

A to Z of Green Capitalism

Corporate Watch

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Contents

Alternative Economics	13
Anthropocene	15
Anthropocentrism	16
Appropriate Technology	17
Buen Vivir	19
offsetting, nhouse ust ple merica). all impact <i>ading</i>). But in mes are extremely	20
Carbon Trading	21
Commodification of Nature	22
Commons	23
Deep Ecology/Deep Green Environmentalism	25
De-growth	26
Ecology	27
Eco-modernism	28
Economic Growth	29
Ecosocialism	30
Ecosystems	31
Ecosystem services	32
Energy democracy	33
Energy Justice	34

Environmental Ethics	35
Environmental Justice	36
Externality	37
Extractivism	38
Food sovereignty	39

A-Z of Green Capitalism

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Corporate Watch

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About Corporate Watch

Corporate Watch is a not-for-profit co-operative providing critical information on the social and environmental impacts of corporations and capitalism. Since 1996, Corporate Watch's research, journalism, analysis and training has supported people affected by corporations and those taking action for radical social change.

Corporate Watch is run non-hierarchically as a workers' co-op. To maintain our independence we do not accept funding from corporations or the state.

We aim to bring our work to as wide an audience as possible and make sure all our published materials are available online free of charge. We believe in the democratisation of research and run 'DIY' trainings so that more people are able to investigate corporations effectively.

See our website for our areas of work, principles and values, and how to support us:

www.corporatewatch.org

InTroDuCTIon

Why an A-Z of Green Capitalism?

This guide is intended as an introduction to the ideas surrounding green capitalism as well as the alternatives to it. We hope that attempts also hope it will it a s at. ally exploitative of both dominates societies idespread belief that es' means that people n by green capitalism, it will be a tool to understand this relatively new manifestation of capitalis to incorporate nature. We support attempts to resist and create space for real ecological alternatives.

We chose to write guide to green capitalism a we see it as a serious thre Capitalism is fundament people and nature, yet it around the world. The w 'there are no alternativ can gradually be taken i adopting its values and ways of behaving, often without realising it.

As the ideas behind green capitalism spread they become much harder to challenge, and so we hope that this guide will support attempts at stopping them taking hold. Every day people struggle against green capitalism and for ecological, free and equal societies all over the world. It is those people and struggles that we aim to support.

We tried to make this guide approachable and easily understandable, yet accurate and not over-simplified. We hope that it will be useful for those new to the ideas and people already familiar with the area. We should also add that some of the issues involved, especially the more philosophical ones, can get pretty complicated, and the guide is only intended as an introduction.

WhAT IS Green CAPITALISM?

Answering this question involves considering several further questions which this A-Z explores. What does it mean to be green? How does capitalism operate? When, why and how did green capitalism emerge? We will examine these issues in this introduction, as well as in the definitions that make up the rest of the A-Z.

Green capitalism is a development of capitalism, formally and explicitly attempting to incorporate nature with specific new policies and practices. It is made up of a wide range of institutions (governments, corporations, think tanks, charities, NGOs, international financial institutions etc). implementing processes to enforce market mechanisms on nature. Few of them use the term green capitalism to describe what they are doing, but we — and many others — feel it is the best way to describe it.

Capitalism thrives on crisis, and the multiple current global environmental crises, including climate change and habitat and biodiversity loss, are creating new markets from which to generate profit. Those promoting green capitalism argue that if nature was valued correctly it will not only be protected, but even enhanced, along with the health of the economy and well-being in society.

They say that through pricing the assets, goods and services provided by the environment, the ‘invisible hand’ of the market can then measure, trade and minimise environmental degradation.

But this ignores the fact that once you put a price on something to protect it you open the door to someone willing and able to pay the price to destroy it.

Green capitalism is also a decoy.

It is an attempt to make capitalism appear socially and environmentally responsible when it is not.

With ample worldwide agreement on the need to tackle climate change and confront environmental problems, capitalism needs to reinvent itself to appear concerned with these problems and with finding the best solutions for them.

Green capitalism functions as a way to deflect questions over the role of capitalism in creating the problems in the first place, or its capacity to deal with them. It takes the same capitalist ideas and values that create environmental crises — i.e. continual economic growth, private property, profit and ‘free’ markets — and applies them to the natural world as a way to solve those crises. It serves to maintain capitalism’s dominance, both through finding new ways to generate profit, and as a way of protecting it from ecological critique.

While it is an evolving concept and doesn’t have a fixed definition, in the next section we go into a little more detail of what we believe are the key features of green capitalism and why they are a problem.

Key FeATureS oF Green CAPITALISM

Disarming ecological resistance

The existence of what we call green capitalism is partly a response to social movements forcing capitalism to acknowledge ecological issues. Ecological crises around the world engendered resistance and, as grassroots green movements were getting more organised and popular, capitalism had to present itself as the solution to ecological crises in order to take power away from movements. The concepts behind green capitalism started to be developed in the late 1980s and were brought into the mainstream

through a collaboration between some environmental organisations and corporations. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro was attended by around 180 governments, as well as business groups, NGOs and the media. Many see this as the moment when green capitalist ideas started to take hold.

Co-opting ecology

One of the main criticisms of capitalism is the destructive effect it has on the environment. In the last few decades, the idea of green capitalism has been used to argue that, far from harming the environment, capitalism can actually solve our environmental problems. In this way it is an attempt to take a powerful critique of capitalism and turn it on its head to provide an ideological justification for its continuation. It strengthens the idea that ‘there is no alternative’ and blocks other ways of organising society from being considered or realised.

The time-sensitive nature of the climate and other ecological crises can also encourage green capitalist approaches. Because solutions are needed quickly, or rapid changes to ways of living are required, people can be less willing to entertain the possibility of larger, systemic changes and instead be enticed by the promises of false green capitalist solutions such as geoengineering. This does nothing to address the crises but certainly strengthens capitalist values and ways of thinking.

Inequality, injustice and the Global South

The commodification of nature is central to green capitalism. It means that people’s access to and capacity to benefit from it depend on their ability to pay, which inevitably exacerbates environmental inequality, especially along lines of class, race and gender. Those who can afford to pay the extra cost of environmentally friendly products can claim they are absolving themselves of responsibility, whereas those who cannot afford it are increasingly demonised as being part of the problem.

People in the Global South who depend on nature in survival/subsistence economies are often immediately exposed to green capitalism’s most destructive manifestations, such as deforestation in their communities. Killing people by destroying nature is a form of violent oppression common to many green capitalist projects and familiar to many in the Global South. On the other hand, wealthy people in the Global North are often distanced from impacts and either ignorant or dismissive of those who are affected.

Dissecting nature

Another issue is that in order to commodify nature it needs to be separated into individual interchangeable, tradable parts. But ecosystems are based upon inter-dependent components that function as a whole, and have all sorts of complicated dynamics between their elements. For a simple example to illustrate this complexity and inter-dependency, consider the unexpected effects that resulted from the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone Park, a nature reserve in the United States.

The reserve had become over-populated with deer and severely damaged from over-grazing. After the reintroduction of wolves, deer numbers were not only reduced, but more importantly deer avoided certain areas where the wolves could easily hunt them. This allowed tree and other plant re-growth, which in turn attracted insects, birds and beavers.

The beavers built dams, which provided habitats for new aquatic life in the rivers. Tree and plant re-growth also affected the rivers themselves, stabilising their banks, changing their flows, stopping soil erosion and creating more habitats for other forms of life.

In a short period of time, the reintroduction of a small number of predators positively affected a large ecosystem all the way down to its physical geography.

If ecosystems are divided into their constituent components, as is required by green capitalism, they cease to function or even exist. Some people argue that even the idea of an ecosystem is too simplistic to model natural processes. We are barely able to conceive of the complexity of interactions that exist within and between lifeforms and their natural environment, so the idea that we understand them well enough to put a financial value on them is ludicrous. But it's partly the issue of putting a price on things at all that is the problem.

Different kinds of values

Those that support green capitalism argue that putting a price on nature will prevent it from being exploited, but part of the problem with this kind of approach is that it is trying to place a certain kind of value (monetary) on something which has entirely different kinds of value (intrinsic, spiritual or existential). The value of a mountain range, an underground river system or a species of worm cannot be quantified entirely in financial terms when so much of their importance is subjective and dependent on their environment and context.

In practice, trying to translate the value of nature, or certain aspects of it, into money will mean that things are able to be bought and sold rather than protected.

We are entirely dependent on the natural world for our survival and well-being. Applying such values to it threatens the very things that green capitalism ostensibly claims to protect. Assuming that one value system can apply to something as complex, diverse, and perhaps even indefinable, as nature is a serious mistake.

Nature includes all lifeforms, including other sentient beings. These other forms of life don't exist just for the purpose of serving human needs. Nature has its own inherent value that cannot be expressed in financial or economic terms. All of this is ignored or even denied by the anthropocentric (human-centred) approach that capitalism and other exploitative systems are built on.

Anthropocentrism is deeply embedded in modern western culture, but if we are to find ways of existing in harmony with the non-human natural world then we need to completely re-think (and perhaps to some extent re-learn) the ways in which people relate to nature.

Keeping capitalism alive

Looking at the issue from a slightly different perspective, green capitalism can be understood as a stage in the evolution of capitalism — or even perhaps a necessary step for its continuation.

For capitalism to survive, money must be made, economies must grow and new sources of profit are continually required as others are exhausted. This, and the need and ability to constantly re-invent itself, has always been part of capitalism. In this sense, green capitalism is a way of allowing capitalism to continue functioning. New ways of making money are created by turning ever more aspects of the natural world into commodities to be bought and sold. Seen this way green capitalism is an evolution within capitalism, providing a route for it to expand into new areas in order to continue generating profit.

The powerful stay powerful

This relates to another issue that is too often ignored, that of power. Capitalism is used by those with wealth and power to maintain it. Green capitalism is a way of holding on to and strengthening this power. It is a way of reinforcing the same structures of power that created the global ecological crises we are currently facing. Instead of taking power away from the transnational corporations profiting from environmental destruction, it gives them more power, making it harder and harder to challenge them. The very institutions and systems that were responsible for past and current economic crises will now be entrusted with the protection of the environment on which all life depends.

Once nature is commodified and included within market systems, it will be at risk from the same kinds of high-stakes trading and speculation that created the US subprime bubble and the ensuing financial crisis.

Not only this, but green capitalism further embeds and gives greater power to the philosophical perspectives behind capitalism. It means that current dominant relationships with and conceptions of nature are further entrenched and the power they hold over our collective imaginations strengthened.

ALternATiveS And WAyS To ChALLenGe Green CAPITALISM

It is not the purpose of this guide to explain how we might go about stopping green capitalism but we have included some alternatives to green capitalist approaches in the A-Z, such as food sovereignty, indigenous knowledge, community-controlled renewable energy, alternative economics, buen vivir (living in harmony with nature and each other) and non-anthropocentric philosophies.

We hope that these give some insight into other ways of organising our economies and relating to nature. An important part of capitalism's power is its control of our imaginations, so imagining, discussing and creating alternatives to it is vital.

But it is just as important to directly oppose attempts to bring green capitalism into the world, and to link with other struggles against capitalism and other systems of oppression.

There are large, diverse, powerful, grassroots social and environmental justice movements all over the world constantly fighting against exploitation and ecological destruction. The fight against green capitalism is just part of this rich tapestry of resistance.

list of terms

A Agroecology 18

Alternative Economics 19
Anthropocene 20
Anthropocentrism 21
Appropriate Technology 22

B Biodiversity 23

Biodiversity Offsetting 24
Buen Vivir 24

C Capitalism 25

Carbon Offsetting 26
Carbon Trading 26
Commodification of Nature 27
Commons 27

D De-Coupling 28

Deep Ecology/Deep Green Environmentalism 29
De-growth 29

E Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism 30

Ecology 31
 Eco-modernism 31
 Economic Growth 32
 Ecosocialism 32
 Ecosystems 33
 Ecosystem services 33
 Energy democracy 34
 Energy Justice 34
 Environmental Ethics 35
 Environmental Justice 36
 Externality 37
F
 Food sovereignty
G
 Gaia Theory
 Global South and Social Movements
 Extractivism 37
 Green Economy 40
 Green-grabbing 41
 Green Growth 41
 Green Jobs 42
 ‘Green’ or ‘ethical’ consumerism 42
 Greenwash 43
I Indigenous Knowledge 43
 Industrial Agriculture 44
J
 Just Transition
L
 Liberalism
 Industrialism 44
 Luddism and neo-luddism 47
 M Marketisation 47
 Misanthropy 47
 N Natural capital 48
 Nature 48
 Neocolonialism 49
 Neoliberalism 49
O
 Offsetting
P
 Precautionary Principle
 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-Option 50

- Primitivism 52
- R Reformism 53
- Renewable energy 53
- S Sceptical Environmentalism 53
- Spiritual Ecology Movements 54
- Sustainable Development/Sustainability 54
- T Technocracy 55
- Technofixes 56
- Technology 56
- Techno-optimism/techno-progressivism 57
- W**
- Women, Gender, Feminism and the Environment
- Z**
- Zebra
- Transhumanism 58

A-Z of Green CAPITALISM

Agroecology

An ecological approach to agriculture that views agricultural areas as ecosystems and is concerned with the ecological impact of agricultural practices. The term is used to refer to a science, a movement or a practice.

Agroecological farming methods, such as diversifying farms and avoiding chemical inputs, strongly contrast with ss, rather mate industrial agriculture and can help to addre than contribute to, ecological crises like cli change or habitat loss (see *Industrial Agriculture* and *Industrialism*).

Unlike industrial agriculture, agroecological farming methods provide the basis for secure farm livelihoods, keep carbon in the ground, support biodiversity and rebuild soil fertility.

Evidence shows that agroecological methods can compete with industrial agricultural methods in terms of total outputs and are robust under environmental stress. Industrial food systems are constantly being challenged by new forms of co-operation and the development of nonmarket relationships.

Agroecology has been practised for millennia in diverse places around the world. Transnational social movements such as La Via Campesina (The International Peasant's Movement) are building and strengthening agroecology in order to move towards a just, sustainable and viable food and agriculture system.

Food sovereignty is central to agroecology practices (see *Food Sovereignty*).

Alternative Economics

There are many types of economies operating around the world, and many different ways of conceiving of economics. These alternatives show that ecology and economics do not have to be at odds, although some of them could operate within capitalism or could be types of greenwash depending on how they are implemented (see *Decoupling*, *Green Economy* and *Greenwash*). The slogan of the Chipko movement against deforestation in India is: ‘ecology as permanent economy’. Notable alternative economic approaches or systems include:

Circular: A circular economy aims to make flows of goods and services more efficient and eliminate waste. It is based on the principles of repair, reuse and remanufacture. The goal is to minimise energy use and look at the full life cycle of products. However, it can be used as a way of avoiding challenges to growth economics and the values it is based on. In some cases it is used by large corporations as greenwash, with the idea promoted without any serious attempt to introduce it.

Ecological: An approach to economics that recognises the problems with market-based activities and that human well-being is not determined by the amount of things produced, but needs things such as health, education, friends, family and nature. Externalities, such as pollution, are not considered when setting prices in market economics. As a result, profits are privatised while costs are socialised through passing them onto the community, to the natural environment or to future generations. In order to move towards genuine sustainability, ecological economics aims to address externalities without using market mechanisms (see *Externality*)

Environmental: An approach that tries to incorporate environmental impacts into the market and balance value from economic activity with loss of value from environmental degradation. Environmental economics has been instrumental in informing green capitalist policies across the world, for example creating carbon markets or ecosystem services (see

Carbon Trading and *Ecosystem Services*).

Participatory: A comprehensive model that describes how an economy can be organised as an alternative to capitalism and centrally planned socialism. A participatory economy entails social ownership of productive property, self-managed workplaces and neighbourhood councils that allow citizens to participate in decisions over consumption and local public goods (see *Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism*).

Survival/Subsistence: An approach that accepts and respects that many people, especially in the Global South, derive their livelihoods directly from nature through self-provisioning mechanisms, such as hunting and cultivation for food and using sur-

rounding trees and materials for building shelter. Growth-based economics destroys the survival economy by diverting natural resources from directly sustaining people to generating economic value (see *Global South* and *Social Movements*).

Anthropocene

The earth's history is divided into periods of time relating to significant events recorded in layers of rock. An epoch is the shortest of these periods, representing millions of years. The Anthropocene has been proposed as a new epoch (to replace the current Holocene) in recognition of the impact that humans have had on the Earth's geology and ecosystems ('anthropo' meaning 'human').

However, the term Anthropocene implies that the impacts on the environment are created by all humans rather than certain groups or sections of societies or specific political or economic systems, such as capitalism. This depoliticisation has seen the idea criticised, with detractors claiming that it erases histories of colonialism, industrialism and enclosure of the commons. Some have suggested that Capitalocene would be a more appropriate name (see *Capitalism* and *Commons*).

Anthropocentrism

The idea that humans are the most significant species on the planet and have higher value than all other life forms, or a view of reality through an exclusively human perspective. Anthropocentrism is often considered to be one of the root causes of the environmental problems created by humans.

It is, therefore, a major concept in environmental ethics and philosophy, with many interpretations (see ***Environmental Ethics***). Anthropocentrism leads to an exploitative relationship with nature, which is treated as a resource for humans to use rather than something with inherent value of its own.

Appropriate Technology

A term used by those who have a critical perspective of the current role of technology in society (see *Technology*). Technology is not neutral or ‘apolitical’ but is developed in ways which correspond to dominant social structures and power relations. sort ord

Whether or not a technology is ‘appropriate’ depends on whether the new choices and possible courses of action resulting from the realisation of the technology are desirable or not. In other words: what

<center> to create?

For example, does specifi w pro via tr intern assess across so of society does a particular technology require in er to develop, and what sort of society does it help the technology provide c opportunities for capitalism to expand into new areas or does it promote a more equal or just society? It is useful to think about whether current or new technologies fit ith preferred values. One posed way of doing this is ansparent and participatory ational technology ment, with full participation ciety and strict application of the precautionary principle (see

Precautionary Principle).

The term appropriate technology was originally developed in the context of ‘Third World’ development projects to ask whether new technologies being implemented were consistent with the cultural and social traditions of each society or whether they were destroying them.

A good example of whether a technology is appropriate or not is to compare and contrast nuclear power with community-controlled renewable energy (see *Renewable Energy* and *Technocracy*).

Nuclear power is suitable for control by state bureaucracies or corporations, due to its massive cost and risks, large scale, centralised production of electricity (fitting into existing grid distribution systems) and dependence on highly technical expertise. Its existence reinforces centralisation and makes local control and alternatives to national grids more difficult to implement. Nuclear power could be said to be appropriate to our current society, because it fits with existing dominant values. But it is inappropriate for a society based on the value of decentralisation.

On the other hand, community-controlled renewables projects increase local control and skills, as well as democracy. It is often argued that many types of technology can co-exist, but in fact some actively hinder the potential of others. The concept of appropriate technology is useful for thinking about future ecologically just societies.

Biodiversity

Biological diversity (usually shortened to biodiversity) refers to the variety of forms of life within and between species and ecosystems (see *Ecosystems*). Biodiversity is vitally important to the health of the planet and all species living on it. For example, when an animal or plant species exhibits larger genetic diversity it is better equipped to respond and adapt to changing conditions (this is known as genetic biodiversity). Ecological biodiversity describes the variety of ways that species interact with each other and their environment.

All species play a role in this and when there are a wide range of species, the environment is more resilient to external shocks and ecological crises. Human impacts are resulting in a massive loss of biodiversity on the planet, creating a global ecological crisis. Under green capitalism, biodiversity is made into a commodity that can be bought and sold (see

Biodiversity Offsetting).

Biodiversity Offsetting

The idea that the destruction of biodiversity in one area can be ‘offset’, or compensated with the protection or re-creation of biodiversity in another area (see *Offsetting*). It is a way of commodifying biodiversity and incorporating it within a capitalist economy (see *Commodification of Nature*). It is based on the false assumption that the value of biodiversity can be expressed in monetary terms and that it can be treated as interchangeable from place to place, rather than unique to a specific location. In practice it allows for the destruction of nature.

It also enables environmentally destructive companies to look like they are ‘doing good’ and provides opportunities for them to work with environmental NGOs and other groups (see *Greenwash* and *NonGovernmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-Option*). There are many examples of biodiversity offsetting around the world, and the companies involved often claim that there doesn’t need to be a conflict between their economic activities (such as coal or oil extraction) and environmental protection.

A good recent example is the mining company Rio Tinto’s so-called forest conservation project in Madagascar. The biodiversity offset project for the Rio Tinto QMM titanium ore mine has resulted in a net loss of biodiversity, the destruction of rare forest and local people being forced off their land and losing their livelihoods.

Buen Vivir

Buen vivir roughly translates to ‘good living’ or ‘living well’, but it does not have a single meaning and is an evolving concept. The term originates from social movements in Latin America, and is strongly linked with indigenous thinking and ways of life from the region (see *Indigenous Knowledge*). It generally refers to well-being in a holistic sense, not focusing on the individual but incorporating community, culture and the natural environment. One interpretation of it is living in harmony with nature and each other. Ideas like buen vivir can be seen as alternatives and challenges to capitalist value systems, particularly to their narrow focus on individual material standards of living.

Capitalism

A way of organising societies based on the principles of profit and private property, allowing those with power and wealth to gain more power and wealth. It has only been around for a few hundred years but now exists in one form or another all over the world.

Under capitalism, making money is more important than anything else, and people and the environment are often exploited in the interests of profit (see *Economic Growth* and *Green Economy*). Capitalism exists in many different forms, for example the aggressively market-driven neoliberalism compared to more state-centred approaches (see *Neoliberalism*).

It is constantly evolving and isn’t just an economic system. It includes social values and cultural practices that people act out in their daily lives, the identities they adopt and the roles they take on.

Consider how, often from childhood, people in capitalist societies learn to accept the rules of markets; gross inequalities of power and wealth; to place great value on the right to private property; and to see animals and the natural world as ‘objects’ to be bought and sold, owned or managed. In this way, people support the continuation of capitalism in the way they live their lives, often without realising it.

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Carbon Offsetting

The most common form of where activities that cause gree gas emissions (sometimes j called carbon or carbon emissions) are compensated for by other activities that supposedly reduce carbon emissions by the same amount.

The idea is that something which produces lots of emissions, such as taking a trip on a plane, is okay if you offset it by reducing emissions somewhere else (for exam planting trees in South A This is said to make the over ‘carbon neutral’ (see ***Carbon Tr*** practice carbon offsetting sche unreliable and in many cases lead to a net increase in emissions. Their main effect is to justify the continuation of activities which are harmful to the climate (see ***Green Economy*** and ***Offsetting***).

Carbon Trading

Making carbon emissions into commodities so that permissions to pollute can be bought and sold (see ***Marketisation***). Supporters say it is a way of using the market to reduce emissions efficiently. In reality it is used to avoid other limits on carbon emissions, such as taxing them or banning environmentally destructive activities, such as coal mining.

Attempts at implementing carbon markets have been catastrophic failures that have increased emissions and financially rewarded polluters.

The European Emissions Trading Scheme, for example, was intended as a flagship carbon trading market but ended up paying huge windfall payments to some of the worst polluters, mainly due to lobbying from industry (see ***Green Economy***).

Commodification of Nature

The assignment of economic value to something not previously considered in economic terms, i.e. something not bought or sold through the market. The commodification of nature comprises the ways in which things and processes in nature are made into objects of trade, exchangeable through the market. The commodification of nature is an extension of the enclosure of the commons, which enabled the rise of capitalism (see *Commons*). There are many undesirable and destructive consequences of the commodification of natural resources and processes. As capitalism expands, more and more aspects of the natural world become commodified

(see *Capitalism* and *Nature*).

Commons

Land or resources belonging to or affecting the whole of a community; from shared agricultural land to ‘creative commons’ such as open source software. Capitalism operates by enclosing commons for profit.

For example, in England during the 18th century small landholdings that families and small groups had the collective right to access and live off were enclosed to create one larger farm, the use of which became restricted to the owner.

This meant that the land ceased to be common land for communal use.

As a result great numbers of people lost access to land to grow their food and became dependent on wage labour to feed themselves and pay rent.

This new landless working class provided the labour required in the new factories in the cities (see *Industrialism*).

Similar processes of enclosure are taking place today under neocolonialism, particularly indigenous land being taken from common ownership by governments and companies (see *Green-grabbing* and *Neocolonialism*).

De-Coupling

The idea that economic growth can be separated (de-coupled) from the use of physical resources and the associated environmental destruction (see *Economic Growth*). Historically, as economies have grown they have consumed more natural resources such as timber from forests, minerals from mines, or fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal.

This is why some environmentalists want to make economies that no longer grow, but stay at the same level of economic activity or reduce over time (see *De-growth*).

However, economic growth is fundamental to capitalism and a key idea behind green capitalism is that economies can continue to expand while reducing or even eliminating resource consumption and damage to the environment (see *Capitalism*).

The idea is that more of the economy can focus on activity that doesn’t directly use natural resources, such as entertainment, banking or media (sometimes called the service or tertiary sector).

However, even when economies move away from manufacturing industries they still consume natural resources, and sometimes the manufacturing and environmental damage just takes place in other economies in other parts of the world. Despite widespread enthusiasm for the idea among green capitalists, evidence of de-coupling is weak at best. Some argue that it will never be possible, others that it will only ever reduce

rather than eliminate resource consumption or that it can't happen fast enough to address current ecological crises (see *Alternative Economics*).

Deep Ecology/Deep Green Environmentalism

An environmental movement and philosophy that recognises the inherent value of all living beings and doesn't assign more value to some over others. This includes human life, which is considered as just one of many equally worthy components of the global ecosystem.

The word 'deep' can refer to how profound the questioning of issues is. Deep questioning means considering the fundamental root or systematic causes of problems rather than superficial change in the form of consumption-orientated, often short-term techno-fixes, such as recycling or electric cars (see *Techno-fixes*).

'Deep' can also refer to how much nature is valued in relation to people. Deep green environmentalists believe that environmental problems are an inherent part of industrialised civilisation and seek radical political change. Deep greens claim this is caused by the emphasis on economic growth, a tendency referred to as 'growth mania'.

The deep green position of environmentalism is associated with ideas of anti-consumerism, de-growth, ecoor bio-centrism and a relinquishment of technology to reduce humanity's impact on the biosphere (see *De-growth, Environmental Ethics* and *Technology*). One of the main criticisms of deep green environmentalism is that some advocates prioritise nature over issues of social justice, which can originate in contempt for humans (see *Misanthropy*). This can lead to deep greens proposing 'solutions' to the ecological crises which ignore social or political issues, such as imposed human population control. Among other problems, this seriously exacerbates gender oppression (see *Environmental Justice*).

De-growth

A response to the ecological and social problems created by economic growth and over-consumption. It argues that consumption can be reduced without reducing quality of life. It promotes societies and economies that are based on the well-being of all and the preservation of nature.

Through various conferences, events and networks, the de-growth movement discusses and proposes models of how to organise alternative non-growth based economies. There are a wide range of positions and ideas within the movement. Although sometimes described as being anti-capitalist, the de-growth movement is also sometimes criticised for not being explicitly anti-capitalist or political enough (see *Alternative Economics*).

Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism

A school of thought within anarchism that puts a particular emphasis on environmental issues. Anarchism is centred on the question of how to organise society without superiors, subordinates or coercion, basing it instead on voluntary cooperation, solidarity and real democracy. It values freedom and equality, and attempts to eliminate forms of coercive power and authority, such as the state or patriarchy.

There are a wide range of views of what anarchism is in theory and practice. One example of ecological anarchism is Social Ecology, which is committed to the construction of a ecological society through Communalism, based on face to face local assemblies and federations, in which power and property is held by people and communities, not elites. Green anarchism looks beyond human interactions and includes the interactions between human and non-human nature, aiming for animal and ecological liberation, as well as human liberation. Ecological anarchism is not just a theory, but a practice with many individuals and groups across the world enacting principles and ethics in line with this philosophy, though they may not use the term to describe themselves (see

Reformism and *Liberalism*).

Ecology

The study of organisms and their environment. It is also used to refer to environmental movements. Although the ideas behind ecology have been around for a long time, interest became much more widespread during the 1960s and 1970s with the birth of the modern environmental movement in the West.

The word ecology itself is much abused within green capitalism, with the prefix eco or eco-friendly being attached to products and services to give them the appearance of being environmentally friendly (see *‘Green’ or ‘ethical’ consumerism*).

Eco-modernism

Eco-modernists argue that, using technology, humans should separate from nature rather than depend upon and harmonise with it. They say this will reduce human's impact upon nature which can then be allowed to be 'wild'. Eco-modernists believe that industrial modernity (characterised by technological development, urbanisation and intensified agriculture) has benefited humans by liberating them from nature, creating liberal democracy, better standards of living and life expectancy and liberating women from patriarchal gender roles (see *Industrial Agriculture, Industrialism, Liberalism, Technocracy, Technology, Techno-optimism/ Techno-progressivism* and *Women, Gender, Feminism and the Environment*).

Eco-modernism is closely allied to techno-progressivism and to traditional conservationism, which prioritises protection of wilderness.

It is criticised for failing to understand that the philosophy of domination of nature, which shapes modern technologies, is a primary cause for environmental crises: it thus advocates as solutions the very things which produced the crises.

Secondly, it speaks consistently of 'human' impact upon nature, failing to include any understanding of social and political dynamics, or critique of the role of the capitalist system in environmental destruction.

By failing to take the side of those oppressed by capitalism this supposedly apolitical perspective actually takes the side of those who benefit from it (see *Capitalism* and *Sceptical Environmentalism*).

Economic Growth

The increase in the size of economies, meaning that over time more and more goods and services are produced. It is a fundamental aspect of capitalism, whereby in order to survive, economies need to continually grow, and generate profit to expand.

This means that economic growth is often prioritised at the cost of social and environmental well-being. The phrase ‘infinite growth is not possible on a finite planet’ is used as a way of explaining that there are natural limits to economic growth (see *Capitalism*, *De-Coupling* and *Green Growth*).

Ecosocialism

Ecosocialism combines the insights of ecology with socialist thought (especially Marxism) and action: advocating action that is both ecological and anti-capitalist.

Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organisation and action advocating that the economy should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.

Ecosocialism attempts to address the issue of class (the hierarchical division of society according to social or economic status) in tandem with ecology. Ecosocialism is opposed to forms of socialism that ignore environmental justice.

There is much debate and many positions within socialism and ecosocialism. Ecosocialism has similarities with other anti-capitalist green positions, such as ecological anarchism, but has been criticised as being too state-centric (see *Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism*).

Ecosystems

All the living things within a given area interacting with one another and their non-living environment as a system. For example, a river ecosystem includes physical factors such as the rate of flow, temperature and chemistry of the water, plus biological factors such as the types of fish, insects and microbes that live in it. All these things combine and interact to make the ecosystem. Although the idea is popular in environmentalism, there are also some criticisms that the idea originates from a ‘mechanical’ understanding of nature that lends itself to natural resource exploitation and an ecosystem services approach (see *Ecosystem Services*).

Ecosystem services

A way of describing ecosystems in terms of the ‘services’ they provide to humans. For example insects pollinate most of our crops so the ecosystem including the pollinating insects is described as providing a ‘service’.

Another example could be the water filtration ‘services’ provided by a forest ecosystem, or the disease prevention ‘services’ provided by frogs in lake and river ecosystems eating malarial mosquitoes.

Similarly to biodiversity offsetting, describing ecosystems as providing services means they can be made into commodities according to the benefits they offer to humans and incorporated into capitalist economies.

In the example of pollinating insects the ecosystem can be valued according to the financial benefit provided by crop pollination.

This is promoted as if it were a way of protecting ecosystems but in practice it results in greater environmental destruction (see *Biodiversity Offsetting, Commodification of Nature* and *Green Economy*).

Energy democracy

An approach to: ensure that everyone has access to enough energy; produce energy in a way that doesn't harm or endanger people or the environment; and address energy efficiency and attitudes to energy consumption.

Energy democracy involves environmentally beneficial changes to energy systems whilst strengthening democracy and public participation at the same time. Energy democracy is a political, economic, social and cultural concept that has been successful in grassroots movements, enabling them to combine resistance against fossil fuel exploitation with positive alternative agendas, such as decentralised energy transition projects like renewable energy cooperatives (see *Renewable Energy*).

Energy democracy can include different things on the ground — with some people participating in setting up community-owned power stations and others engaging in more autonomous co-operatives. Sometimes terms like 'energy democracy', 'energy justice' and 'environmental justice' can de-politicise environmental issues by not being explicit about the politics involved, particularly with regard to capitalism (see *Energy Justice* and *Environmental Justice*).

Energy Justice

Explicitly links social justice with access to energy. Projects that focus on energy justice aim to provide all individuals, across all areas, with safe, affordable and sustainable energy.

For example, those that campaign around fuel poverty try to highlight the injustice of cold homes by targeting energy companies and politicians, and taking action for warm, well insulated homes and clean, affordable community-controlled energy.

Many community renewable energy groups also work on energy justice by advising people on how to take action against fuel poverty in their own lives and more broadly. Energy democracy and energy justice overlap in many senses but whereas energy democracy focuses on the justice of how the energy is produced and owned, energy justice focuses on equal access to energy by all (see ***Energy Democracy***).

Environmental Ethics

A philosophical discipline that looks at the ethical relationship of humans to the environment and the value and ethical status of the environment and its non-human content. Environmental ethics emerged as a field of philosophy in the early 1970s, primarily challenging Western anthropocentrism (see *Anthropocentrism*). It examines questions such as: what is the value of an environment restored by humans (for example after mining has taken place in an area) compared with the original natural environment that was there before? Or: is it ethically wrong for humans to pollute or destroy parts of the natural environment, and if so, why?

Is it due to the instrumental (i.e. the means to further some other outcome, such as sustaining humans) or intrinsic (i.e. contains value in and of itself regardless of whether it is useful for something else) value of the natural environment? Environmental ethics uses concepts from ethics, such as instrumental and intrinsic value, to examine fundamental beliefs and values, such as anthropocentrism, in order to develop critical thinking and effective action in relation to the environment.

Of course there are numerous disagreements and strands within environmental ethics, but it can be a useful tool to understand the causes of and possible solutions to environmental issues. For example, consider the positions of biocentrism and ecocentrism.

Biocentrism is an ethical perspective that all life has equal ethical value: i.e. that the rights and needs of humans are not more important than those of other living things. Despite its non-anthropocentric view, biocentrism has been criticised as conflicting with environmentalism, because protecting individual lives may harm ecosystems, such as where there is a need to remove an invasive species to preserve the health of an ecosystem. Ecocentrism holds that ecological collections, like ecosystems and species, are the central objects of environmental concern.

It is more holistic than a biocentric position, because it argues that preserving ecosystems and species is environmentally more crucial than protecting the lives of individual elements of ecosystems or members of species. For example, culling members of an overpopulated herd or killing invasive non-native plants is justified.

Environmental Justice

The term is most commonly used to describe social movements focusing on environmental issues and their links to social justice. Environmental justice is a movement that grew from the recognition that the most disadvantaged communities in society are generally the ones to disproportionately suffer environmental burdens, such as exposure to pollution or toxicity. Environmental justice exposes this fact and aims to remedy it. The term has anti-racist origins: it was coined in the US with particular reference to the disproportionate exposure of communities of colour to pollution.

There is no one accepted approach to environmental justice and there are many contested elements. Environmental justice is defined in different ways depending on the political approach. The two most well-known and popular approaches to environmental justice are: 'justice as distribution' and 'justice as recognition of diversity and/or difference'. For those supporting 'justice as distribution', environmental justice will be achieved when there is an equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits, and fair and meaningful participation in environmental decision-making.

With 'justice as recognition of diversity and/or difference', environmental justice will be achieved when the diverse ways of understanding and experiencing what nature is are recognised so that they can not only flourish but have a direct influence on how we organise politically in a way that respects the environment. The latter is a direct criticism of the former as its defendants argue that 'environmental justice as distribution' does not address the reasons why environmental degradation happens in the first place, but it is only concerned with an equal distribution of its impacts (see *Global South and Social Movements*).

Externality

A term used in economics, to describe a cost (negative externality) or benefit (positive externality) that does not affect its creator. Externalities are considered to fall 'outside' markets, when the cost or benefit does not affect prices within the market where they were created. In the context of green capitalism, externalities are often used to refer to environmental costs that do not affect those that created them, for example when oil companies do not have to pay for the cost of the air pollution they create (see *Alternative Economics* and *Marketisation*).

Extractivism

An economic approach that bases economies on the extraction of natural resources, usually for export. It is a model that operates in many resource rich countries in the Global South. Although it is often defended by governments as a way of financing social programmes or ‘development’, in practice it usually serves as a form of neocolonialism, exacerbating inequalities of wealth within and between economies. Extractivism can apply to farming, forestry and fishing, not just mineral and fossil fuel extraction (see *Neocolonialism*).

Food sovereignty

The concept and practice of food sovereignty originates with social movements such as La Via Campesina — The International Peasant's Movement. Food sovereignty champions the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. It argues that the right to land must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology. It also argues for peoples' rights to define their own food and agricultural systems, putting those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies, rather than at the mercy of governments, markets and corporations (see *Agroecology*).

Gaia Theory

In Greek mythology, the goddess Gaia represents mother earth. The Gaia hypothesis or theory, proposed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis in the early 1970s, argues that organisms interact with their non-living surroundings to form a complex interacting system that helps to maintain and continue the climatic and biogeochemical conditions for life on the planet.

It proposes that life on earth can be understood as a 'single organism' and forms an important part of deep green environmentalism (see *Deep Ecology/Deep Green Environmentalism*). One definition of Gaia is: a series of interacting ecosystems that compose a single huge ecosystem at the Earth's surface. The hypothesis/theory has been defined and argued in numerous ways, and has as many critics as adherents. The Gaia theory is entirely biophysical and has no spiritual resonances. It has been influential on ecology movements and inspired The Gaia Foundation (see *Ecosystems*).

Global South and Social Movements

The Global North-South divide is a socio-economic and political divide. Global South is used to refer to countries that are 'less economically developed', mainly in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia and the Middle East. During the Cold War, the East (the Soviet Union and China) and the West (the United States and their allies) classifications were coined, with Third World for all the other countries.

'Third World' emerged more specifically from the UN bloc of nonaligned countries during the Cold War. Now, Global South corresponds largely with the old Third World, and the Global North corresponds with the old East and West.

The Global North has much more power, controlling four fifths of the income earned globally despite containing only about a quarter of the worlds population. The development of capitalism and green capitalism take on different characteristics all over the world. Development and aid interventions in the Global South aimed at the commercialisation of natural resources involve a shift in control from local communities to national and international financial institutions, as well a shift in how rights to resources are perceived.

Development projects often create conflicts over natural resources with tribal and peasant communities facing international institutions, with the state acting as an agent of dispossession. There is a long history of critical ecology movements in the global south, based on the right to survival, the need to protect nature and strengthen people's collective rights to common resources. Global South movements that resist development projects are challenging concepts of politics and economics as defined within the narrow confines of the market (see *Environmental Justice* and *Neocolonialism*).

Green Economy

The Green Economy is currently one of the most important manifestations and theories of green capitalism, using capitalist methods and institutions, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to attempt to 'green' the economy.

For example, the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit, a global conference on sustainable development to assess progress on agreements and discussions at the first Earth Summit 20 years before, promoted the green economy and pledged to pursue 'sustained growth', with a wide range of social movements arguing that it resulted in a new cycle of debt and structural adjustment dressed in green, with protests outside the summit met with police repression.

The main systemic concept of the green economy is The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), a global initiative aiming to mainstream ecosystem services into decision-making at all levels. Policies such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) are promoted as solutions. REDD+ aimed to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering economic incentives for Global South countries to reduce emissions from forested lands, whilst not addressing the underlying causes of deforestation. It opens forests up to be tradable commodities, including futures markets (see *Alternative Economics*).

The Green Economy project will ultimately fail because its strategies will not be able to outweigh the social and ecological contradictions of capitalism (see *Capitalism, Greenwash* and *'Green' or 'ethical' consumerism*). The social dimension of addressing ecological issues is reduced to growth, green jobs and poverty reduction, rather than environmental justice (see *Environmental Justice*).

It contributes further to capitalist development in a similar way to sustainable development strategies from the early 1990s (see *Sustainable Development/Sustainability*). The Green Economy is based on technofixes that reinforce centralised,

corporate forms of energy production (see *Technofixes* and *Technology*). It is selective and socially exclusive.

It may be successful in establishing more green elements in the economy, such as electric mobility and renewable energy, but if they are based on continuous growth they will reinforce capitalism. The most recent version of the green economy is called the ‘Inclusive Green Economy’ and is supposed to address some of these issues, but it still reinforces corporate control and privatisation and does not address issues of power and equality in society.

Green-grabbing

Similar to ‘land grabbing’, green grabbing involves people being forced from their land and livelihoods, but in this case for the specific purpose of ‘green’ projects. These can be conservation projects, monoculture plantations, biodiversity offsets, solar farms, mega-dams or even if the people living there aren’t considered to be living sustainably. The idea highlights the often over-looked social consequences of so called green solutions (see *Global South and Social Movements* and *Neocolonialism*).

Green Growth

A version of the concept of economic growth that does not harm the environment. Green growth is a central principle behind green capitalism as it allows for the continuation of economic growth, a fundamental requirement of capitalism, while at the same time claiming to address environmental issues.

Supporters argue that the current growth-based economies can continue while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, minimising waste and inefficient use of natural resources, and maintaining biodiversity. But while it’s possible to achieve some reductions in environmental harm caused by economic growth, it is not possible to have a truly sustainable capitalist economy or green growth (see *Alternative Economics, De-growth* and *Decoupling*).

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Green Jobs

Often promoted by campaign as a way of finding new source of employment that are benefit to the environment at the same time as ‘greening’ the economy. However, some say campaign for ‘green jobs’ stays within current growth-based economics and so will ultimately fail to address environmental issues.

Some go further and say that we need to re-think the whole concept of work and the role it plays in society as part of moving to ecological and socially just ways of living, and that campaigning around job creation can prevent this. (see *Green Economy* and *Environmental Justice*)

‘Green’ or ‘ethical’ consumerism

Where ‘consumers’ buy products that are claimed not to harm the natural environment. ‘Green’ or ‘ethical’ consumerism often creates niche markets of expensive ‘green’ products (thereby providing new areas for capitalist expansion), rather than opposing environmental destruction or questioning the capitalist model of over-consumption. ‘Ethical’ consumerism makes campaigning and struggling against capitalism less likely to succeed if people feel that it is enough to buy ‘green’ products to protect the environment.

This reinforces individualism and inequality and leaves unquestioned the damaging political and ethical values and systems along which capitalist societies are organised. Some forms of ‘ethical’ consumerism may be beneficial; for instance, collective purchasing from food coops fosters a sense of community and makes products more affordable to more people, as well as offering support to alternative models of economics within capitalism. But this can never be a substitute for collective action for change (see *Green Economy* and *Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-option*).

Greenwash

Making something that is environmentally destructive appear ‘green’. For example when a company uses natural imagery to sell products that are actually harmful to the environment. BP changing to its ‘sunflower’ logo is a classic example of this, trying to make the company appear green while continuing to be one of the most environmentally destructive organisations on the planet. Other examples include advertising cars with marginally fewer emissions as being environmentally friendly, or promoting the idea of ‘clean coal’ and ‘carbon neutral’ flights (see *Green Economy*).

Indigenous Knowledge

Many indigenous populations have been living in harmony with the environment for millennia. They possess vast amounts of ecological knowledge and are well equipped to ensure the balance and sustainability of that environment.

It is important not to essentialise complex indigenous cultures and practices as somehow pure, or to make generalisations about all indigenous peoples — there is a vast amount of diversity within and between indigenous groups.

However, some indigenous knowledge and practices around conservation are undoubtedly valuable, such as methods that ensure that resource use does not diminish the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.

Industrial Agriculture

The development of industrial agriculture more or less coincides with the industrial revolution (roughly 1760 to 1840) in Britain, the US and Western Europe.

It was already well advanced by the 1920s, was common practice at the start of the second world war and its imposition on the Global South through the Green Revolution started in the 1950s. Industrial agriculture is energy-intensive, fossil fuel-based and mechanised. It is characterised by centralised, large-scale monocultures (large areas of land cultivated with a single crop) and widespread use of pesticides, chemical fertilisers and antibiotics. It leads to problems such as high greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, livelihood insecurities for small-scale farmers and widespread degradation of land, water and ecosystems.

The Green Revolution was a significant development in industrial agriculture, with petrochemical companies introducing new methods of intense chemical farming. It forced traditional small-scale farmers to abandon their land and join the masses of the urban unemployed, leading to the situation we have now where fewer farmers — mostly large corporate farmers — own more land, and over time gain even more power and control. Industrial agriculture is unsustainable, partly because the Green Revolution was launched under the assumptions that the climate would stay stable and there would be always be abundant water and cheap energy from fossil fuels. (see *Agroecology* and *Industrialism*)

Industrialism

A way of organising societies and economies based largely on mechanised industry rather than subsistence or traditional agriculture, craftsmanship, or commerce (see *Industrial Agriculture*). It developed in the late 18th century in England and involved the centralisation of production in factories, the division of labour, mechanisation and the use of fossil fuel energy.

It is based upon abstract scientific and technological knowledge and skills, and creates cheap goods that undercut handmade goods, thus creating dependency on and markets for its own goods. Industrialism doesn't recognise natural scales and limits.

Alternatives to industrialism involve decentralisation, and; widespread practical knowledge and tools developed and maintained by a community of users. Some movements and political positions (such as primitivism, green anarchism and neo-luddism) see industrialism as a primary source of contemporary environmental problems. (see *Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism*, *Luddism and Neo-Luddism*, *Primitivism* and *Technocracy*).

Just Transition

Gradually changing to environmentally sustainable economies in a way that is socially just (fair), particularly regarding sources of employment. For example, many people currently work in the fossil fuels industry and a just transition would include supporting these workers so they are not negatively affected by society moving to other, renewable forms of energy. The idea is particularly popular among environmentalists

in the trade union movement and is influenced by the fact that previous significant shifts in economic production have left substantial numbers of people unable to support themselves. For example, the rapid shift away from industrialism in the UK left huge numbers of people without livelihoods and in poverty. Those supporting a just transition often also campaign for the promotion of green jobs (see *Green Jobs*).

Liberalism

Liberalism, is a central political and economic ideology in contemporary Western capitalist societies. Liberalism is complex to define as there have been many competing definitions since it was developed in the UK around the 17th Century. However, there are a series of values that most forms of liberalism defend: individual freedom and rights, formal social equality, private property rights, representative democracy, the existence of some form of state and toleration of different viewpoints and cultures.

Some problems with liberalism include: restricting the direct political participation of citizens; prioritising private property rights (the accumulation of which derives from exploitation and inequality); conceptualising the state as a neutral and necessary body; inadequately addressing power and inequality in society; and advocating individual rights over collective 'rights', such as that to a safe environment.

The tactics of 'green liberals' can go hand-in-hand with green capitalism with advocates directly or indirectly supporting the structures that allow capitalism to continue with business as usual, but with slightly greener appearance and some tacit compromises. Many liberals oppose neoliberalism and support more government intervention (see *Neoliberalism*). Green liberals, such as large non-governmental environmental organisations, tend to favour working with states and corporations to try to achieve small changes rather than focusing their energy on deeper, structural problems. Green capitalism is strengthened by these alliances as they help it look like it is acting in the interests of the environment (see *Anthropocentrism, Deep*

Ecology, Green or Ethical Consumerism and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-Option).

Luddism and neo-luddism

The Luddites and neo-luddite movements question whether a technology is hurtful to the 'common good', which includes the environment. The Luddites were 19th century English textile workers who smashed the new machines (called 'frames') that were destroying their trade and their communities. Luddism is not about being 'against technology' — that is a history written by the victorious industrialists to discredit the Luddites. Neo-luddite movements develop this by looking not just at how different technologies interact with society but also at technology in general and its relationship to capitalism (see *Capitalism and*

Technology).

Marketisation

A market is a way for people to buy and sell goods or services. Markets are not inherently capitalist. Marketisation, however, can be seen as the process of commodification: making things exchangeable through the market, where they were previously not exchangeable in this way (see *Alternative Economics* and *Commodification of Nature*).

Misanthropy

An overwhelmingly negative view of humans or humanity. A common reaction to the realisation of the net affect our species is having on other life on the planet is to see humans as essentially bad. It could be argued that capitalism also takes a misanthropic view of our species, in that it is based on the premise that people make selfish, individualistic choices.

However, whether as a result of our effect on the environment or our attitudes to each other, the idea that we are inherently bad prevents us from imagining other possible future societies and ways of living, and taking action to make them real (see *Deep Ecology*).

Natural capital

A way of applying the idea of capital (one understanding of capital is resources which enable the production of more resources) to the environment, seeing it as providing goods and services which can be bought or sold (see *Ecosystem services*, *Marketisation* and *Commodification*).

Natural capital represents everything in nature that can be considered a resource, including water, soil, air and all living things, and allows all these things to be given an economic value and be bought or sold.

As well as reducing the value of things to economics, part of the problem with the idea of natural capital is that putting a price on nature to protect it means there will inevitably be someone willing and able to pay the price to destroy it (see *Green Economy*).

Nature

We won't try to define nature here as although people generally have a rough idea about what it is, actually trying to define it properly can get very complicated. However, it may be useful to explain very briefly how some conceptions of nature are relevant to discussions of green capitalism. Part of the problem with capitalism is that it takes an anthropocentric (humancentred) view of the world (see *Anthropocentrism*).

Since the 17th century, Western views of nature have generally been based on an attitude of domination. Other philosophies have a different view of nature and humans'

place in it. For example, many surviving indigenous cultures take a very different perspective on peoples' place in the universe (see *Indigenous Knowledge*), and other political philosophies have a very different approach to the environment (see *Ecology, Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism*). It's worth noting that there are also political philosophies other than capitalism that have extremely problematic interpretations of nature.

An essential part of dealing with the ecological crises we are confronted with is to change the dominant societal attitudes towards nature, particularly to non-anthropocentric perspectives.

Neocolonialism

The control of less economically developed countries (mostly in the Global South) by more economically developed countries (mostly in the Global North) and corporations through indirect means. The term is used to refer to any process where the power of countries is used to produce colonial-like exploitation. It is a form of global power where corporations and global institutions work together to perpetuate colonial forms of exploitation of other countries.

Neocolonialism includes forms of cultural domination (sometimes called cultural imperialism), where language, education and the media are used to increase economic and political control. It is a development that enables powers (nations and corporations) to dominate other nations through international capitalism rather than by direct rule (see *Global South and Social Movements* and *Green-grabbing*).

Neoliberalism

A set of capitalist economic and social policies, with accompanying ideologies, that have become widespread and dominant during the last thirty years, with the rapid globalisation of the capitalist economy that can be characterised as 'rule of the market'. Core aspects of neoliberalism include cutting public spending for social services, deregulation and privatisation.

Neoliberalism is a strongly individualistic form of capitalism, attempting to eliminate the concepts of 'public good' and, in its most extreme forms, 'community' (see *Capitalism* and *Liberalism*).

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-Option

NGOs exist to provide services or advocate public policy outside the remit of state institutions, although often fulfilling functions that traditionally fell under the government remit. NGOs address a wide variety of issues from human rights to environmental protection. Some NGOs are created or controlled by governments, either overtly or more subtly through funding or regulations or the creation of pseudo-government departments.

NGOs are submitted to regulations, with governments giving them benefits whilst at the same time restricting their activities. Depending on their size, funding, purpose

or politics they can be assets to broader grassroots movements working in coalition and providing resources to them. But they can also be barriers to social change, with some of the larger, more conservative organisations essentially reformist in approach, following government or corporate agendas. Grassroots environmental groups that are more critical but have less power and fewer resources are often co-opted (assimilated) into larger, less critical organisations, like big NGOs. The process of co-option is often slow and subtle.

The mainstream environmental movement is dominated by a few well-funded and well-connected organisations that work closely with governments and corporations, and often obscure the links between ecological crises and capitalism. Co-option is one of the major obstacles to effective global ecological resistance.

As well as derailing or undermining more critical or radical movements NGO cooption means that the efforts of many people who are concerned about the environment are wasted on initiatives that reinforce green capitalism (see *Global South and Social Movements*, *Liberalism*, *Neocolonialism* and *Reformism*).

Offsetting

Achieving a balance by counteracting something else. If something has a particular impact or effect somewhere an offset can be used to balance out or neutralise the overall effect. In green capitalism offsets are used to allow something that is environmentally harmful to go ahead (for example the construction of a new mine in a forested area) by doing something positive for the environment elsewhere (for example

planting some trees).

Aside from practical problems such as reliably measuring the impact of offsets, there are also more fundamental problems with the idea. The Roman Catholic

Church used to sell 'indulgences' where sins could be redeemed for a price. Offsets are similar in that they allow individuals to commit environmental 'sins' provided they can afford to offset them, an example of green consumerism.

To help illustrate the problems with this approach, consider if the issue was political repression rather than environmental damage. The logic of offsetting would mean an authoritarian regime could torture a group of people in one place provided it invested in protecting, or simply not harming, a group of people in another place (see *Biodiversity Offsetting*, *Carbon Offsetting* and *Greenwash*).

Precautionary Principle

A way of managing risk. With a precautionary approach, if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is not harmful, then the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on the people taking the action or implementing the policy.

If the risk is too high, the action or policy should not happen. With new technologies, such as nanotechnology, a precautionary approach would mean those implementing technologies would be required to take on the responsibility of establishing whether or

not that technology is harmful. If it were found to be potentially harmful then they would have to minimise or eliminate the harm. Green capitalism is usually opposed to the precautionary principle as it hinders capitalist development (see *Technology*).

Primitivism

A critique of the origins and progress of civilisation, whereby it is believed that the shift from hunter-gathering to agricultural subsistence and then cities gave rise to a wide range of problems. Some advocates want to return to non-'civilised' ways of life through deindustrialisation and the abandonment of large-scale technologies — and sometimes technology more generally.

Others do not advocate a return to hunter gatherer lifestyles, but oppose technopositive, mass-scale visions of alternatives to capitalism, such as some versions of socialism and anarchism (see *Deep Ecology, Ecological Anarchism/Green Anarchism* and *Ecosocialism*).

The overall argument is that 'civilisation' itself, especially its current manifestation as mass technological society, results in our failure to live rewarding lives and struggles for change should therefore be against civilisation, as opposed to (for example) concentrating on capitalism or patriarchy, which primitivism views as features of civilisation (see *Women, Gender, Feminism and the Environment*).

Primitivism and anti-civilisation movements and political positions have been heavily criticised by other environmental activists as being purist, elitist, unrealistic, unclear (for example around questions of what level of technology in society is acceptable), unethical (for example when they make arguments for enforced population control) and misguided (such as the problem being with mass society in general rather than profit-focused mass society).

Reformism

Reformism advocates small, gradual changes to the current system, such as the introduction of new policies. Some reforms can contribute to fundamental change, such as legislation that protects people's rights in the short term so that they can be involved in social movements. However, reformism is different to the reforms themselves. Prioritising the achievement of small changes often makes fundamental change more difficult. A significant proportion of the global environmental movement is reformist, attempting to incorporate green concerns into liberal politics. Many environmental activists and movements are fundamentally opposed to reformism. They argue that fundamental change is needed and reforms are not enough to address ecological and other crises (see *Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Co-option* and *Liberalism*).

Renewable energy

Energy that is generated from a source that is not depleted when used, such as sunlight, wind, tides and waves. Renewable energy can take many forms

— from centralised, neo-colonial, corporate-controlled mass projects that generate a large amount of emissions themselves and serve the interests of those in power, to decentralised, democratic, community-controlled, smallscale projects that challenge the political status quo. Renewables are often thought of as inherently good and a simple solution to climate change, but the form they take, and how they are controlled and managed, is crucial in whether or not they contribute to a socially just ecological society (see *Appropriate Technology*, *Energy Justice* and *Green Economy*).

Sceptical Environmentalism

The belief that claims by environmentalists and environmental scientists are false or exaggerated. It is associated with being critical of environmentalism in general and with climate change denial (see *Ecomodernism*).

Spiritual Ecology Movements

Some ecology movements and indigenous cultures are based around the central concept of mother earth or earth spirit, with many other groups being influenced by this. Spiritual ecology is a branch of ecology movements that argues that humanity needs to address its spiritual responsibilities towards the planet in order to address global environmental crises. There are a wide range of environmental groups influenced by spirituality, from engaged Buddhists to spiritually orientated deep ecologists (see *Deep Ecology*).

Sustainable Development/Sustainability

Usually defined as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is also often described in terms of its three pillars: social, economic and environmental (sometimes called the triple bottom line). The idea is that economies can develop without creating social or environmental harm. Sustainability basically refers to the same thing.

The terms were originally used primarily within the environmental community as a way of highlighting the fact that our economies were undeniably environmentally and socially unsustainable. However, the terms are now so abused by businesses and government that they have become worthless. In some cases the term has evolved from sustainable development to ‘sustained’ development, which basically translates as continual economic growth. This is an example of how an idea intended as a critique of capitalism has been twisted via the logic of green capitalism into re-enforcing the very thing it was intended to oppose.

Another problem is that as a continuation of the concept of ‘development’, it supports the idea that to be ‘developed’ is to participate in capitalist economic activity. Development is also used to continue many of the exploitative processes put into place by colonialism (see *Green Economy* and *Neo-Colonialism*).

Technocracy

A cultural and philosophical system of modern technology that aims to control nature and create social order through modern technology. The term is more commonly used to describe the supposedly apolitical and impartial rule of society by technical experts who determine the organisation of industrial resources, financial institutions and the social system.

However the influence of the general cultural and philosophical control of experts of modern system is pervasive even when direct political power by technical is not present. It has a series of concepts, for example a mechanistic understanding of nature, efficiency and automatic control and tends to mean a regimented and dehumanised society.

Technocracy tends to force nature to conform to these concepts, rather than finding natural limits and working with the way that nature is structured.

In a technocracy, the smoothly functioning machine is the ideal, both technical and cultural, to be striven for. This is central to the way that scientists and engineers develop technology. The technocratic approach of treating all problems as technical issues to be best addressed through technological fixes is a crucial problem (see *Technofix*).

Theorists of technology often argue that contemporary capitalism is technocratic, and that the central role of technology and specific technologies in capitalism is not given enough weight in political analysis, which should include technology alongside central concepts like class, race and sex (see *Technology*).

Technofixes

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A way of using a technological ‘fix’ to solve an (often complicated) environmental or social problem. For example, Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technologies are proposed for storing carbon emissions rather than stopping the emissions in the first place. Technofixes are often risky, extreme interventions that are likely to either simply not work or create much worse problems than those they were supposed to solve.

Many technologies are being branded as ‘green’ even though they are dangerous to the environment, such as clean coal, biochar, biomass incineration, nuclear power, waste incineration, geoengineering and genetically engineered ‘carbon sucking’ trees. Technofixes are also used as ways of deflecting attention away from the real causes of environmental problems, such as growth based economies (see *Green Economy*,

*Economic Growth, Technocracy and
Techno-optimism/techno-progressivism*).

Technology

The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially the development of machinery and equipment in industry. It can be the knowledge of techniques and processes, or knowledge can be embedded in machines, computers or other devices that can be operated by people who don't have detailed knowledge of how the devices work.

Technologies can be understood as social relationships, as well as particular physical developments. Technologies are often seen as providing solutions to social and environmental problems, as well as enabling people to do things that were not previously possible.

But with each 'new' way of doing things, we do not simply add another possibility; we may delete other pathways that may have been previously possible and which may have actually been more beneficial to a just and sustainable future. A common myth is that technology is neutral. But political arrangements are hard-wired into the very design of technologies. For example nuclear power requires a militarised control environment and coal power is inevitably centralising, whereas solar power can be decentralised. Under capitalism, technologies are often owned and controlled by states or corporations. The influence of technocratic ideas can be seen very clearly in the shaping and selection of modern technologies, and in ways that mean that problems arise inevitably, not accidentally. New capitalist technologies allow the commodification of nature at new levels, for example genetic engineering allows the ownership of genes, and the creation of new industries.

For the last 150 years technological development has depended heavily upon basic scientific research. A critical way in which corporations and the military steer the development of societies is through their control over the funding of basic research. Science is similarly political in that the institutions in which it is produced are not neutral: what is researched and how is strongly influenced and in some cases directly determined by state and corporate funding, dominant cultures, ideas and ideologies and many other factors. Social movements have suggested methods for moving towards the democratisation of science and technology, such as via the strict application of the precautionary principle and transparent and participatory forms of technology assessment. (see *Appropriate Technology, Luddism and*

*Neo-Luddism, Technocracy, Technofixes and
Techno-optimism/techno-progressivism*).
Techno-optimism/techno-progressivism

Techno-optimism is the belief that there is ongoing progress through technology, an idea which is crucial for the continuation of technocratic capitalism (see *Technocracy and Capitalism*), and that technology can solve societal problems (see *Green Economy*).

Techno-progressivism assumes that human flourishing is advanced by the convergence of inevitable technological 'progress' and democratic social change (see *Technology*).

However complex a social or ecological problem (such as climate change), techno-optimists advocate technofixes and believe there will always be technological solutions (see *Technofix*), ignoring the underlying political and social forces that direct technology. There are active techno-progressivist organisations with a surprisingly large membership (see *Transhumanism*).

Transhumanism

The belief or theory that humans and nature are inadequate without technology and that human minds and bodies need to become more technologically advanced. Transhumanists believe humans can and should evolve beyond our current physical and mental so-called ‘limitations’ by means of science and technology. The application of the ideas of techno-optimism/techno-progressivism to human beings in order to enhance our capabilities may seem benign, yet many critics have argued that, at worst, is a form of techno-fascism driven by the desire to have power and control over our own bodies and over technologically inferior others (see *Techno-optimism/technoprogressivism*).

Women, Gender, Feminism and the Environment

Globally and historically, women’s involvement in environmental grassroots movements and resistance to manifestations of green capitalism has been, and is, widespread. Many movements have been initiated by women, such as Greenham Common and the Women’s Environment Network in the UK, the Chipko movement in India and the Green Belt movement in Kenya.

There are many issues to consider when looking at how women around the world are affected differently to men by ecological destruction, such as the fact that women do more agricultural work globally than men, but men generally own the land and control women’s labour.

There are various philosophies that link feminism with ecology, such as ecofeminism, ecological feminism and feminist political ecology. Some branches regard feminist and ecological concerns to be the result of male domination of society: patriarchy. They argue that, historically, the domination of nature is intertwined with patriarchy and the domination of women. There is a wide range of views, from more liberal positions to more radical ones. Some critiques or interpretations of eco-feminism include challenging the belief that women have a greater connection to the environment, that patriarchy is the cause of ecological destruction and the romanticisation of goddess-worshipping matriarchal societies.

Zebra

As far as we know, zebras have no direct relevance to green capitalism. But this is an A-Z.

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Corporate Watch runs workshops and training days on how to investigate companies and on specific topics, such as company accounts or the Private Finance Initiative.

Call **(0207) 426-0005** or email **contact@corporatewatch.org** if you'd like to request one for a group you're involved in, or keep an eye on our website for details of any upcoming ones.

SuPPorT our WorK

Corporate Watch is run on a tight budget and we need your support. We do our best to avoid dodgy funding, we don't take money directly from companies or governments, and we provide all our work for free online. If you like our work, please consider helping us with whatever you can afford. Even small amounts will help us stay independent and sustainable. Make a one-off donation or become a 'Friend of

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Get in touch by calling us on **(0207) 426-0005** or emailing us at **contact@corporatewatch.org**, or see our website for more details of the different ways you can support us.

CW

Green capitalism is a development of capitalism, formally and explicitly attempting to incorporate nature. Those promoting it argue that if nature is valued financially it will not only be protected, but even enhanced, along with the health of the economy and well-being in society. But this ignores the fact that once you put a price on something to protect it there will inevitably be someone willing and able to pay the price to destroy it.

In this guide we explore the ideas surrounding green capitalism. We hope that we can offer a tool to understand this new manifestation of capitalism and support attempts to resist it. We also discuss the alternatives, giving a picture of some of the other ways of organising our societies and relating to nature.

People struggle against green capitalism and for ecological, free and equal societies all over the world, every day. It is those people and struggles that we aim to support.

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