



COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL
SCIENCE RESEARCH IN AFRICA

CODESRIA Policy Briefs

No. 5, November 2018

Economic Justice in the Age of Climate Change

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Summary

This policy brief outlines a political-economic perspective for studying the impact of climate change in ways that inform pursuits of climate justice initiatives. It emphasises the plurality of interventions needed at the global, international, national, and sub-national levels to effectively address the social-discriminatory effects of climate change and societal responses intended to mitigate and adapt to climate change. While fully acknowledging the importance of sociocultural aspects, this policy brief is premised on the argument that the root causes of climate change and climate injustice have to do with the political and economic inequalities that protect the status quo while sabotaging transformative change.

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Introduction

Climate change is exacerbating age-old injustices. The IPCC's 1.5 Degree report asserts with high confidence that: "Exposure to multiple and compound climate-related risks increases between 1.5°C and 2°C of global warming, with greater proportions of people both so exposed and susceptible to poverty in Africa and Asia."¹ Industrially developed countries are responsible for a majority of the Greenhouse Gas (henceforth, GHG) emissions that led to climate change. They have also taken no action on climate mitigation, which has led us into the current morass. Despite the reality that natural resources, extracted from the African continent, have significantly contributed to both industrial and post-industrial development in countries in the global North, countries on the African continent are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Models of development rooted in extractivism have left the African continent and the people of Africa impoverished.² These outcomes should be attributed not just to corruption and negligence, as argued by the proponents of resource curse theories, but also to the adverse terms of transactions that underwrite the transnational extractive regimes. As recent reports suggest, 48 countries classified as 'sub-Saharan Africa' by the World Bank are short-changed by an estimated \$41.3 billion a year.³ Evidently, the extractive models of

development that are most directly responsible for global climate change and global economic inequalities co-constitute one another. In other words, catastrophic climate change is a product of two distinct, yet closely-related outcomes: environmental degradation and socio-economic inequalities. Therefore, economic justice is not just about redistribution but also offers important avenues for rectifying the excesses of capitalism most responsible for climate change. The IPCC 1.5-degree report suggests that, "Sustainable development supports, and often enables, the fundamental societal and systems transitions and transformations that help limit global warming to 1.5°C. Such changes facilitate the pursuit of climate-resilient development pathways that achieve ambitious mitigation and adaptation in conjunction with poverty eradication and efforts to reduce inequalities."⁴

Climate change, in this context, is primarily caused by political and economic inequalities that have allowed state and non-state actors to promote energy-intensive development.⁵ The confluence of the challenges of climate change, amidst entrenched international inequalities and increasing subnational inequalities, makes it especially challenging to design policy and programmatic solutions to address climate justice. Even so, policy and programmatic discussions cannot merely be seen as technical tasks. Recent studies have

shown that institutional design and change are fundamentally political questions that involve the exercise of power in its various guises.⁶

This policy brief articulates a political-economic perspective for studying the impacts of climate change in ways that inform pursuits of climate justice. The use of 'pursuits', in plural, is in recognition of the plurality of interventions needed at the global, international, national, and sub-national levels to address the socially discriminatory effects of climate change and societal responses intended to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Additionally, as many scholars have argued, addressing the root causes and the impacts of climate emergency requires environmental, cultural, economic, and sociopolitical responses.⁷ Cultural responses intended to address climate change would include questioning the privilege often accorded to consumption-driven lifestyles in the post-industrial era. Similarly, it is also important to consider the socioeconomic reforms, e.g. payment of respectable wages, promotion of social protection, and promotion of public transport, each of which contributes to social welfare, while enhancing a society's resilience to climate change and its capacity to adapt. While fully acknowledging the importance of sociocultural aspects, this policy brief is premised on the argument that the root causes of climate change and climate injustices have to do with the political and

economic inequalities that protect the status quo while sabotaging transformative change.

Failures to reduce emissions in a timely manner has often contributed to the onset of dangerous climate change, which affects the poorest people most severely.⁸ Policymakers have sought to substitute the task of mitigation of GHGs at source with offsets – market-based or fund-based programs – that reward interventions that reduce emissions in sectors such as, forestry, agriculture, and various economic activities in the developing countries, that are not among the prime polluters.⁹ Scholars and commentators have stated the apparent links between the failure to mitigate GHG emissions and the programs meant to replace them. This policy brief draws on insights from classical political economy to produce policy-relevant analyses of inequalities embedded within climate governance that produce a variety of climate injustices. This is especially true of market-based climate mitigation efforts that are often implemented through national and subnational bureaucracies, while claiming representation of key stakeholders.¹⁰ Such representation, however, is often shown to be grossly inadequate at best and entirely ineffectual at worst.¹¹

The arguments outlined below entail a significant departure from the approaches commonly used in the policy world. Instead of analyzing

'social' and 'environmental' goals separately, or fusing them together within macro analysis of 'social metabolism of the human economy'¹², I adopt a relational political economy framework.¹³ By building on the classical arguments in critical political economy, I investigate the mutually-constitutive nature of the linkages between 'development' and climate change. These analyses are then used to map the pathways that connect political and economic processes that are amenable to policy interventions.

Section II offers essential background information about the concept of circular economy, which is often showcased as a promising approach, but cannot address the challenges unique to a globalized economy. To fill this important gap, section III outlines a classical political economy perspective to help us address the questions of economic justice in a climate-changed world. This section outlines theoretical arguments to underline the importance of the state as perhaps the most important, yet the least well-studied, part of the just transition pathways. Section IV then expounds the conceptual discussions to document the concrete institutions, agencies, and interventions within Africa that are likely to act as pathways to a just transition on the continent. The concluding section offers a bullet point summary of the key findings.

Background: The Political-Economy of Natural Resource Extraction

Economic activities and production processes that rely on natural resources can be sustained only with proper and consistent maintenance of the natural resource base. This is the fundamental argument in favor of circular economy. The management and regulation of circular economy is easier when production and consumption occurs within national boundaries, which is not often the case in today's globalized economy. Transnational flows of finances and the outsourcing of economic production means that different activities that make up the economic cycles are dispersed spatially and temporally, often cutting across national boundaries.¹⁴ Despite the significant awareness of contemporary global environmental crises, bilateral and multilateral trade agreements continue to focus mainly on the agenda of facilitating free trade and transnational movements of capital and finance. Because of the complex and ambiguous linkages between national sovereignty and transnational flows of capital and finance, it is extremely difficult to regulate flows in a globalized economy.¹⁵ As such, discussions of a "green" or a "circular" economy that focus narrowly on production processes within national jurisdictions,

but fail to address transnational flows, miss out on very important portions of contemporary political economy.

Contemporary discussions of 'circular economy' often focus on the judicious and efficient use of natural resources within a specific industry. This is a good starting point as it has the potential to motivate important improvements in the utilization of natural resources. However, these discussions must be broadened to account for fiscal and tax policies that affect investments in and diffusion of specific technologies and resource extraction regimes. Perhaps, most importantly, discussions of circular economy must resist the assumption of a steady state supply of natural resource-based inputs into the economy. The increasing scarcity of natural resources and the deteriorating state of ecosystems and natural resource base affect not just the supply of inputs into the economy, but also the political and economic relations that build around the demand and supply of natural resources.¹⁶ The promotion of fracking or shale-gas extraction, at the cost of investments in renewable energy resources, is a particularly apt case in point.¹⁷ The transnational diffusion of fracking technology and the expansion of the global extractive regime highlights the political effects of petrochemical industry in the global South.¹⁸ A heavily-subsidized fossil fuel industry, which acts as the main lubricant for much of the market-based growth, betrays the shaky foundations of competitive capitalism. That

notwithstanding, capitalism cannot be portrayed as a self-perpetuating structural force that can be reined-in through popular mobilization without appropriate structural reforms.

Naomi Klein presents a widely read and acclaimed radical critique of capitalism's role in fueling climate change.¹⁹ Yet, Klein's portrayal of capitalism, in the form of two rather simplistic axioms about humanity's relationship with nature and natural resources, invites the critique that she is merely demolishing a straw-man and that there is much good that can be harnessed from reorienting capitalism to serve newer goals.²⁰ A perceptive critique asked, why does "Klein... the author of three books that have fueled anticapitalist organizing...evade the central question her book raises? Certainly, if capitalism is the problem, the solution must mirror it in scale and imagination, but Klein's response falls far short of the rigor of the rest of the book. She responds simply and frankly, "Well, we do what we can."²¹ Despite the fact that a large-scale and fundamental reset of the relations of productions is warranted, such large-scale transformations, e.g., a complete overhaul of the economic system, cannot be accomplished by way of 'doing what we can'. An approach grounded in the realities of power imbalance would have to rely on pathways that traverse through the contemporary political, economic and institutional landscapes, though such an approach can neither be technocratic nor managerial.

Challenges of a Climate-Changed World: A Classical Political Economy Perspective

Insights from the classical political economy: Land, Labor, and Value²²

Classical political economists, namely William Petty, Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx, recognized land and labor as the main sources of wealth and value in an economy. In the contemporary era, it stands to reason that 'land' stands as a proxy for a variety of environmental and natural resources, including water, energy, and minerals. As such, one could paraphrase François Quesnay to argue that natural resources are the main source of the surplus and that farmers, resource-dependent groups, and laborers provide the foundations for productive activities that are indispensable to much of manufacturing and service industry activities. Adam Smith argued that because land was a source of subsistence for labor, land should be considered the main source of value in an economy. Recent developments in classical political economy recognize the importance of land and other natural resources as a crucial ingredient into economic development and social welfare.

Perhaps, the most important insight from a classical political economy perspective would be to recalibrate the very notion of value in an economy. This would be one of the most important steps toward reforming capitalism in tune with the dramatically changed scenario of a climate-changed world. There are two different and contending ways of measuring 'value' in a capitalist system: 1) a subjective system based on (consumer) preferences; and, 2) an objective measure of value that reflects the availability and consumption of resources needed for the production of a commodity. The laws of demand and supply, which respond to subjective preferences of consumers in a market, determine the value of a product in the neoclassical political economy.²³ On the other hand, classical political economists (e.g. Ricardo & Smith) saw social production as part of a circular process of reproduction that occurs within the limits set by natural constraints. Accordingly, in the classical political economy, the 'value' of a service or a product depends on objective entities like the natural resources and labor needed for the provision. Cost of a product based on a proper valuation of natural resources used as raw materials, reflects the 'true' cost of production and consumption. Note that this is distinct from the popular methods of valuation of natural resources (e.g., willingness to pay), which are derivatives of preference-based computations.

The discussion above should remind readers about the computation of carbon footprints of various types, even though various matrices may differ in the extent to which they account for externalities.²⁴ Perhaps, the most important issue that computations of carbon footprints raise is the distinction between “luxury” and “subsistence” emissions.²⁵ In setting policy priorities, luxury consumptions must be distinguished from production and consumption needed for fulfilling basic necessities, including human development amenities such as health, education, and economic security.

The ‘values’ of respecting ecological integrity, human welfare, and sustainability must be part of the renewal of classical political economy for our climate-changed world. Yet, constitution of such a political economy, would not be possible without the enactment and implementation of concrete policies and institutions. The state would be the central, though by no means the exclusive, venue for these transformations.

Role of “the state” in addressing climate impacts

The increased frequency and intensity of climate-change linked disasters have brought the state back into reckoning. As Christian Parenti argued so vividly, “In the face of floods, fires, and drought[,] it’s the public sector that responds.”²⁶ However, Parenti

pins his hopes on the emergence of a technocratic socialist leviathan: “Extreme technology under public ownership will be central to a socialist project of civilizational rescue.”²⁷ Yet, the path from the status quo to a technologically-savvy socialist state would be paved by political elites who “feel threatened enough to exercise the state’s relative autonomy to capital’s short-term prerogatives” to initiate a transformative climate response.²⁸ While Parenti’s efforts to bring the state back into reckoning are laudable, he assumes a unified state with a singular will and capability to reshape the relations of production.²⁹ Compelling state elites to announce laws and reforms might be possible but that would not guarantee the realization of desired changes in practice. Radical and emancipatory transformations would also require substantive alteration of social, political, and economic relations that mediate the translation of formal laws, policies, and programs into actual political and economic outcomes.

Classical political economists recognized that allocation of property rights is a political question, even though non-political factors (e.g. technological change, relative demand for and scarcity of resources, and information asymmetries) also influence the emergence and evolution of property rights. The state, that is, specific arrangements needed for the governance of societal affairs, is central to the allocation of property rights and

must therefore be considered a central piece of the project of rebuilding a sustainable and equitable political economy. However, the expectation that a technocratic socialist leviathan, that would somehow escape the regressive practices of the actually existing states, could be engineered in the foreseeable future – as argued by Parenti and other ecomodernists – is quite infeasible.³⁰ As opposed to a technocratic centralized governance, the glocal nature of climate change and climate justice issues requires political engagements at multiple geographic scales and administrative levels. Such engagements should not be confused with technocratic forms of multi-scale governance arrangements advocated by the proponents of networked governance. The outcomes of such arrangements have often fallen short of the normative expectations attached by proponents.

One of the few studies to offer a longitudinal analysis of the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program, a network of some 550 local governments promoting local initiatives for the mitigation of climate change, suggested that the financial and political resources the program offered were the main motivation for program participants.³¹ Even though the new age governance models were advocated as a means of knowledge creation and policy learning, this study showed that the program was witness to discursive struggles in which different actors sought to legitimize their speci-

fic interpretations of local climate protection policies.³² While many more empirical studies are needed before one can make conclusive and generalizable arguments about the effects of networked governance, even a cursory understanding of institutional theory would suggest that without institutionalizing checks and balances at appropriate levels, networked governance is more likely to reinforce the status quo of economic and political power. Moreover, such checks and balances must be introduced simultaneously in the political and policy realms.

The following section showcases a few interventions/case studies that are concrete examples of policies and programs from the continent that address the challenges of political economy that the above analysis highlights.

Ways Forward: Political and Economic Pathways to a Just Transition

Access to political and economic power is central to institutions for a socially just transition to climate change and for ensuring climate justice in the face of rapid environmental change.³³ The negotiation of power occurs at every level, though one or more of the multiple levels can be more or less important in any given situation. The Friends of Earth International

(henceforth, FEOI), a global advocacy group, has proposed focusing on five types of economic justice solutions to reshape the global economy towards sustainable societies:

- 1) *Providing public services for all through tax justice;*
- 2) *Scaling up economies based on social ownership and cooperativism;*
- 3) *Supporting local markets and fair trade;*
- 4) *Valuing and measuring the well-being of people and planet; and,*
- 5) *Ensuring binding rules to dismantle the power of big business.*³⁴

It is appropriate to refer to the above listing as principles of economic justice which must be translated into practical solutions that are implemented on the ground. The report cites several useful ongoing interventions, even though most of these are located either in the global North or in Latin America, a region with its own distinctive history of peasant unions and indigenous peoples' movements. Nevertheless, questions of economic justice highlighted in the FEOI report are absolutely central to making progress on climate justice.

In the end, securing economic and climate justice would require actions at multiple scales and multiple institutional arenas. These changes must be brainstormed, negotiated, enacted, and implemented in a variety of international, national, and

subnational arenas, each of which requires a variety of capabilities, powers, and authorities.³⁵

International Institutions and Policy

The storied legacy of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which transformed into the African Union (henceforth, AU) in 2002, constitutes an important node of political organization committed to unity and solidarity among African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations.³⁶ In recent times, the (AU) has issued a number of important policy documents, including the Maputo Declaration, the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015, the Accra Declaration, and most notably, the extensive plans related to Agenda 2063 christened to commemorate the 100th year of the establishment of OAU. Each of these initiatives represents a promising avenue for the pursuit of economic and political empowerment of the peoples of the continent. Most importantly, the continent-wide legitimacy that the AU enjoys, presents it with a great degree of international leverage for addressing climate change and its injustices.

At the retreat on financing of the Union held in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2016, the AU decided that all its Member States should implement a 0.2% levy

on eligible imports to finance the organization. This was an important step toward the autonomy of the AU Member States in the international negotiations on climate change. It would be important to create institutional arrangements needed to pursue coherent, continent-wide justice focused initiatives on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, as argued by Ambassador Di-Aping.³⁷ These institutional arrangements are necessary for protecting the continent's interests within international negotiations, but also for fostering concrete measures within the continent. As argued in the 'Accra Political Statement on Inequalities in the Context of Structural Transformation,' the AU has an opportunity to ensure that structural transformation agenda outlined with great details in various statements and strategies would embrace policies and programs needed to tackle economic, social and political inequalities.³⁸ Another important multilateral institution is the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECA), which is mandated to encourage economic cooperation among its member states, though it is also leading the continent-wide deliberations on questions of climate change and climate justice.³⁹

While the task of building international institutions is important and indispensable, transnational non-state actors (NSAs) also play an important role in promoting inclusive agenda-setting, capacity development, policy and program innovations, and shaping of pu-

blic discourses in general. Again, the continent of Africa is endowed with a number of important civil society and educational institutions that are at the forefront of climate and social justice agendas. This includes the eminently known Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA, a Pan-African a research organization) and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA, a civil society institution committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in the region). Lastly, the emergence of private foundations, (e.g. the Mo Ibrahim Foundation), which focuses on the critical importance of governance and leadership for Africa via a number of high-profile initiatives including Ibrahim Index of African Governance (henceforth, IIAG), Ibrahim Forum, Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, and Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships.⁴⁰ The IIAG, for instance, is an important contribution that challenges the dominance of indices, such as the Freedom House Index, premised on a western liberal understanding of politics and society. As the civic deliberative space expands and gains increased policy-leverage, it would be important to devise mechanisms to protect the public domain against capture by vested interests.⁴¹

A focus on Africa-centered strategy does not preclude tapping into the global and transnational justice initiatives being pursued elsewhere.

For instance, a resolution that the member nations of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed in September 2018 to pave way for the UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.⁴² The Declaration, which is likely to come up for voting and adoption by all Member States of the UN in November 2018, will aid the agenda of defending and protecting peasant rights to land, seeds, biodiversity, and local markets.

National Policies and Programs

As discussed previously, the state has received inadequate attention in the scholarship on climate change, especially in the African context that is often identified with weak states. Yet, the continent has produced one of the most remarkable national level success stories of relatively egalitarian resource governance.

Botswana emerged as an unlikely success story in the 1970s – developing institutions to ensure that the wealth of precious mineral resources, including diamond, was invested for the welfare of its people. These successes have been attributed to Botswana’s political and economic institutions.⁴³ Notwithstanding the importance of institutions, it is equally important to recognize the importance of human agency and leadership.⁴⁴ As a recently acclaimed study suggested, the emergence of

a new generation of policymakers, activists, and business leaders, was an important factor contributing to the success of the emerging countries in the continent.⁴⁵ However, the most commonly cited arguments in favor of institutions and agency of the leaders often leave out an analysis of the political context and political processes, without which neither institutions nor charismatic individuals can facilitate transformative changes in the economy and society. It is useful to refer back to the case of Botswana to illustrate this argument.

During the time Botswana discovered diamonds, it was a period of political instability and weak political institutions. That notwithstanding, Botswana did not end up in the all too familiar problem of resource curse or “Dutch disease.”⁴⁶ Yet, Botswana’s success cannot be defended by the proponents of big-push theory, that is, the notion that a sudden infusion of resources, either via discovery of valuable mineral resource or large foreign aid projects, would be sufficient to propel poor countries out of the trap of low-income equilibrium.⁴⁷ This is the question that political scientist Amy Poteete has sought to answer in her two decade of research in the country. She argued that the secret to Botswana’s success lies in the “broad and stable political coalition” during the first decades of independence, which encouraged the adoption of policies and institutions that led to inclusive

economic growth.⁴⁸ Noticeably, the existence and the eventual effects of political coalitions cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, as Poteete showed, changes in political contexts and coalitions are also likely to contribute to changes in economic policies and performance. In fact, Poteete and others have argued that Botswana's success made the ruling party take on authoritarian tendencies.⁴⁹

While deeper analyses of these changes and their implications for economic justice are awaited, it is reasonable to argue that the absence of well-organized social movements that cut across ethnic identities, is one of the missing pieces of the puzzle. Articulation of the linkages between macro political economy and micro-level social and political mobilization would shed important insights about the realization of economic justice in practice.⁵⁰ Research on comparative analysis of the importance of mechanisms of political intermediation suggests that policy outcomes can be changed by reshaping the terms of engagement in the political process.⁵¹ Scholarship on the role of the state has suffered a significant backlog, especially because of the presumption on the part of many scholars that the era of globalization has undermined the role that the state plays in a country's economic affairs. It is evident that the resources available to states have been significantly diminished because of the imposition of ill-conceived austerity policies.⁵² Yet, the state is far from withering away – indeed, in many cases,

the state actors have colluded with the corporations and other non-state actors to appropriate public resources for private pursuits of political and economic interests.⁵³ This is to underline the important role of engaging with the state institutions and the means in which state actors can be held accountable.⁵⁴ Opening up political spaces to actors and agencies who can be held accountable is likely to improve the chances of more inclusive political economies.⁵⁵

The state also plays an important role in recognizing and helping to realize the political and economic rights of individuals and groups. Policies for restitution of land rights that post-apartheid South Africa adopted is an important case in point.⁵⁶ Although, there have been few cases of effective restitution and exercise of rights to land and other natural resources, such national policy frameworks, that exist in several countries on the continent, are indispensable for building effective grassroots interventions of economic justice.⁵⁷

Subnational/Local Level

The “local” level has received most of the attention in the ongoing debates about climate adaptation, yet not enough attention is being paid to the ways in which the local itself is a manifestation of multiple-levels of political and policy interventions at the subnational, regional, and the micro-level interventions and outcomes. Five strands of economic justice proposed



in the FOEI report and the multi-level approach to institutions, policies, and programs recommended in this policy brief testify to the importance of cross-scale linkages for fostering accountability and effective climate action that also promises economic justice.⁵⁸

The FOEI has been implementing this multi-scale approach. Along with its Mozambique partner, Justiça Ambiental, FOEI has been waging local struggles to hold corporations and government agencies accountable, for instance, by registering and winning a lawsuit against a multinational mining giant, Jindal corporation for fair resettlement in a coal mining project in an area located in Chirodzi, Marara, in the Province of Tete.⁵⁹ Along with local struggles mobilized in specific locations, it is equally important to foster solidarities and concerted collective action on behalf of marginalized groups. This is an appropriate moment to work on building a network of networks, especially in light of the resolution regarding UN Declaration for the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas discussed above.

Perhaps the least talked-about dimension of local resistance is to recognize smallholders and other natural resource-dependent populations as autonomous economic agents. Along with assumptions about the African continent as one big hinterland, African people are portrayed as objects of capacity building. Such assumptions about the continent and its residents

inform the design of large-scale continent-wide initiatives, such as the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which is a G7/G8-led scheme to bring together agribusiness, governments, and donors with the stated goals of transforming the nature of agriculture and food production in Africa.⁶⁰ While smallholder farmers, including women, feature in brochures and websites, they are not seen as active political and economic agents who can chart a course of their own. Such interventions need to be rejected in favor of smallholder-based agriculture, fisheries, and forestry operations that are structured to foster both economic justice and climate action. As Mamadou Goïta, the newly elected International Coordinator for the More and Better Network – Voices from the South argues,

This means that there is a drastic increase of the support to small-scale agro-ecological and other forms of sustainable agriculture, and not leaving the future of food in the hands of few multi-national companies...This means they working to replace the chemical fertilizers with organic fertilizers that protect the soil for the coming generations. This means that we have holistic strategies to grow healthy agro-ecosystems and secure livelihoods. We have a big mess in the world. The food system can't be in the hands of the few. If we want transformation, then public resources should be used on food systems that allow for life. This means that we need to invest in this type of agriculture, and to improve the system, and create more jobs in Africa in this way.⁶¹

The agenda of smallholders should also be a part of the important research being conducted under the auspices of Climate Research for Development in Africa (CR4D), which is an African-led initiative supported by a number of influential international agencies.⁶² Despite the importance of natural resource sectors, which are the mainstays of the economies in most countries on the continent, questions of climate change in urban areas and their implications for economic and climate justice cannot be ignored either. Moreover, it is evident that these questions cannot be relegated to the realm of 'markets' alone, though markets are bound to play an important role.

Urban social mobilization could be leveraged for questions of economic and climate justice. Social Justice Centers, which address harassment, abuse, and corruption of slum residents in a number of cities in Kenya, are a model worth emulating.⁶³ This model of social justice interventions is very similar to a network of "resilience hubs" that the city of Baltimore has promoted in recent years to engage at-risk communities in disaster planning and to provide shelter, backup electricity and access to fresh water and food during emergencies.⁶⁴ City staff make it easy for residents to attend meetings by providing free transportation, food, and childcare. And at those meetings, staff do more listening than talking. Kristin Baja, Baltimore's former climate and resilience planner, calls this approach "sharing power."⁶⁵

As the discussion of local interventions focused on economic and climate justice gains ground, it is worth reiterating the caution that scholars of decentralization have been sounding against handing over powers and resources to non-governmental organizations (henceforth, NGOs) and non-elected committees and user groups. Such interventions have often undermined local democracy and have led to poor accountability in local interventions.⁶⁶ Indeed, many of the injustices are propagated through decentralized despotisms of various types, and local governments are quite prone to elite capture.⁶⁷ However, investing in ad-hoc forums that are driven by donor and NGO considerations, even if they allow for local participation, is unlikely to foster democratic accountability and responsiveness.⁶⁸ These insights, from longstanding social science critique of the "local", must inform the contemporary efforts at promoting climate mitigation/adaptation and climate justice interventions.

Conclusion

Resetting long entrenched imbalances of political and economic power requires transformational change, without which the societal responses to climate change can produce highly consequential negative short- and long-term effects. This is apparent from the recent history of the biofuel boom that led to inflation of global food prices in the period 2005-2007.⁶⁹ While the topic has waned from mainstream media, a

recent study shows that the effects of biofuel promotion on food production have continued unabated.⁷⁰ Moreover, Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (henceforth, BECCS) is back as one of the important means for achieving the Paris Agreement target of keeping the global average temperature changes below 2 degrees above the pre-industrial average.⁷¹ However, it is important to mention that these conclusions are often based on assumptions about the current political economy that are quite realistic, but not beyond scrutiny. This is evident from the fact that some climate scientists also argue that it is possible to contain increases in global surface temperature means below 2 degree celsius without relying on large-scale deployment of BECCS and carbon dioxide removal (CDR).⁷² These models take as their point of departure the possibilities of radical climate action, including rapid mitigation and transition away from fossil fuel-based economies.

Noticeably, the second set of climate modeling research studies mentioned above speak to the vision long-presented by climate justice activists, who have argued that it is possible to chart a socially just transition to economies that do not rely on energy-intensive models of development, especially those based on the extraction and burning of fossil fuels.⁷³ The important question is whether these two visions – one that takes the status quo as given and proposes technocratic solutions to climate change versus the

other that is premised on rather utopian notions of what is feasible – exhaust the possibilities for possible pathways to just transition? This policy brief has sought to present an alternative political-economic argument that takes as given the structural inequalities, while pointing to the potential for action based on international, national, and local interventions that already exist on the continent. The essence of these proposals can be summarized as follows:

1. *A Focus on Economic Justice:* Economic justice shines light on the potential for simultaneously addressing the rising levels of inequalities and discriminatory effects of climate change. This requires action at each of the following levels.
2. *Global/Transnational:* Africa's place within global and international climate governance cannot be reduced to a focus on natural resources, without an analysis of transnational economic and trade relations, which are the major determinants of economic activities.
3. *International:* Pan-African institutions well-placed to leverage political legitimacy and existing institutional infrastructure to steer economic activities on the continent toward a just transition. A number of opportunities for a greater focus on economic justice interventions that directly address the challenges introduced by climate change.

4. *National:* The national state, perhaps, constitutes the most important, yet least well-studied node of economic and climate governance. Action at the national level is important for both international and local-level interventions as well.
5. *Local:* There is a need to focus new types of economic justice and climate security interventions, without privatizing or depoliticizing the local public domain.

Notes

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10. Nuesiri 2017
11. Nuesiri 2016; Ece et al. 2017
12. Martínez-Alier 2012.
13. For a full development of the framework, see, Kashwan 2017
14. Courchene and Allan 2008.

15. Lohman 2008; Ndikumana and Boyce. 2011; Bond 2012; Mol 2012.
16. McMichael 2009.
17. Geels 2013.
18. Obi 2004; Ukiwo et al. 2011; Watts 2012; Ladd 2017. For debates about fracking in South Africa, see, <https://theconversation.com/explainer-unpacking-the-issues-around-fracking-in-south-africa-80513>
19. Klein 2015.
20. Waters 2015.
21. Kahle 2015. What Comes After Capitalism? <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/capitalism-naomi-klein-this-changes-everything-cop21/>
22. This section draws significantly on Martins 2016
23. Marx referred the demand-supply based economy as “vulgar economy”, 1867, (Capital, page 53 as cited in https://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/pdf/subject/1912v_ec.pdf)
24. One could speculate that none of the footprint calculators account for social externalities, e.g. minimum wages not paid or occupational hazards, the costs of which are often imposed on individual workers etc.
25. Shue 1993
26. <http://newpol.org/content/rethinking-state-0>
27. <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/08/if-we-fail>
28. <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/08/if-we-fail>
29. For a classical Marxist critique, see, Foster 2017.
30. See, the Ecomodernist Manifesto, <http://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto-english/>
31. Betsill and Bulkeley 2004.
32. Ibid.
33. For more detailed arguments about how power manifests in institutions at multiple levels and multiple domains, see, Kashwan et al. 2018,
34. <https://www.foei.org/resources/publications/transforming-economy-scaling-solutions-new-report>
35. O’Brien 2015; Scoones et al. 2015; Kashwan et al. 2018
36. <https://au.int/en/au-nutshell>
37. <https://www.uneca.org/stories/strong-institutions-needed-help-africa-navigate-climate-change-says-ambassador-di-aping>
38. <http://enb.iisd.org/paic/html/crsvol222num1e.html>
39. <https://www.uneca.org/act-ii>
40. <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/initiatives/>

41. See, for instance, Drezner (2017), who argued that increasing inequality caused the shift from public intellectuals to thought leaders known for single ideas, often aligned neatly with any one of major ideological spectrums and promoted by private resources, devoted to the promotion of a specific ideology.
42. <https://viacampesina.org/en/un-human-rights-council-passes-a-resolution-adopting-the-peasant-rights-declaration-in-geneva/>
43. Acemoglu et al. 2002; Auer 2007; Radelet 2010.
44. See, Melo et al. 2012.
45. Radelet 2010.
46. Sachs and Warner. 2001
47. This argument is being revived in development economics. See, Pritchett et al. (2018, 253) who recommend 'big' mining and infrastructure projects to "jump-start a country's growth acceleration."
48. Poteete 2009.
49. <https://africaplus.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/democracy-derailed-botswanas-fading-halo/>; see also, <https://africaplus.wordpress.com/2014/11/03/botswana-democracy-on-course-or-derailing/>
50. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214790X15000520>
51. See, Kashwan 2017.
52. Ehresman and Okereke 2015; Dowling 2017.
53. Randeria 2003.
54. Agrawal and Ribot 2012.
55. Agrawal and Ribot 1999; 2012; Nuesiri 2017; Lewis 2018
56. Carruthers 2007.
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65. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGSzS2NObOE>
66. Ribot 2011; Mansuri and Rao 2012.
67. Mamdani 1996.
68. Crook et al. 1998; Ribot 2007; Ribot and Larson 2011; Kashwan 2014.
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71. Smith and Porter 2018.
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Acknowledgements

CODESRIA would like to express its gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), the Open Society Foundations (OSFs), Andrew Mellon Foundation, Oumou Dilly Foundation and the Government of Senegal for supporting its research, training and publication programmes.

The author is grateful to the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) resource persons and participants at the 2017 CODESRIA Summer Institute on Economic Justice held in Maputo, Mozambique, with generous support from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).

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