Climate Justice Struggles

There are many people in many places fighting for climate justice today – that is what the examples we have mapped here aim to show. Often it is the most affected and most marginalised whose protest are the most powerful. Their struggles are part of a global, rapidly growing movement. A movement that asks fundamental questions: how do we want to live, produce, consume? How do we transform the world, how do we democratise it, how do we reclaim control over our resources? In short: how to win the good life for all?

It's up to us: climate justice, or climate chaos?

If you open the map and flip it over, you will see examples of how existing inequalities and injustices are made worse by the advancing climate crisis – and it is indeed escalating much more rapidly than earlier forecasts had made us believe.

Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, warming oceans or heat waves not only destroy whole ecosystems: we find ourselves in the midst of a fundamental crisis of justice, which is in turn intensified by a fossilistic and colonial capitalist system. Those who have contributed least to the climate crisis are, by and large, much more strongly affected by it than those who caused it. Only those who possess sufficient resources can find safety and shelter from an advancing climate crisis – which threatens the livelihoods of indigenous people, peasants and other marginalised groups most of all, and in the end it is all too often women who bear the brunt of its injustice.

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Anti-Pipeline-movement

UNITED STATES / CANADA
#PIPELINES #TARSANDS #OIL

The colonisation of Turtle Island (‚North America') began over 500 years ago. Ever since, indigenous First Nations have been marginalised, deprived of their livelihoods, exterminated. And yet: when it comes to building new megapipelines it is these communities that organise the most effective resistance: whether it's marches, blockades or camps, whether it's against the Dakota Access Pipeline, or Line3, or Keystone XL or the Transmountain Pipeline. Indigenous communities also use the courts to enforce their rights. Their message: this is our land. We will defend it!

Against deforestation

AMAZON #FOREST #CLEARANCES

The indigenous women's march against slash-and-burn deforestation in the Amazon is strong: ever since the beginning of the European occupation, indigenous communities in the Amazon have been resisting a politics of dispossession and marginalisation, and fighting for their own survival. Women play a central role in these struggles. While business and politics see the Amazon as a source of raw materials, as a commodity to be bought and sold: soy plantations to feed global meat production, timber for export. In response, the women say: you shall not pass. We are the land.

Ende Gelände

GERMANY #LIGNITE

Germany is world-champion in lignite: no other country extracts and burns more of this climate killer. But there are people who put their bodies on the line (literally!) to stop this: the activists from Ende Gelaende. Using only their bodies they shut down diggers, pits and train tracks, thus stopping this dirtiest of all fossil fuels. Every year there are more of them. They say: system change, not climate change!

Alarm Phones

SAHARA / MEDITERRANEAN
#MIGRATION #FLIGHT

When peoples' livelihoods are destroyed, for example through wars or conflicts, droughts or water shortages, they seek to escape. But those most affected are often precisely the ones who do not have the opportunity to cross borders easily to find safety elsewhere, not least as Europe seeks to violently deter them. The Alarm Phones, a form of solidarity 'on the move', assist them in enacting their freedom of movement and reaching Europe alive – whether they're at sea or in other emergency situations on desert routes in the Sahara.

Anti-Oil-Protest

NIGERIA #OIL

Oil is a lucrative resource, especially in the Niger-delta, where Oil Majors rake in superprofits with their dirty extractivism. All the while the oil seeps through the entire delta, entire regions are defiled and the ecosystem is about to collapse. More than 30 million people live here, amidst destitution and destruction. They resist in a myriad ways: from marching to occupying infrastructure – as their parents and grandparents did before them. The most famous among them are the indigenous Ogoni, they have maintained their protest for decades. Most recently, they sued Shell at a court in The Hague.

Anti-Fracking movement

ARGENTINA / CHILE #FRACKING #GAS

The grid of fracking rigs that criss-crosses the Vaca Muerte desert at the border of Argentina and Chile has a haunting quality. From underground storages on the land of the historically persecuted Mapuche, oil and gas are being squeezed out of the earth with the help of poisonous chemicals and huge amounts of water. But the Mapuche are fighting back, stopping police and construction workers, going to the courts to reclaim their rights. They have always been, and will always be: Defenders of the Earth.

Ecodefense

RUSSIA #HARDCOAL

Around 40% of global energy consumption are based on coal, with hard coal its major source, and more and more being mined (there has been a 70% increase in global coal production since 2000!). Russia sits upon the second largest hard coal resources globally. In remote areas in Siberia, the megamines tear apart village communities, destroy the livelihoods of indigenous fisherfolk, even colour the snow pitch-black. Ecodefense is an environmental organisation in Russia that organises and supports resistance in the affected communities - despite being heavily targeted by state repression and criminalisation. And: their success is growing!

Northern Forest Defense

TURKEY #FOSSILMOBILITY #MEGATOURISM

Istanbul Airport is said to be the world's biggest airport: built in record time, it is intended to redefine megatourism for the 21st century. But the fact that a large part of the forests north of Istanbul had to fall to this concrete onslaught triggered resistance: forest defenders from the Northern Forest Defense and local communities started opposing the megaproject, and at the end forced a Dutch company to withdraw from its financing. They are thus continuing the tradition of peaceful collective protest that was born in the Gezi-park protests and the Taksim Commune.

Small farmers movement

INDIA #AGRIBUSINESS

The world's 20 largest meat- and dairy-companies produce as many emissions as Germany, Canada, Australia or France. Industrial agriculture is one of the key drivers of climate chaos. On the other side are small farmers, who – in non-industrialised countries – still produce 80% of foodstuffs by using local resources and value chains. Peasant agriculture is based on traditional knowledge and their autonomous control over land, water and seeds. In India, there is a huge movement fighting for the rights of small farmers. And it just keeps growing!

Fridays for Future

WORLDWIDE #INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

The striking students have managed to coalesce into a global social movement. But there are massive inequalities within the movement: not everyone can ‚just' skip school and go on strike, and there are many countries where climate action is criminalised or entails other risks. While in some places the worst that happens is that the hours spent outside school get logged, there are others where protests are met with repression and policy brutality. Nonetheless, the Fridays for Future-protests are spreading, whether in Kenya, China or Afghanistan, in Uganda, Russia, or Myanmar, in Pakistan and many other places. They are many. And there's more of them all the time.

Seruni

INDONESIA #PALM-OIL

In Indonesia and Malaysia, huge swaths of ancient rainforests are being clearcut to plant oil palms, from which the new ‚green gold' palm oil is won, and whole landscapes are often dominated by palm monocultures – which end up in consumer products or gas tanks in the rich countries of the global North. Using a feminist approach, in Indonesia organisations like Seruni work with indigenous women around issues of environmental justice and human rights. Theirs is an important contribution in empowering marginalised groups to organise against the plantations.

Torres Straight Islanders

OCEANIA #SEALEVELRISE

The inhabitants of the Torres Straight Islands will be forced, by rising sea levels, to leave their homes well before the century is over: floods will destroy their villages, their indigenous culture and tradition, there will scarcely be room to live. The islands are only a few meters above sea level, and formally belong to Australia. But from the inhabitants' perspective, Australian politics is doing way too little against the climate crisis. And they are fighting back with an unusual weapon: they are suing Australia for its lax climate policies. It is the Islanders calling the government to account.

for justice
because while we may all be sitting in the same boat, we're by no means on the same deck: climate change affects those most who have done least to cause it, thus exacerbating global injustices.

for transformation
because you can't have infinite growth on a planet with finite resources. In short: because another – post-fossil, democratic and environmentally just – world is not only possible, but very necessary. Hence the movement's key slogan: System Change not Climate Change!

in diversity
because the climate crisis is also the result of unequal global power structures: the exploitation of nature is premised on that of people, especially of marginalised groups, black, indigenous and people of colour, women* and workers. This is why our struggles always also have to be antiracist, feminist and anti-colonial struggles.

in solidarity
because we can only change things if we work together. Our backgrounds may differ, but what brings us together is the hope that a future beyond exploitation and ecological destruction is possible.

against false solutions
because many of the measures, technologies and megaprojects that are presented to us as answers to the climate crisis would in fact exacerbate existing conflicts, and even create new ones. Nuclear power, carbon capture & storage and geoengineering are all part of the problem, rather than solutions.

globally & together
because the climate crisis affects us all. And because there is a world to win: the good life for all. Will you join the fight?

WE WILL RISE!

For climate justice

Shishmaref must go

UNITED STATES (ALASKA)
#ICE MELTING
#SEA LEVEL RISE

At some point this century, the Arctic will be ice-free in the summer. Western fossil fuel companies will prospect for oil and gas in the Chukchi Sea right off the Alaskan island village Shishmaref, megafreighters will sail the north-west passage and huge trawlers will drop their nets in traditional fishing grounds. But the Inupiat, the indigenous island dwellers will no longer have to see this happening: they will have been resettled long before – after long ago being forced to settle there by the US government. Flash floods and coastal erosion will have made the island uninhabitable.

Climate Justice at the border

UNITED STATES / MEXICO
#HEAT #DROUGHT #BORDER REGIME

El Paso (US) and Juárez (Mexico) are twin cities, but they are worlds apart. While El Paso is rich, Juárez is poor, suffers from the ‚War on Drugs', pollution and the profusion of sweatshops ("maquiladoras"). Both cities will have to prepare for longer heatwaves and less rainfall if the climate crisis progresses. But the Mexicans have few resources to adjust. If more and more people flee from Latin America to the North, the US might turn the border into a fortress. Trump's ‚build that wall' plans seem to be just another step in that direction.

Sweating in the hothouse

SPAIN #HEAT #DROUGHT
#HEALTH #AGRICULTURE

Many of those fleeing Africa – often also due to climate impacts – end up as illegalised day labourers in Southern Spain's greenhouses. Every year the agribusinesses in "Europe's vegetable garden" expand their plantations. But soon the overused water resources might run dry and the model collapse: the region is becoming ever hotter and drier. Towards the end of century the region will face decade-long droughts. Spain will become a desert. Even worse: the coming decades will see the spread of dengue-fever mosquitoes, especially in this region.

Lake Chad is drying out

WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA #HEAT #DROUGHT
#CHANGES IN WEATHER #FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Ordinarily, the waters off the coast of Senegal should be teeming with fish. But every time the fishing boats return from the catch, their haul grows smaller. It is the EU's huge fishing trawlers that are to blame, overfishing the oceans far off the coast. Add to this the advancing climate crisis that acidifies and warms up the ocean, leading to the rapid growth of low-oxygen dead zones. A gigantic wave of migration has begun: sea animals are moving northwards to cooler climes. The fisherfolk might soon follow them.

The Amazon rainforest is burning

BRAZIL #EXTREME WEATHER #DROUGHT

Meat, logging and mining companies are destroying the Brazilian rainforest, and displacing indigenous communities, aided by the protofascist Bolsonaro-administration. The future will bring more extreme rainy and dry seasons. Climate crisis, drought and clearcutting set off a vicious circle. Soon, deforestation might reach a critical ‚tipping point' for South America's ecosystem and hydrological cycle. What's more: what used to be the world's "green lung" would then release massive amounts of CO2.

Santiago de Chile will have to confront serious problems: the combination of El Nino-years and climate crisis will produce more extreme weather events. Drought and heat will alternate with rainstorms and floods.

Water wars in Mesopotamia

KURDISTAN #HEAT #DROUGHT #AGRICULTURE

Kurdistan is running out of water. There is no rain, ground water levels are falling, rivers carry less and less water. It is not, however, only the climate crisis that is to blame, it is also the Turkish state: over the coming decades it plans to dam the headwaters of Tigris and Euphrates in Northern Kurdistan with 22 separate dams. The Ilusu-dam would have huge consequences: some 100.000 would be displaced, the ancient city of Hasankeyf destroyed. Syria and Iraq might run dry and no longer be able to irrigate their crops. A political timebomb.

Air conditioners making Mumbai sizzle

INDIA #HEAT

Megacities like Mumbai will become furnaces. Not only because of the climate crisis: the newly-minted middle-class, too, is heating up the city with their air con units. There are frequent blackouts when these machines spring to life in the midday heat. As usual it is the poor who are most-affected, whether in the slums or on the land. They are left unable to satisfy even their basic needs. Air con units alone could double Indias power consumption over the next 15 years – the equivalent of some 300 new coal-plants. A vicious circle.

Jakarta's sinking slums

INDONESIA #SEA LEVEL RISE

Jakarta is sinking even more quickly than sea levels are rising: excessive use of ground water could lead to the city sinking up to 3 meters by 2100. Of the ca. 30 million people living in this megalopolis, the first victims will be among the women* of the fisherfolk living in low-lying coastal slums. After every flood it is the women who suffer most from appalling hygienic conditions, and have to work even harder in order to feed their families.

Water crisis in the Western Cape

SOUTH AFRICA #DROUGHT #AGRICULTURE #FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Sooner or later, it will come: Capetown's Day Zero. When the metropolis runs out of water, the government will turn off the water taps, limiting water distribution to a few central locations. The Western Cape is projected to see 20% less precipitation during the rainy season. Already now, the distribution of water in South Africa is extremely unequal. Small farmers receive less and less, partly because the white wine merchants in the Cape take so much for their export crops. This wine is so cheap because the mostly black workers labour under extreme conditions.

Arctic nomads under threat

RUSSIA #ICE MELTING #FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Arctic is heating up twice as fast as the rest of the world. The result: the Arctic ice melts, the permafrost thaws. Hitherto unreachable reserves of oil and gas are beginning to look exploitable to major companies. On the Jamal-Peninsula, Gazprom is already extracting huge amounts of gas for the EU. The climate crisis and the negative effects of extractivism threaten fishing and grazing grounds as well as trails long used by the nomadic reindeer herders. The normally highly adaptive nomads are under threat of losing their livelihoods.

The Third Pole is melting

THE HIMALAYAS #ICE MELTING #DROUGHT #FLOODING

All of the 10 most important rivers in Asia start their journey towards the sea in the glaciers of the Himalayas. Their water supplies more than a quarter of the Earth's population. But rising temperatures are melting this "third pole": the glaciers might shrink by over a half by the end of the century. During the first decades, people will struggle with heavy flooding. Once the glaciers have passed their ‚high water mark', there will be devastating droughts. And then: hunger.

Rising sea levels are threatening megacities around the world. **Shanghai** is in particular trouble: there, as the sea rises, the earth is sinking!

Disappearing islands

OCEANIA #SEA LEVEL RISE #EXTREME WEATHER

Several islands and archipelagos in the Pacific will soon be gone forever. For example those making up the impoverished country of Kiribati: its islands reach no higher than 2 meters over sea level, and with every cyclone, its inhabitants lose another piece of land to the ocean. The sea rises, the water is salinated, fishing nets remain empty. Why? Because the coral reefs off their coasts are bleaching, dying out. Thousands of species lose their habitats. The island dwellers will have to leave their ancestral homes before the end of the century.

OR

WE WILL BURN

(choose your side)

+3°C

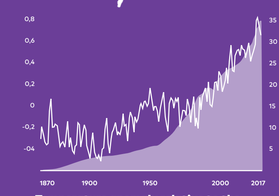
Mapping the climate crisis

In an age of climate breakdown, we're all in the same boat – except that some spend their time relaxing leisurely in 1st class, while others have to crowd together in the engine room. This is what we aim to show by mapping the climate crisis: we are telling the story of a planet that, come the end of the century, will have heated up by some 3°C.

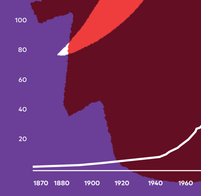
The escalating climate crisis hits those in the global South the hardest, although the crisis was produced by the global North. Its first victims are: women*, slumdwellers, peasants and farmworkers, fisherfolk and indigenous communities. Today's youth is the first generation that will live their lives against a backdrop of climate catastrophe.

The climate crisis is now – not in some distant future. But we can still stem the tide!

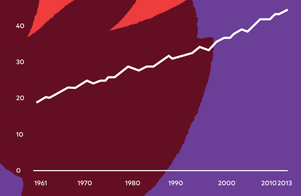
But: why 3 degrees global warming? Didn't the international community, at the 2015 climate summit in Paris, come together and agree to limit global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels? Yes and no, because even if governments were to deliver all promised reductions, emissions level would still rise precipitously, and the earth would warm by ca. 3°C. In order not to bust the 1.5° limit, global greenhouse-gas emissions would have to peak around 2020, and rapidly decline afterwards – down to half of current levels by 2030.



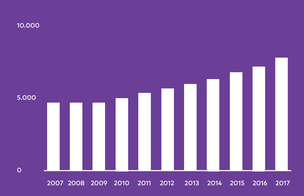
Temperature anomaly relative to the 1961-1990 mean, Global (measured in °C)



World GDP over the last two millenia
(measured in trillion $)



Per capita meat consumption per year, World
(measured in kilogram)



Passenger air traffic, World
(measured in billion passenger-kilometers)

Global greenhouse gas emissions
(measured in GtCO2e/year)

Infographics Climate Action Tracker, ourworldindata.org, statista.com