism and racism, the concept of climate reparations remains underexplored and often misunderstood. One major reason is the lack of accessible materials on the topic - particularly in German-speaking contexts.

With our project “Building Blocks for Climate Reparations” we aim to close this gap - by providing accessible, grounded knowledge that links climate reparations to justice, responsibility and systemic change.

ABOUT THIS FACTSHEET

This factsheet examines the question what a “guarantee of non-repetition” would entail. The result is the framework “world-making after growth” which combines the concepts and measures of Decolonization and Degrowth. It is authored by Tonny Nowshin and Matthias Schmelzer. Tonny is an economist, activist, and development professional examining colonial continuities and power dynamics. Matthias is Professor for Social-Ecological Transformation Research at the University of Flensburg.



**THE ONLY
SUSTAINABLE
GROWTH IS
DEGROWTH**

POST-GROWTH AND DECOLONIZATION TO GUARANTEE NON-REPETITION

An essential element of climate reparations is the guarantee of non-repetition: ensuring that the structural drivers of harm cannot continue. In the context of climate justice, “repetition” is driven by the ongoing reproduction of inequalities through a global economic system that relies on the extraction of resources, labor and ecological value from and the externalization of costs onto countries in the Global South. Taking the guarantee of non-repetition seriously therefore requires confronting the economic and political order that produces these harms. It implies dismantling the growth-oriented, extractivist model that underpins the current global economy and enables the continuous exploitation of people and environments. To meet this challenge, we argue that post-growth perspectives must be integrated with decolonial approaches. Together, they offer a framework—world-making after growth—capable of both limiting ecologically destructive expansion and transforming the colonial power relations embedded in today’s world economy.

9

POST-GROWTH FROM A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

The concept of post-growth or degrowth has been at the center of discussion in many areas of environmental activism, especially in the fields of resource extraction and climate change. As the first nations to fully industrialize have moved beyond their periods of rapid expansion, many economic theories developed and taught since the 1940s no longer fully reflect today's realities.

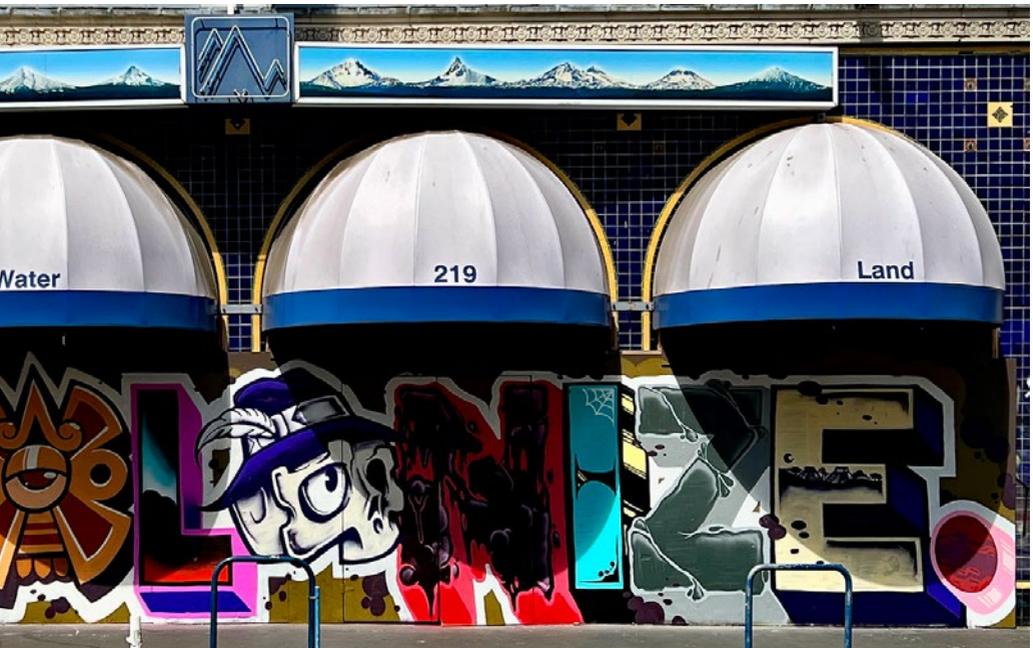
10 In the context of a worsening climate crisis, economic orthodoxies and the narrative of limitless growth on a fragile planet is increasingly being questioned by heterodox approaches, including new generations of economics students. Post-growth is not a single, uniform idea. Rather, it is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of approaches, from earth system sciences to critical ecofeminist perspectives.

While the discussions on post-growth are a relatively recent phenomenon in the Global North, the idea of planetary well-being—living in harmony with the Earth, valuing nature in ways that go beyond monetary measures and respecting the planet's boundaries—has existed far longer than modern industrial civilization, and long before Western scholars coined the terms post-growth or degrowth.



To do these concepts justice, any attempt to define or discuss post-growth from a decolonial perspective must begin by acknowledging that many of these principles pre-date Western academic framing altogether.

Once we grasp that degrowth or post-growth is not a unique, ground-breaking modern idea but rather a Western way of recognizing the limitations of an economy and society built on the false promise of unlimited growth, the question becomes how this idea interacts with, acknowledges and builds on the pre-existing pluriverse of alternative economic thinking.



11

Chris Christian,
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<https://flic.kr/p/2nCpVe1>

The following section outlines how the demands of degrowth or post-growth in the Global North can center, align with and support the demands of decolonization and reparations.

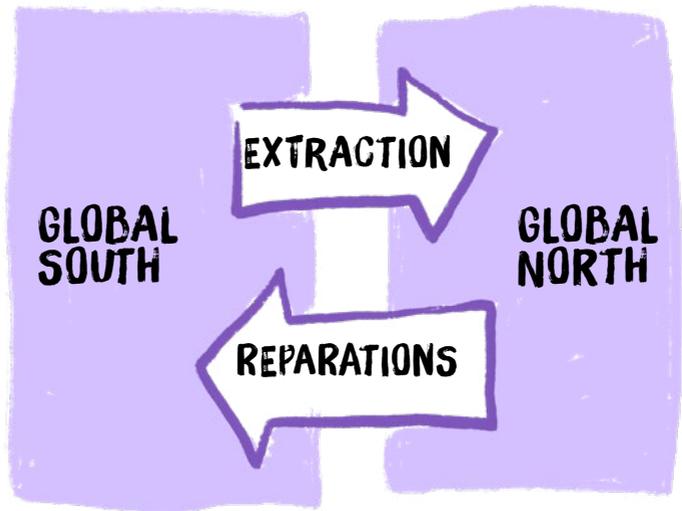
POST-GROWTH FOR THE NORTH

VS. POST-GROWTH FOR THE SOUTH



12

It is important to recognize from the outset that post-growth in the economic context of the Global North does not mean the same thing for the Global South. Today, countries are embedded in an exploitative global hierarchy that channels value upwards to capital-owning, wealthier individuals and nations. This hierarchical world system is built on unequal ecological exchange, on appropriating labor, resources and financial returns from Global South countries. International institutions like the World Bank, IMF and WTO often function to protect and maintain this hierarchy. Any post-growth transition that seriously questions this hierarchy will significantly affect all the countries entangled in this extractive economic structure. So, by design, post-growth in the Global North and in the Global South involves different variables and concerns.



For many Global South countries, a post-growth transition in the Global North could be disruptive, since they are often restricted to a specific, dependent role. This role might be that of an exporter of raw minerals, fossil fuels or the host of a low-cost production site. Without further changes, a reduction in the demand for these exports could lead to a recession and economic downturn.

13

At the same time, such a transition opens the door to halt the extraction that has continued over centuries. Communities and movements in the Global South have been opposing harmful policies of the World Bank, WTO and IMF since the 1980s. Just stopping extraction could allow resources to stay where they are needed and enable communities to heal and develop. In that context, a post-growth future for the Global South could very well involve growth, but not in the conventional, GDP-centered sense.

Finally, a post-growth transition also opens the door not only to stop extractive flows but also to reverse them. That is where reparations come in. To understand how post-growth can connect to the reparation agenda, it's important to look at the existing reparations demands landscape.

REPARATIONS DEMAND LANDSCAPE

Existing reparations demands across global justice scholarship, civil society movements and Global South coalitions converge around the recognition that today's global order is rooted in centuries of colonial extraction—of land, labor, culture, ecosystems, and financial resources—and that meaningful repair requires confronting these structural foundations.

Central to this agenda is sovereign debt justice, which highlights that many Global South governments are burdened by debts that are illegitimate products of colonial financial systems and harmful conditionalities. Sovereign debt justice means canceling unfair debts, ending predatory lending practices and ensuring that no country is forced to choose between servicing debt and meeting basic social needs. It also includes establishing transparent, fair international rules for resolving debt crises that do not give disproportionate power to creditors. These movements therefore call for immediate debt cancelation and safeguards against future unjust lending.

14

Alongside this, reparations frameworks emphasize restructuring international governance, arguing that institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO entrench colonial hierarchies.⁴ Key demands include democratizing decision-making, shifting global tax and trade governance to more representative UN bodies, and expanding Global South leadership in climate and development policymaking.

* **Data colonialism** describes how corporations and governments extract and control data from individuals and communities—especially in the Global South—in ways that echo older patterns of colonial resource extraction. It highlights how data is taken without real consent, processed elsewhere, and used to generate profit and power that rarely benefit the people who produced it.⁶

Reparations also place ecological debt in the foreground, asserting that high-income countries owe compensation for environmental destruction and carbon emissions that disproportionately burden the Global South. Proposed measures include grant-based climate finance, loss-and-damage funding, equitable technology transfer, ecological restoration and land restitution that strengthens Indigenous sovereignty. Linked to this is a strong focus on tax justice, including a UN global tax convention, which would create fair, transparent international tax rules instead of allowing wealthy countries and corporations to design them. This involves tackling issues such as:

- the recovery of illicit financial flows, meaning stopping money that is illegally taken out of countries—through corruption, illegal mining, tax evasion or criminal networks—from disappearing into offshore accounts;
- the regulation of corporate profit shifting, which refers to multinational companies hiding or moving profits to tax havens to avoid paying taxes where their economic activity actually takes place and
- establishing reparative taxation and supply chain justice to ensure that more of the value created in Global South communities stays there rather than flowing to multinational corporations or northern financial centers.⁵

15

Beyond structural reforms, reparations frameworks stress cultural and knowledge reparations, including returning stolen artifacts, revitalizing Indigenous and Afro-descendant languages and knowledge systems, and ending biopiracy and data colonialism.* They also call for land reparations, agrarian reform and protection from contemporary land grabs; corporate accountability for extractive and colonial harms

and justice for displacement and border violence, including protections for climate-displaced people and demilitarized borders.

Taken together, these demands provide a transformative agenda for economic justice, ecological repair and the redistribution of power—the very elements that a decolonial post-growth agenda should entail.

WHERE POST-GROWTH IS FALLING SHORT

Despite its valuable critique of ecological inequalities and neo-colonial patterns of extraction, the post-growth debate often falls short when it comes to outlining how an alternative economic model would confront and redress global injustices. The central unresolved challenge is clear:

How can post-growth be implemented in a way that dismantles, rather than reproduces, global inequalities—and that directly addresses centuries of colonial, ecological and financial debt owed by industrialized nations?

16 Too often, post-growth is framed narrowly as a call for “living well with less” in high-income countries, without integrating the political and reparative actions needed to transform the global systems that continue to externalize harm to the South. In this formulation, the moral high ground becomes an inward-looking localism that focuses on reducing Northern footprints while overlooking the structural power relations—supply chain injustices, unequal trade terms, debt regimes, extractive corporate practices, and border violence—that shape the material conditions of life across the world. While the impulse toward humility is understandable after decades of paternalistic Northern interventions, it can slide into what critics describe as an “ostrich syndrome,” where withdrawal from international responsibility is mistaken for solidarity.⁷





This inward turn is particularly risky because it can allow post-growth agendas to sidestep reparations demands emerging from the Global South: debt cancelation, trade and monetary reform, corporate accountability, land and resource sovereignty, climate finance and loss-and-damage commitments, mobility justice, and the return of cultural and ecological wealth taken over the course of history. As Fanon reminded us, the prosperity of industrialized nations is inseparable from the extraction that enriched them:

“THE WEALTH OF THE IMPERIALIST NATIONS IS ALSO OUR WEALTH.”⁸

Without explicitly engaging with global dependencies and the need for material repair, post-growth risks leaving the very hierarchy it seeks to undo untouched. In this sense, a post-growth transition that is not anchored in internationalism and reparative justice could become yet another mechanism for “kicking away the ladder”⁹—stabilizing affluence in the North while leaving the South to navigate the consequences of a system it did not shape but has long borne the costs of.

17

Taking inspiration from what Adom Getachew calls a form of “world-making after colonization”, we can begin to outline a proposal for “world-making after growth” that builds on existing post-growth policy ideas while centering reparations demands.

This proposal highlights how post-growth can advocate for a social-ecological transformation in the Global North while forging alliances with movements and communities in the Global South, and why it requires post-growth debates to develop an explicit engagement with global justice.

While a comprehensive answer to sketching a world beyond growth requires deeper exploration,¹⁰ here we can begin to outline a preliminary vision of such a policy agenda across six key categories—each designed to ensure that post-growth is not merely a Northern experiment in austerity, but a project rooted in international solidarity and reparative justice. In addition, the table highlights existing reparations demands that correspond to each of these categories and identifies possible alliances for addressing these demands.

SLOWING THE PROCESS OF ACCUMULATION IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

Goals:

- Reduce excessive production and consumption in the Global North
- Build taxation and welfare systems independent of economic growth
- Phase out of fossil fuels and other carbon-intensive sectors

Means (examples):

- Resource and energy caps (limits on total extraction and use)
- Decommodification of basic services (health, housing, mobility, energy, care)
- Abolition of environmentally harmful subsidies
- Reduction of working hours
- Moratoria on neocolonial “green” extractivism
- Protection of (Indigenous) land rights and land reform

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Structural Reform Demands

Groups working on it

War on Want; Transnational Institute (TNI); Climate Justice Alliance; Global Justice Now; Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

**Reparations and
Post-Growth:
WORLD-MAKING AFTER
GROWTH**

(ECOLOGICAL) REPARATIONS

Goals:

- Stop further injustices and ensure accountability and repair
- Address historical wrongs and redistribute resources and power
- Lay foundation for longterm healing between the Global South and North

Means (examples):

- Debt cancellation
- Unconditional cash transfer weighted by historical disadvantage
- Fair-share climate adaptation finance and Loss & Damage funding
- Technology transfer (including open licensing and patent reform)
- Knowledge commons (shared, public access to scientific, technological and cultural knowledge)
- Land restitution and reform

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Ecological Debt Repayment
- Loss and Damage demands
- Ecological Restoration Fund
- Community Led Restoration and Stewardship

Groups working on it

Jubilee Debt Campaign; Debt Justice UK; Third World Network (TWN); Climate Action Network South; Heinrich Böll Foundation; UNFCCC Loss & Damage networks; Rights and Resources Initiative; Landless Workers' Movement (MST); Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature; ICCA Consortium

TRANSFORMATION OF EXTRACTION

Goal:

- End extractivism from the Global South and reduce material throughput globally
- Ensure communities control decisions about their land and resources

Means (examples):

- Local ownership and democratic participation decisions on extraction
- Supply chain justice (ensuring fair prices, transparency and labor rights)
- Communityled monitoring; free, prior and informed consent
- Strong protections against land grabbing and corporate abuse

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Corporate Accountability for Ecological Destruction
- Compensation for resource extraction and toxic impacts

Groups working on it

Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN); Amazon Watch; Friends of the Earth International; Oilwatch; La Via Campesina; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre; Mining Watch Canada; Amazon Mining Watch; Earth Rights International; OECD Watch

TRANSFORMATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Goal:

- Establish a fair and sustainable global trade system that respects ecological limits through delinking
- Expand policy space for the Global South

Means (examples):

- Reversing terms of trade; price stabilization mechanisms
- Preferential trade agreements for Global South producers
- Just transition support in exporting countries
- Limiting energy-intensive trade; transforming shipping and aviation
- Deglobalization where necessary; relocalization where beneficial

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Trade justice as reparations

Groups working on it

Trade Justice Movement; Our World Is Not For Sale; Third World Network; South Centre

TRANSFORMATION OF INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Goal:

- Create a sustainable and fair international financial system
- Reduce dependency on volatile capital flows and creditor-dominated institutions

Means (examples):

- International currency (Bancor), democratically managed
- Social-ecological tax reform: ending tax havens, introducing global social-ecological taxes
- Capital controls (preventing speculative, destabilizing financial flows)
- Expanded Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)
- Democratic reforms of IMF/World Bank governance

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Democratic restructuring of IMF/World Bank
- Transformation of global financial architecture
- Special Drawing Rights

Groups working on it

Bridgetown Initiative' International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Global Alliance for Tax Justice; Africans Rising; Afrodad; Eurodad; Bretton Woods Project; Society for International Development; Debt for Climate

REPRIORITIZATION IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Goals:

Build global democratic institutions capable of ecological and reparative governance
Refocus on Indigenous rights, land rights, and Rights of Nature

Means (examples):

- Strengthening global democratic institutions
- Recognition and implementation of the Rights of Nature
- “Open localization”: relocalizing economies while expanding global solidarity
- Safe mobility pathways and protections for displaced people
- Prioritizing Indigenous land rights and self-determination
- Decolonising conservation practices and restoring community stewardship; global democratic institutions/Rights of Nature: open localization, freeing up mobility of people across borders, safe passages for relocation of people and communities,
- Prioritizing Indigenous Land Rights, Decolonizing conservation

Parallel Reparation Demands

- Migrants and displacement reparations
- Land rights for Indigenous people;
- restructuring of international bodies

Groups working on it

Migrant Rights Network; PICISOC; Amnesty International migration teams; CARICOM Reparations Commission; UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; Survival International; Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature; Pan African Parliament; African Union; Global South Coalition of States at the UN

Reparations and Post-Growth:

WORLD-MAKING AFTER GROWTH

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: THE WAY FORWARD

Building on this framing, a post-growth agenda for “world-making after growth” can start by recognizing that reducing the Global North’s material footprint is only one part of a broader transformation.

22 For a global justice-oriented transition, policies aimed at **SLOWING NORTHERN ACCUMULATION**—resource and energy caps (limits on total resource use), moratoria on neocolonial green extractivism (halting mining and land grabs justified in the name of the green transition), fossil fuel phase-outs and work-time reductions—need to be paired with additional sets of policies. On their own, they risk reproducing global inequalities if they do not also consider the potential impact that this can have on the countries embedded in the supply chain of the world economy. At the same time, the table highlights potential areas of cross-pollination with existing structural reform demands and allied organizations. Some of these movements are already articulating the global justice implications of Northern extraction and therefore can provide a climate justice grounding to the self-limiting policy demands in the North.





Efforts to reverse the Global North's externalization of harm need to be paired with **MATERIAL REDRESS** such as debt cancellation, unconditional cash transfers weighted by historical disadvantage, fair-share climate adaptation finance (payments aligned with responsibility and capacity), and technology transfer (sharing low-carbon and climate-adaptation technologies without restrictive patents)¹¹ These initiatives could enable resource flows to the Global South while acknowledging the social, ecological and often non-visible economic debt accumulated through centuries of exploitation. Jubilee Debt Campaign and Rights & Resources Initiative to Loss & Damage alliances and Landless Workers' Movement. These actors are organizing and offering concrete pathways towards just solutions.

23



A just post-growth orientation also demands a **RETHINKING OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE**. Reducing energy-intensive shipping and aviation, restructuring global supply chains, and enabling Southern policy space (the ability of countries to set industrial, trade and social policies without external constraints) are not merely technocratic shifts but forms of justice-oriented realignment.¹² Trade justice movements—Our World Is Not For Sale, South Centre, the Trade Justice Movement— frame these interventions as part of broader reparations struggles. The table highlights the opportunity that post-growth proposals for rebalancing trade must intersect with and reinforce existing campaigns seeking fairer and more equitable global economic relations.

Similarly, transforming extraction requires more than limiting material throughput; it demands **RETHINKING WHO CONTROLS MINERAL REGIMES** (the rules governing extraction rights, licensing and revenue distribution), how decisions are made, and who benefits.¹³ Indigenous and frontline organizations such as Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), Amazon Watch, La Vía Campesina (the global peasant movement), and Mining Watch have long advanced reparative frameworks that confront ecological destruction, land dispossession and corporate abuse. They have worked to raise communities' voices and center Indigenous Rights in their work. This demonstrates that the post-growth approaches to extraction do not begin from scratch. Rather, they draw on a long history of resistance, community stewardship and demands for land rights.

TRANSFORMING THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCIAL SYSTEM is another essential dimension of world-making after growth. Monetary reforms, expanded Special Drawing Rights (SDRs—a global reserve asset issued by the IMF), capital controls (limits on speculative or destabilizing financial flows across countries), and global social-ecological taxes are most effective when paired with the reparations-oriented work already led by groups such as Afrodad, Eurodad, the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, and the Bridgetown Initiative.¹⁴ These actors show that the infrastructure for monetary and financial transformation already exists—post-growth debates simply need to acknowledge and collaborate with



them.

Finally, a decolonial reorientation of global governance and the global commons requires institutions capable of centering epistemologies of the South, upholding the Rights of Nature, restoring atmospheric space to the Global South (the fair share of the remaining carbon budget), and securing both the right to stay and the right to move.¹⁵ Radical municipal networks, Indigenous governance structures, and translocal grassroots coalitions both in the Global North and Global South are already practicing these forms of democratic world-making. Their inclusion in the table demonstrates that the alliances necessary for reparations-based governance transformations are already active, offering concrete entry points for post-growth to deepen its global justice commitments. Across all six domains, the table shows two things:

- how post-growth needs to include policies to advance the global justice agenda; and
- the real work that is already taking place and allies that post-growth needs to support.

25

Post-growth must actively recognize, support and politically align with reparations demands and movements already working globally.

World-making after growth will become possible not through isolated Northern policy innovation,

but through active ally building and supporting the longstanding struggles for justice.



NO POST-GROWTH WITHOUT REPARATIONS

Post-growth without reparations risks repeating the injustices it seeks to overcome.

A just transition demands confronting colonial legacies, redistributing power and resources, and supporting the movements already leading the way.

If the Global North is serious about transformation, it must pair self-limitation with material repair and international solidarity.

The path beyond growth is not a retreat from the world, but a commitment to rebuilding it on fair and democratic terms.



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ORGANISE REPAIR TRANSFORM

An essential element of climate reparations is the guarantee of non-repetition: ensuring that the structural drivers of harm cannot continue. In the context of climate justice, “repetition” is driven by the ongoing reproduction of inequalities through a global economic system that relies on the extraction of resources, labor and ecological value from and the externalization of costs onto countries in the Global South. Taking the guarantee of non-repetition seriously therefore requires confronting the economic and political order that produces these harms. It implies dismantling the growth-oriented, extractivist model that underpins the current global economy and enables the continuous exploitation of people and environments. To meet this challenge, we argue that post-growth perspectives must be integrated with decolonial approaches. Together, they offer a framework—world-making after growth—capable of both limiting ecologically destructive expansion and transforming the colonial power relations embedded in today’s world economy.

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