

**The Fallacies of Clean Growth:  
Neoliberal Climate Governance Discourse in Canada**

Claire O'Manique  
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**Introduction: Climate Change as a crisis of fossil capitalism**

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. It is occurring alongside, and compounding the impacts of pollution, and biodiversity and habitat loss (Weston, 2014). Our ‘business as usual approach’ is leading us on a direct path towards planetary destruction (Magdoff & Williams, 2017; Steffen et al., 2015). The overwhelming consensus is that global average temperatures must remain within 2 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels, with 1.5 degrees Celsius names as the ambitious goal (Foster, 2017). On our current trajectory, even with the ratification of the Paris Agreement, we remain on track for a temperature rise of between 2 and 3.1 degrees above pre-industrial levels, pushing us past what is the safe upper limits for humanity (Foster, 2017). And the reality is that the catastrophic impacts are already with us. Those most vulnerable -- the people whose livelihoods and lives depend on their local environments - are already suffering from the extreme weather events that are steadily rising in both number and intensity (Jeffery, 2015; Nilsen, 2016). This position we find ourselves in requires that we ask big questions about how we as societies want to move forward in the face of growing uncertainty, as we face the unprecedented and complex circumstances that climate change is currently presenting us with. Despite 20 years of international negotiations and multilateral declarations, global leadership has failed to come up with solutions that respond to the severity of the present crisis (Satgar, 2017; Jeffery, 2015). Instead, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) continue to rise as we continue to prioritize profit motives over and above people’s needs (Malm, 2016; Foster, 2017).

This failure to respond at the scale necessary calls into question the dominant knowledge and policies that have been used to frame the problem and its subsequent solutions. What exactly climate change constitutes is continuously contested, and the understanding of climate change embedded within complex and power laden societal relations (Brand, 2010; Escobar, 2006). Increasingly, the political and economic elite, who have a vested interest in maintaining the status-quo in terms of social relations have proposed a ‘greening’ of capitalism as the solution to climate change (Brand, 2010; Wanner, 2015; Newell & Paterson, 2010). Often under the banner of ‘green capitalism’, the ‘green economy’, ‘green growth’, and, now in Canada, ‘clean growth’, This is an attempt, to construct an alternate model of growth, that does not rely on an abundant source of fossil fuels, decoupling emissions growth from economic growth (Labatt & White, 2011; Gasper et al., 2013). This has been met with a burgeoning critique of this now mainstream approach to addressing climate change, carried out through the extension of neoliberal rationale into the environmental realm, as paradoxically being served the problem as the solution (Swyndegeouw, 2010; McCarthy, 2015; Dale et al, 2016; McAfee, 2016). This large and convincing body of research locates the crises of climate change as internal to the workings of our growth based, fossil fueled, neoliberal capitalism (See Huber, 2009; Malm, 2016; Mitchell, 2011; Klein, 2014; McMichael, 2009; Dale et al., 2016; Moore, 2015). This research demonstrates that the logics of a society under capitalism- which depends on infinite growth on a finite planet, undermines the fundamental biophysical operations to sustain many forms of life on earth (Speth, 2008; Clark & York, 2005; Moore, 2015). These discourses reflect an

understanding that in order to address the interconnected crises that we face, requires stepping outside of existing institutional boundaries towards new and transformative ways of organizing societies.

### *Climate Change Politics in Canada*

To what extent is Canada implicated in maintaining this status quo? With the election of Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister of a majority Liberal government in October 2015, there was a significant shift in climate discourse. Gone were the Conservatives led by Stephen Harper who had spent the previous nine years in power wholly invested in transforming Canada into an energy superpower (Taber, 2006). They had put in place a political economy in Canada that disproportionately favoured the interests of the Alberta tar sands -- the largest fossil fuel project in the world -- and saw 9 years of climate denialism. The Federal government failed to implement any measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, pulled out of the International environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations Convention to combat desertification, gutted environmental regulation in Canada, slashed budgets for environmental science, and even went as far as labelling environmentalists as terrorists (Adkin, 2016; Shrivastava, & Stefanick, 2015). Fossil fuel emissions steadily increased, as did the power of the fossil fuel industries on the Canadian political landscape.

Trudeau was elected on a campaign promise to be serious on climate change. Since his election he has used opportunities on the international stage to mend Canada's tarnished reputation as a climate laggard (Ljunggren, 2015; McDiarmid, 2015; Mas, 2016). But while he has branded himself a climate leader- his policy actions say otherwise. Since signing the Paris Agreement the federal government has pursued the expansion of fossil fuel production, supporting the construction of new pipelines to transport bitumen and new LNG terminals (Lee, 2017).

The critical question that comes halfway into the Liberal government's term is this: to what extent does the rhetoric match the reality? What follows is a discourse analysis of Canada's approach to climate change as laid out in its 2016 document the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (PCF). Discourses here are captured by the definition offered by Wanner as "the processes that construct understanding and meaning about things or issues in the world" (Wanner, 2015, 22). They construct meaning and relations that make common understandings and common sense of the world, legitimizing certain forms of knowledge over others (Wanner, 2015; Dryzek, 2005; Shotwell, 2016). This is important, because as Alexis Shotwell states, "The narrative we use to explain the world structures what we do in it. So, we can ask, what happens if we use this narrative to make these changes in the world." (Shotwell, 2017, 100-101).

The discourse analysis that follows attempts to uncover the logics, rationalities and narratives that the government is using to frame the challenges and solutions ahead for Canada as we transition to a post-carbon society. This analysis does not cover the potential for this framework to meet its targets under the Paris Agreement (for this see, Lee, 2016); instead it interrogates the

discourse of the PCF to see the kind world it makes possible for us. It begins to explore the future that this document is imagining in the face of climate change. What are the ‘truths’ that the Canadian government is establishing in their approach to dealing with climate change in Canada? What does this have to say about our current political imaginary for what is possible in addressing climate change?

My central argument is that Canada’s approach to defining the problem in the PCF does not present a transformative vision for Canada that the gravity of the challenge necessitates. What is being offered remains embedded in the worldview of neoliberal capitalism, which leaves unquestioned the current regressive power structures that have produced the very problems we currently face. This paper begins with a discussion with the fallacies of neoliberal environmental governance, first through an understanding of ‘neoliberal rationality.’ It then analyzes how the PCF constructs the role of the various ‘stakeholders’ in climate policy: the nation-state, business, citizens, and Indigenous communities. Throughout this analysis it examines the consequences of this framing of climate change for transitioning to the necessary low carbon future.

### **Neoliberal Rationality**

Over the past 40 years neoliberal capitalism, has emerged as the dominant ideology structuring the global economy (Brenner et al., 2010). However, as Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (2013) notes “there is no single or unitary neoliberalism” (69). It is thus important to clarify what is meant by neoliberal capitalism. Capitalism at its most rudimentary is understood as a way of organizing society where capital is held in private hands and traded in a market to accrue a profit. Accumulating capital thus becomes the primary goal in a capitalist society, which as Crook and Short (2014) state, renders “all other social and natural relationships subordinate to this primary goal” (200).

Neoliberal capitalism is commonly understood as an extension of this ideology, in avowing ostensibly ‘free’ markets as the most efficient and favourable way to mediate human interactions and transactions. The neoliberalization of the state occurs through economic, legal and regulatory policies and frameworks that favour industry and capital flows, strong protection of private property rights, reductions in welfare state spending, and the privatization and commodification of public goods and services including education, roads, parks, and prisons (Brown, 2015). Regressive taxation schemes erode the tax base and serve to justify cuts to public spending (Harvey, 2007; Brown, 2015). Different states exhibit different degrees of commitment to neoliberal policies as evidenced for example, by the U.S. government’s full embrace of the ‘rights’ of corporations over the health of people and the planet.

This however does not capture the full reach of neoliberalism on society. As many have argued, neoliberal capitalism is much more than simply an economic ideology that prescribes a set of economic tools and policies. It also serves as a normative rationale; a world-view. Neoliberalism

is a specific set of values and norms that shape and inform what individually and collectively we believe is valuable (Haiven, 2014). This has the primary effect of extending a specific formulation of economic values and practices rooted around a universal principle of competition to every dimension of life (Foucault, 2008; Parr, 2014; Brown, 2015; Dardot & Laval, 2013). As Foucault argued, what makes neoliberalism distinct is the generalizing of the economic form of the market to the entire social sphere. As a neoliberal rationality it “disseminates the model of the market to all domains and activities- even where money is not at issue and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as homo oeconomicus” (Brown, 2015, 31). ‘Homo oeconomicus’ is described as a free and autonomous rational individual acting in the world, motivated by their own self-interest (Hamann, 2009). This compels individuals to act in competition with each other, transforming communities of people into economic subjects whose every need can be met in the marketplace as long as they work hard enough and make rational choices. This has the effect not only of fostering and normalizing inequalities, but to further reinforce and justify them (Brown, 2015; Dardot & Laval, 2013).

This also produces a neoliberal state that acts on behalf of the economy to facilitate economic growth and competition; to ‘regulate society by the market’ (Foucault, 2008). This commitment to the economization of all spheres of life has the effect then of narrowing the functions of state and citizen to the “sphere of economically defined freedom at the expense of common investment in public life and public goods” (Brown, 2015, 108). As such problems that might once have been recognized as a collective social ill have shifted to the personal realm- so for example, environmental degradation is captured no longer as a collective issue, requiring collective action, but a private issue, requiring individuals and charity to make voluntary and individual or market shifts to cause less degradation (Hamann, 2009). This has the effect not only of fostering and normalizing inequalities, but to further reinforce and justify them (Brown, 2015; Dardot & Laval, 2013).

### **Problematizing the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change**

#### ***The State as the facilitator of growth and competition***

Under a neoliberal rationality the primary role of the state is to ensure the proper functioning of the market economy- to ensure that the conditions for ongoing competition as a means of generating economic growth. The state then gains its legitimacy through its ability to support and create the conditions for ongoing economic growth, while not stepping in or being perceived as controlling how it occurs. Foucault elaborates:

In neoliberalism social policy must not be something that works against economic policy and compensates for it or that follows strong economic growth by becoming more generous. Instead economic growth by itself should enable individuals to prosper and to protect themselves against risk, so economic growth is the state’s social policy.

Competition is a means facilitating an end; the state primes this means so that the economy can generate the end (Foucault, quoted in Brown 2015, 63).

It is under this neoliberal rationality that the Canadian government, in partnership with the provinces and territories released the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in December 2016. The 85-page framework outlines Canada's plan to meet its goal of reducing carbon emissions by 30% from 2005 levels by 2030 setting an emissions cap at 523 MT of carbon, as part of its commitments to the Paris Agreement. The framework is built around four main pillars: pricing carbon pollution; complementary actions for reducing emissions across the economy; measures to adapt and build resilience to climate change impacts; and actions to accelerate innovation, support technology and create jobs. The policy document introduces itself as a:

Collective plan to grow our economy while reducing emissions and building resilience to adapt to a changing climate. It will help us to transition to a strong, diverse and competitive economy; foster job creation with new technologies and exports, and provide a healthy environment for our children and grandchildren (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 5).

The backbone of the framework is premised on the concept of 'clean growth;' the belief that through the appropriate application of science and technological innovation and through establishing proper market incentives that include environmental considerations, ecological degradation can be curbed, while also producing new opportunities for capital accumulation and economic growth (Dale et al., 2016; Sapinski, 2015). To quote the Pan Canadian Framework:

The politics that help drive down emissions can also help the economy to keep growing by cutting costs for Canadians, creating new markets for low-emission goods, and services and helping businesses use cleaner and more efficient technologies that give them a leg up on international competitors (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 8).

The word growth appears in the 85-page document a whopping 114 times, communicating the explicit message that the continuation of economic growth is the top priority. This upholds a vision of the role of the State as the facilitator of economic growth, ensuring that the market remains competitive. The market is regulating not only the economy, but also the climate, and society at large. (Foucault, 2008; Parr, 2016).

An important theme throughout the framework is ensuring not only that investments are made in low carbon technology, but that Canadian firms get this innovative technology to market- and that it is the role of the state to ensure that this competitive advantage is maintained. Under this agenda of clean growth, climate change is structured as an opportunity for new markets for

Canadian businesses, offering new sites for profit and competitive advantage. The logic of competition is repeated throughout the document, exemplified below where it states that:

Taking action now, to position Canada as a global leader on clean technology innovation, will help ensure that Canada remains internationally competitive and will lead to the creation of new jobs across the country (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 3).

This ideological approach has been met ongoing criticism, including that it is the exceedingly narrow framing of the problem of climate change as one of individual carbon emissions, which can be reduced through the proper pricing and valuation of emissions in the market- to be either traded or taxed (Ford, 2011). This narrow approach serves to elevate the “principles of economic competition to the guiding mechanisms of humanity’s interactions with the natural world” (Dale et al., 2016, 2). Alongside this, Erik Swyngedouw convincingly argues that this has led to a ‘post-political’ climate governance, that constructs individual carbon emissions as the totality of the climate crisis. This masks the root causes and drivers of climate change while normalizing a techno-managerial approach in which the solution is to engineer our way out of the crisis (Swyngedouw, 2010; Dempsey, 2016).

Here the economy becomes the primary object of State policy and concern, as environmental issues become cast exclusively in economic terms (Brown, 2015). The justification for acting on climate change in the PCF is deeply embedded in this neoliberal rationality; erased are the many concerns of the people in Canada, and throughout the world whose lives are being profoundly impacted today by climate change; people whose carbon footprints are the smallest. Questions of climate justice, responsibility and obligation that are warranted in discussions of the impacts of climate change are excluded from the conversation. Canada as a wealthy nation, is one of the major contributors to the accumulation of GHG emissions per capita. Yet it still frames its ‘obligations’ in terms of a crude economic cost-benefit analysis: “Taking strong action to address climate change is critical and urgent. The cost of inaction is greater than the cost of action: climate change could cost Canada \$21-43 billion per year by 2050” (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 1).

This contrasts the discourses around climate change that are emerging out of the climate justice movement, that see it as an opportunity to build solidarity and reciprocity, and to address our highly unequal global economy, rather than reinforce the primacy of capital in our attempts to address climate change. The attachment to remaining economically competitive, both nationally and globally ensures that the highly uneven power structures remain entrenched, all in order to ensure that further regimes of accumulation of capital are not threatened (Felli, 2015). As climate change continues to threaten communities’ livelihoods in Canada and abroad what we need to demand is action that is more oriented towards the needs of people- and particularly those that

are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and less towards the accumulation of capital (Leach, Mehta and Prabhakaran, 2016; Felli, 2015)

### *Corporations as site of innovation and solution-makers*

In similar fashion to the Paris Agreement, the PCF fails to address heavy carbon emitters as a primary driver of climate change. Yet, in Canada the fossil energy sector is one of the most powerful industries in the country, - their culpability and responsibility to decarbonize rapidly is missing (Rubin, 2016). Instead, what we have is a climate change policy that allows the largest emissions emitters, and who have exploited both the land and human labour to be cast as the drivers of solutions- the saviours who will get us out of the mess they have created.

As such it fails to recognize that the damage that the tar sands, the largest industrial project on the planet has had on the communities- both human and non-human that call that place home. As Melina Laboucan-Massimo writes:

What we are seeing in the communities around these projects are elevated rates of cancers and respiratory illnesses like emphysema and asthma because of air quality issues and water contamination, as well as the destruction and complete fragmentation of the boreal forest. This boreal forest is one of the last remaining ancient forests in the world- and is crucial to the lungs of Mother Earth” (Laboucan- Massimo, 2014).

However, The PCF takes a soft approach towards Corporate Canada and the energy industry that has caused so much damage, stating: “Canadian industries are the backbone of the economy... industrial emissions are projected to grow between now and 2030 as demand for Canadian-produced goods at home and abroad” (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 20). In addressing this industry, the PCF only offers support to the Alberta government’s emissions cap on tar sands production. This so called ‘cap’ of 100Mt/y actually offers the ability for production to increase, tripling from the 2005 level of 34 Mt/y (Scott & Muttit, 2017). In so doing, it would allow for the oil and gas sector to take up to 53% of Canada’s emissions under its current goal for 2030 (Hughes, 2016). This means substantial cuts for all sectors across the economy, to accommodate the industry that not only continues to push us further into climate crises, but has become one of the most powerful and profitable industries along the way, having received subsidies over the years totaling around 3.3 billion dollars (Milman, 2016). Furthermore, under the PCF the government is offering the oil and gas sector \$50 million over two years to invest in technologies that will reduce GHG emissions (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016). This is consistent with a neoliberal rationale that upholds the aspirations of capital accumulation above other considerations. Rather than approaching industry with restrictions on their activity, the three main areas of action to address the industrial sector follow a similar orientation as the rest of the framework. Under this logic, businesses are seen as sites of innovation that will achieve improvements in efficiency and produce the low-emissions technology that will make Canada competitive on the world stage.



There are serious consequences to this neoliberal approach, both social and economic. It avoids addressing the massive asymmetries of power that exist today in the global economy that has produced our current predicament (Kenis & Lievens, 2014). Following similar trends on a global scale, Canada has seen an extreme consolidation of wealth, both in the hands of corporations and individuals to the extent that the two wealthiest Canadians have the same combined wealth as the bottom 30%, (CBC, 2017) and where corporate consolidation has seen to the top 25 enterprises out of the more than 1 million incorporated businesses across the country accounting for 41.2% of all business assets (Carroll, 2016). This translates into political power to shape state policies, through their lobbying and close relationships to politicians who in a capitalist state are ostensibly dependent on the capitalist elite for revenue and job creation.’ Corporations have significant power to choose where they invest and to what degree. They also exert increasing cultural power, through owning and controlling mass media, and through funding to public and private institutions, policy planning think-tanks, universities and researchers to the degree that we look to corporations for the solutions to the crises that capitalism has presented us with (Aschoff, 2015).

The technical ‘solutions’ the framework offers up includes funding and investment opportunities for new forms of clean and renewable technologies such as smart grids, energy storage, electrification of transportation, and renewable energy, improving efficiency standards in buildings and transportation to spur innovation through competition. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these technological solutions as part of a plan for GHG mitigation. But the government plans to do this by increasing support to advance and commercialize innovative technology, and through collaboration to “enable access to capital for clean technology businesses to bring their products and services to market... at commercial scale” (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016, 40). In short, the benefits accrue to the private sector-to the handle of corporate elites who have the capital to bring these products to market, rather than a public benefit for all Canadians.

The PCF is the outcome of this immense corporate power. It supports these power structures and in facilitating the creation of new markets, offers the opportunity for these top firms to extend their reach and power. The benefits of economic growth accrue to a small group of individuals at the expense of a growing majority of both humans and non-human animals, and the other life forms upon which we all depend.

### ***We are not individuals***

In *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* Dardot and Laval (2013) argue that neoliberalism is “nothing more nor nothing less than the form of our existence”- producing distinct kinds of social relations, ways of living, and subjectivities. Wendy Brown adds to this conversation stating:

The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public minded; indeed it would barely exist as a public. The body politic ceases to be a body but is rather a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers (143).

The PCF conceives of individuals not as citizens or communities. We are captured in economic terms as our labour and purchasing power. What the PCF offers to Canadians is a vague promise of employment, created indirectly as an outcome of the new market opportunities of a green economy. However, as Posthuma and Mucoucah (2016) document in their analysis of ‘green economy discourse and policy’, decent jobs with livable incomes are not a guaranteed outcome of market mechanisms in shifting to a green economy. Instead, they note that training programs, income, wealth distribution, gender equity, and measures to tackle poverty must be placed at the forefront of discussion around job creation in a post carbon economy. Failing to do so ignores critical considerations and questions around who can actually access the jobs created by these new markets.

Implicit in the PCF is a false and limited account of human motives and conduct. It misrepresents who we are; what motivates us as individuals and citizens. We are not rational, isolated individuals; we are not the commodity labour; we are interdependent and we live in communities. This is particularly troubling in the face of climate change- which requires deep transformations of the ways that societies are organized to create meaningful low carbon lives for all. This cannot be achieved if we are moving forward with a limited understanding of what human needs are- and as we see, many critical considerations about the ways that climate change will impact everyday life remain absent.

From the perspective of a feminist lens of the everyday, we can see that the neoliberal climate policies offered under this banner of clean growth have significantly uneven impacts (Bee et al., 2015). What is critically missing from the discussion surrounding labour is gender. Women are highly underrepresented in the sectors where these new green jobs are being proposed (Posthuma & Mucoucah, 2016). Furthermore, because it envisions the extension of neoliberal rationality, it will continue to entrench the culturally-constructed gendered division of labour that currently exists and which fails to value reproductive labour, the largely invisible and unpaid labours that keep all people alive and healthy, from birth to death. In the frame of the PCF women are given the option of embodying the neoliberal subject “leaving the world uninhabitable, or taking up the reproductive labour where women occupy their old place as unacknowledged props and supplements to masculinist liberal subjects” (Brown, 2015, 104-105).

*Indigenous communities and the PCF*

A common thread throughout the PCF is the recognition that Indigenous Peoples in Canada will be disproportionately impacted by climate change and are in a unique position to be the leaders of climate change. The specific policy goals on offer in this framework include reducing the reliance on diesel fuel in Indigenous communities, supporting green infrastructure projects, and supporting climate adaptation strategies in Indigenous communities, particularly in northern and coastal communities through collaborative approaches of scientific and traditional forms of knowledge. While these are all in themselves important and necessary projects that should take place- they fail to unpack the ways in which the Canadian state has systematically placed many Indigenous communities in a particularly vulnerable position in the face of climate change. As such, it inadequately addresses the environmental racism that Indigenous communities face, such as the Lubicon Cree- where the community remains in extreme poverty, lacking basic needs such as health services, and running water, in the context of increased health concerns as a result of the toxins from the \$14 billion in oil and gas revenues that have been extracted from their territory (Laboucan-Massimo, 2014). Through the extension of a neoliberal governmentality into the environmental realm, what the PCF does is continue the capitalist project that first acted to colonize Indigenous Peoples, dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land, and of their identities. As Taiaiake Alfred (2017) states:

Dispossession is more than just the political injustice of territorial alienation. Disconnected from the land, we cannot be Indigenous. To be indigenous you have to live out the original instructions and honour your basic responsibilities to your family, to yourself, to other people, and to the other nations of trees, of animals and fish and insects and the waters and winds... and of which speak to it is to exist in a peaceful good way as a human being in this land. Living out this environmental ethic is essential for freedom, health, happiness, and justice to be realized in the life of an Indigenous person

Realizing this environmental ethic becomes nearly impossible under a hegemonic neoliberal rationality that imposes a narrow understanding of the environment- where value is recognized only in those that can be monetized and marketized. This continues to alienate people from the land and has attempted to remove Indigenous peoples from their relationship and identities to the land (Brand & Wissen, 2012; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013) This comes into direct conflict with Indigenous worldviews of the environment, and serves to reproduce ongoing dispossessions. It does not present a meaningful opportunity for reconciliation, nor space for alternate worldviews to exist. As prominent Dene scholar, Glen Coulthard writes: “Without such a massive transformation in the political economy of contemporary settler colonialism, any efforts to rebuild our nations will remain parasitic on capitalism and thus on the perpetual exploitation of our lands and labour” (2013). This framework offers nothing close of any progress of doing such.

### Conclusion

From this analysis we see that the current Federal approach to addressing climate change in Canada continues us on a neoliberal trajectory, placing concerns over market competitiveness and economic growth as the top priority. In so doing it establishes a narrow, and technocratic approach to climate change solutions- one that constructs it as a problem of reducing specific carbon emissions through privatized technological solutions. This allows for our even power structures- those that have been established under fossil-fueled capitalism to remain in place.

What this means is that those who have benefited the most from the destruction of our planetary systems- the fossil fuel industry in particular bare no responsibility for their actions both in producing the problem, nor in responding to it. Furthermore, in constructing the ‘green economy’ as a site for new markets and new sites for market competition, it risks opening up new opportunities for capitalist domination over people and the environment.

This however does not have to be the trajectory that we continue on in Canada. The climate justice movement has emerged as a global resistance to this form of neoliberal climate governance. It recognizes that the mainstream ‘green economy’ approach taken here is merely a cover for business as usual, and functions primarily to delay the necessary transformation of our current neoliberal order (Ehresman & Okere, 2015; Bond, 2012). The movement situates climate change as a crisis of capitalism and its dependence on fossil fuels to drive unending regimes of accumulation (Ehresman & Okere, 2015; Foster, 2017). In its place, the movement advocates for a politics rooted in social justice and equity, taking a holistic approach that privileges the interests of the majority over the 1% (Bond, 2012; Satgar, 2017).

Here in Canada these systemic alternatives exist in the Leap Manifesto (2015), which provides a vision for our future rooted in “caring for the earth and one another.” It ascribes a new set of values into how we should move forward, built on a foundation of respect of Indigenous peoples’ relationship and responsibility to the land, and allowing for a transition to an energy democracy through collective, community-controlled energy systems, reducing economic, gender and racial inequalities. The groundwork for transformative change has already been laid, as it continues to evolve the government must decide who they will stand with: the citizens already mobilizing for a just transition, or the corporations profiting off of our current crisis.

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