

**Re: Revolution or Ruin, by Kai Heron and Jodi Dean, e-flux 110 June 2020.**  
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/110/335242/revolution-or-ruin/>

Jodi Dean is always worth reading for her provocative analysis, although I still fail to understand her high regard for the writings of Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou. I have read her books *The Communist Horizon*, *Crowds and Party* and *Comrade*. The last two particularly resonate with me as a “red diaper baby”. Her revival of the communist horizon is much appreciated (I call it the solar communist horizon). She makes a formidable case for a continuing role of a communist party in guiding class struggle in contemporary capitalism. Hence no surprise, this article closes with “We need to see these crises as both social and ecological catastrophes of unprecedented proportions and as an opportunity to end exploitation, oppression, imperialism, and inequality. We need to see this moment from the perspective of the revolutionary party that we must build as climate Leninists.”

The most welcome critique I get from this article is of the denialism of the severity of the climate crisis as well as the cowardly acceptance of its inevitable path to catastrophe. The article makes a strong case for the importance of the state as an actor to address the multifold crises we face. Christian Parenti has similarly emphasized the importance of the state in confronting the climate crisis.

On the role of the state and the Green New Deal (GND/Green Industrial Revolution (GIR) the article argues,

“The struggles to implement the GND and GIR tell us that environmentalists are increasingly aware of the need to seize the state—and the need to develop a fighting organization with the capacity to do so.” “conceiving the state as a form for the collective power of working people, an instrument through which we remake the economy in the service of human and nonhuman life.” “The state is a ready-made apparatus for responding to the climate crisis. It can operate at the scales necessary to develop and implement plans for reorganizing agriculture, transportation, housing, and production. It has the capacity to transform the energy sector. It is backed by a standing army. What if all that power were channeled by the many against the few on behalf of a just response to the climate crisis?”

If we take this as a recognition of achieving some degree of working class power even in a capitalist state it would be a clear departure from dogmatic Marxist Leninist formulations of the state as simply the dictatorship of the bourgeois, a departure along the lines of the thinking of Nicolas Poulantzas and Bob Jessop. The class struggle over the valorization of labor power, including the global conditions for its reproduction, manifests itself in the balance of power in the capitalist state (see the discussion in chapter 9 of our book, *The Earth is Not for Sale*).

While the article recognizes many of the positives of a GND, it concludes that this form of Green Keynesianism falls short of what is needed to confront the climate crisis. The article concludes, “The green neo-Keynesianism of the GND and GIR is a dead end, but it would be a mistake to conclude that there is nothing to learn from these plans.” And that “We know that the forces of fossil capital and social democracy stand in our way.”

I agree, both fossil capital and accepting the limits posed by social democracy stand in our way.

But “climate Lenin” is essentially a reprise of 1917. What I find absent is an outline of a strategy informed by climate science and a deep analysis of current political economy to prevent climate catastrophe, which if it fully materializes will result in the collapse of civilization along with the end of the possibility of any kind of post capitalist society worthy of envisioning for a long time into the future. Further, a viable strategy should anticipate how to create the necessary conditions for the emergence of sufficient transnational working class power that can overcome capitalism on a global scale. I don’t find this here. So rather than green neo-Keynesianism of the GND/GIR being a dead end, I suggest that this strategy begins with a Global Green New Deal (GGND) of a Green Keynesian character, utilizing a broad front including green capital to defeat militarized fossil capital, thereby preparing the way for the next stage for a global ecosocialist transition led by the transnational working class and its allies, with class struggle being the driver from the inception of a GGND forward. Defeating militarized fossil capital is critical to make a truly just GGND, confronting the challenge of resource extraction especially in the global South, while ending energy poverty and having the capacity for effective climate mitigation and adaptation in a 100 percent global wind/solar energy transition (1). “Green” capital must be challenged all along the way, to optimize environmental, worker and community protection, while progressively eroding its power to manage this transition, until full social management is in place.

So rather than Climate Lenin, I invoke “ecological Leninism” from Andreas Malm (2), taking it to mean “reloading Lenin”, i.e., to act before losing the opportunity to do so, to recognize imperialism as an obstacle to overcome in a global context, and to use the divisions in the ruling class, in particular between fossil and green capital. Thus, following Jodi Dean in this respect, parties with an ecosocialist/ecocommunist vision are necessary from now on to collectively synthesize the experiences of the global movement, and help to coordinate the ongoing multidimensional class struggles along the way.

As Arandhuti Roy put it, the pandemic “is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.” (3). Let’s reimagine this next world likewise as a portal to an ecosocialist future. But pretending we can jump to a communist future directly, like we hear in the message of the Progressive Labor Party, is a delusion. Yes to more socialism, more communism, less capitalism on the way, until capital reproduction on our planet is finally aborted. Forward to the Solar Commons!

## Footnotes

1. See [http://www.theearthisnotforsale.org/Critique\\_Capitalocene.pdf](http://www.theearthisnotforsale.org/Critique_Capitalocene.pdf) and <https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/100-renewables-wishful-thinking-or-an-imperative-goal-9879a8947d1b> (Updated in our book, *The Earth is Not for Sale*, <http://www.theearthisnotforsale.org/>)
2. See <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/06/andreas-malm-coronavirus-covid-climate-change>
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.

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