

## GLOSSARY

**Unpacking some of the concepts we might come across in climate justice work (alphabetical order).**

### 1.5 degrees

1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures is generally deemed (by political and scientific consensus) the “safe limit” for global heating – though every fraction of a degree causes damage. Prior to 2015, the target figure generally used was 2 degrees, but thanks to lobbying by campaigners and climate-vulnerable countries, the 2015 Paris Agreement includes the intention to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The world has already warmed by a little over 1 degree since 1880.

These figures represent global averages: in many cases, the actual temperature rises experienced around the world are already much greater.

### Absolute decoupling

‘Decoupling’ in our context refers to the idea that it is possible for the economy to continue to grow without equivalent growth in greenhouse gas emissions and/or resource consumption. ‘Relative decoupling’ is when emissions/resource use continue to grow, but at a slower rate than the economy; this has been achieved in some cases through increased efficiency and decarbonisation of the energy supply. ‘Absolute decoupling’ is when emissions/resource use go down as GDP goes up. It is strongly criticised by ecological economists, who argue there is no evidence it can be achieved.

### Activism

See social action below.

### Adaptation

(definition from [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Synthesis Report Glossary](#))

The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.

### Artivism

Artivism is a portmanteau of the words ‘art’ and ‘activism’. It is said to have been popularised as a concept in the 1960s with the Chicano movement in Los Angeles, but the use of creative expression to cultivate awareness and bring about social change can be found throughout history.

Artivism can involve the use of various disciplines such as visual art, poetry, spoken word, music, film, theatre or street art in a social action. Artists also often use parody or satire through culture jamming and other forms of subvertising (another portmanteau of 'subvert' and 'advertising') to change the original meaning of a well-known image or corporate logo.

Artist [Eve Ensler](#): "This passion has all the ingredients of activism, but is charged with the wild creations of art. Artivism—where edges are pushed, imagination is freed, and a new language emerges altogether."

### Attribution science

A field of research used in climate studies which seeks to test whether — and by how much — climate change is responsible for specific extreme weather events, such as droughts, extreme flooding, hurricanes or excessive heat.

### Capitalism

(definition from [Open Education Sociology Dictionary](#))

An economic system based on market competition and the pursuit of profit, in which the means of production or capital are privately owned by individuals or corporations.

### Carbon offsetting

(definition from [United Nations Environment Programme website](#))

A carbon offset is a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere.

### Class

(definition from [Open Education Sociology Dictionary](#))

An individual's or group's position within the social hierarchy, typically based on power, prestige, and wealth.

### Colonialism

(definition from [Divest to Decolonise Toolkit](#))

Colonialism is control by one power over another area and/or people through establishing settlements and/or exploiting resources. The Indigenous population are directly ruled, displaced, or exterminated. Colonising nations usually control the resources, labour and markets of the colonial territory. Often, they also impose socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the Indigenous population.

## Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)

(definition partly taken from [Climate Nexus](#) and 1992 UNFCCC Treaty)

CBDR-RC is a principle within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that acknowledges the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing climate change - i.e. that every country has a responsibility to take action, but to differing degrees depending on their situation.

## Decolonisation

(definition from [Divest to Decolonise Toolkit](#))

Decolonisation challenges, resists, and dismantles ongoing colonialism imposed through Western powers. Decolonisation is tied to colonialism, but is inseparable from matters of imperialism, social justice, capitalism, and White Supremacy. Decolonisation is a goal but it is not an endpoint. Decolonisation is political, but it is also economic (in the possession of resources), educational (in the imposition of knowledge), cultural (in the erasure of values, attitudes, language, and beliefs), and psychological (internalisation of oppression). The goal of decolonisation is for colonised people to achieve sovereignty — the right and ability of colonised people to practice selfdetermination over their land, cultures, and political and economic systems.

## Deregulation

The removal of laws or restrictions in a particular area. Its stated purpose is usually to increase standards and efficiency by encouraging competition and preventing monopolies. However, it can equally be argued that it lowers standards by removing environmental protections, workers' rights and product safety standards. Financial deregulation, which enabled extreme risk-taking and mortgage mis-selling, was widely blamed for the 2008 economic crash.

## 'Developing' countries

Countries with a less developed industrial base, low per capita income and low standard of living. We use this term only to refer to the 'non-Annex I' list of countries in the context of the UNFCCC – an important distinction, as Annex I countries are those which are expected to take most of the responsibility for reducing emissions.

The term is controversial because it divides the world into two categories without a clear definition, and implies that some countries require "development" while others don't. Outside UNFCCC contexts, we use other terms including 'Global South'; you may also hear 'majority world'.

## Doomism

The belief that total climate breakdown (often including human extinction in the near future) is inevitable, based on predictions which are more pessimistic than the scientific consensus, and that mitigation and most forms of adaptation are therefore largely irrelevant. It is a derogatory term, not generally used by people who subscribe to these beliefs.

This set of beliefs is closely associated with Jem Bendell's 2018 paper 'Deep Adaptation', which has been highly influential in some parts of the climate movement but has also been [widely criticised](#) for its reliance on contested science and its dismissal of scientific consensus.

## Eco-fascism

An ideology experiencing a revival among the far-right, which blames the ecological crisis on overpopulation, immigration, and over-industrialisation and connects nature conservation to ideas of racial 'purity' and racially-based rights to land. In ecofascist thought, the need to preserve an imagined pristine environment is used to justify oppression and sometimes mass murder of certain groups.

## Economic Justice

(definition adapted from [Divest to Decolonise Toolkit](#))

Economic justice is about making sure that the economy is structured to benefit everyone, not just those at the top of society. Everyone should not only be able to access to basic needs for survival, such as healthcare, food and housing, but should also be able to thrive. The economy should serve society, not the other way round. This means that the economy should be increasing the share of national income that goes to wages rather than profits, so that everyone prospers and no one gains excess wealth at the expense of others. This directly contrasts capitalist ideologies that claim that those at the top need to be disproportionately rewarded as 'wealth creators'.

## Enclosure

The act of appropriating common land for private use, depriving users of their rights of access.

## Externalities

In economics, a positive or negative effect caused by a producer which does not have a financial impact on them, and which is therefore not reflected in the price of the goods or services involved. Most externalities are negative. They often relate to environmental and public health issues such as pollution, where private profit to the producer comes at a cost to the public and to nature.

## Extractive economy

(definition from [Climate False Solutions glossary](#))

An economy based on harvesting or extracting natural wealth and exploiting human labour to the maximum degree, without provision for replenishment. It is often placed in opposition to a 'regenerative' economy, which produces, distributes and consumes resources in a way that protects, repairs and sustains life.

## Fair shares

(definition from [Friends of the Earth International](#))

Climate fair shares is a method that enables us to find out what climate action should be taken, based on:

- The remaining carbon budget – The total amount of greenhouse gases that may yet be emitted, globally, before we are most at risk of irreversible and accelerated change.
- The responsibility of the country – Based on the total amount of greenhouse gases the country has already emitted.
- The capability of that country – Based on that country's existing resources, and their ability to act.
- The country's right to develop sustainably.

## False solutions

(definition from [Climate False Solutions glossary](#))

This term is used to bring attention to climate change policies that do not keep fossil fuels underground and that support corporate industry profit over communities. Some examples include: carbon pricing, carbon offsets, carbon capture and storage/sequestration (CCS) and many more examples discussed throughout this toolkit.

## Financialisation

This term refers to a complicated set of phenomena and is difficult to define precisely. Broadly, it relates to the expansion of the finance sector relative to the rest of the economy, and to its growing presence in our lives through the increased use of debt and the repackaging and selling on of loans. Financialisation can be traced back to the 1970s/80s, prompted by a variety of factors including the loosening of regulation around financial transactions and the rise of computers.

## Global South

The term is often used to describe decolonised nations roughly south of the old colonial centres of power. As a collective term it is often associated with Africa, Asia, Latin America and parts of Oceania.

## Global North

The term is seen in opposition to the term Global South. It is often used to describe countries in the hemispheric north that have industrialised and become wealthy through colonialism. As a collective term it is often associated with North America, Europe and parts of Oceania.

## Greenhouse gases

Gases which increase the temperature of the planet by absorbing solar radiation and trapping heat within the atmosphere (the 'greenhouse effect'). These gases include carbon dioxide and methane.

## Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

(definition from [Quakers in Britain New Economy Reading Booklet 1](#))

GDP measures national income and is calculated by adding up the value of all monetary transactions that happen within an economy over a year or financial quarter (3-month period). It represents the monetary income created in that period.

GDP is a measure of economic 'busy-ness'. So, it is increased by the production of useful goods and services, but also by crime, ill health, insurance claims, pollution, war, flood damage, bankers' bonuses, the liquidation of forests and soil fertility ('natural capital') and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources. On the other hand, it is not increased by family caring, volunteering, home-grown food, community fun and celebration.

## Imperialism

(definition from [Divest to Decolonise Toolkit](#))

Imperialism is a set of policies or practices that extend the power and control of one nation over the political, economic, and cultural life of other ones. Imperialism can be understood as the logic that drives colonial projects – it is used to gain or maintain an empire.

## Just transition

(definition adapted from [Climate False Solutions glossary](#))

Just transition refers to the 'transition' away from the fossil fuel economy and the need to ensure this does not disadvantage workers and communities which have been dependent on fossil fuels. It is often used in a narrow sense to mean creating jobs for oil and gas workers, but can also refer to a much broader framework of principles, strategies and practices that shift society away from polluting, extractive economies to local, healthy, caring and sharing economies. Just transition centres the leadership of frontline communities and workers – working together to envision, organise and build these new economies, aligned with local ecosystems and the needs of those most harmed.

### Loss and damage

The impacts of human-induced climate change which have not been, or cannot be, avoided or adapted to. This includes both sudden-onset extreme weather events like hurricanes and cyclones, and slow-onset events like sea-level rises. The Paris Agreement recognises “the importance of averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change”.

### Mitigation

Action taken to minimise climate change by reducing the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, either by preventing greenhouse gas emissions or by increasing the capacity of carbon ‘sinks’ - systems which remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

### Neoclassical economics

(definition from [Investopedia.com](https://www.investopedia.com))

A broad theory that focuses on supply and demand as the driving forces behind the production, pricing, and consumption of goods and services. It emerged in around 1900 to compete with the earlier theories of classical economics, which saw the cost of production as the main factor in determining price. Neoclassical economic theories underlie today’s mainstream economics.

### Neocolonialism

(definition from the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](https://www.iep.utoronto.ca/))

The subtle propagation of socio-economic and political activity by former colonial rulers aimed at reinforcing capitalism, neo-liberal globalization, and cultural subjugation of their former colonies.

### Neoliberal / Neoliberalism

Liberalism in economics, also called ‘free-market economics’, is the view that the state should not intervene in the economy or restrict individuals’ ability to accumulate wealth. Neoliberalism, which has been the dominant ideology in the UK and the US since the 1980s, seeks to extend the logic of free markets into more areas of life through privatisation. It differs significantly from classical liberalism in that rather than keeping the state away from the market, it uses the levers of the state to serve the interests of markets – for example through deregulation, reduced corporate taxes, and financial incentives for privatisation. There is, however, no single agreed definition of neoliberalism.

### Polluter pays principle

(definition from [United Nations Environment Programme website](https://www.unep.org/))

The principle that those causing pollution should meet the costs to which it gives rise.



## Prison abolition movement

(definition from [Community Action on Prison Expansion](#))

Prison abolitionists want to live in a world without institutions such as prisons, immigration detention centres and secure juvenile facilities. They believe that the police, courts and prisons systematically target people in our society – poor people, queer and trans people, people of colour, and people with mental health issues – and that incarceration is a form of violence against these people. They oppose the idea that imprisoning someone is a form of justice, or promises ‘rehabilitation’, and believe that there are better ways of reducing and addressing interpersonal violence.

The mutually reinforcing network of our country’s laws, systems of policing and surveillance, courts, prisons, and the companies which profit from the incarceration and exploitation of prisoners, are collectively referred to as the [Prison Industrial Complex \(P.I.C.\)](#).

Prison abolitionists envisage various strategies for dismantling the PIC, which may include:

- Opposing the construction of new prisons
- Decriminalisation (removing laws which target, for example, drug users or sex workers, so that fewer people are put into unnecessary contact with a deeply prejudiced judicial system)
- Improving access to mental health care services
- Alternative ways of dealing with interpersonal violence within communities, for example through transformative justice processes
- Fighting against inequalities based on class, race, ability, gender, and sexuality.

Prison abolition may seem an unrealistic or utopian goal, as prisons are such a widely accepted part of our society. But prison abolitionists believe that we do not need to accept prisons as a fact of life, and that a world without prisons is possible.

For more resources explaining abolition, go to <https://abolitionistfutures.com/resources>.

## Racism

(definition from [Racial Justice Network glossary](#))

A system that uses the concept of race as the basis for maintaining inequality in society through interpersonal and institutional oppression.

## Regenerative economy

(definition from [Climate False Solutions glossary](#))

An economic system based on ecological restoration, community resilience, social equity and participatory processes aimed at universal liberation. A regenerative economy values the dignity of work and humanity and prioritizes local community governance and stewardship of resources. It requires a re-localization and democratization of how we produce, consume and share, and ensures all have access to healthy food, clean energy, clean air and water, good jobs and healthy living environments.



## Reparations

The act or process of making amends for a wrong i.e., making repairs, seeking reparatory justice. It is often used to refer to a process where a country or institution responsible for major harm transfers money or land to those who have been harmed (or their descendants). However, it can also include other elements such as apologies, additional decision-making rights or programmes of public investment.

Many advocates of reparations for colonialism and slavery argue that reparation means not only making amends for past harms and injustices, but requires a fundamental transformation of our relationships with all living beings and peoples, so that such harm can never happen again.

## Sacrifice zones

(definition from [Nowhere and Everywhere](#))

A sacrifice zone or sacrifice area is a geographic area that has been permanently impaired by environmental damage or economic disinvestment. It can be a specific area suffering from terrible housing conditions that cause numerous health issues, farmers exposed to chemicals each day and neighbourhoods positioned right next to toxic plants or landfills.

Fossil fuels require what journalist Naomi Klein calls “sacrifice zones” – places and communities damaged or destroyed by fossil fuel drilling and mining. Politicians and other decision-makers tend to overlook these harms and injustices and most people are generally unaware of these issues.