

Different Responses to Climate Change: An Historical Overview

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Abstract. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report finalized in February 2022 underscores the urgent nature of the climate emergency, signaling profound impacts on both the environment and society. Amidst this crisis, various Green New Deal (GND) projects have emerged, offering diverse responses to the multifaceted challenges at hand. However, the intersection of economic policies and environmental imperatives predates the GND, tracing back to the Rio+20 Conference, where concepts like "green economy" and "sustainable economic growth" were first introduced. This paper critically examines the evolution of these terms and their influence on international agendas, particularly within organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It argues that the concept of the 'green economy' has largely emerged as a neoliberal strategy, aiming to commodify environmental processes and prioritize monetary valuation over equitable distribution and social rights. Against the backdrop of an escalating climate crisis, there arises a pressing need for a comprehensive inquiry into our approaches and actions. This study delves deeply into the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideologies on environmental initiatives and economic endeavors, aiming to elucidate the degree to which socio-environmental considerations are integrated into policy discourse and implementation. Moreover, this research provides a nuanced examination of the origins and multifaceted consequences associated with the emergence of the 'green economy' paradigm. By dissecting these dimensions, it aims to offer a more thorough understanding of the intricate interplay between neoliberalism, environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic dynamics,

Keywords. Green New Deal, Neoliberalism, Green Economy, International Organizations

1. Introduction

According to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finalized in February 2022[1], the world is experiencing a climate emergency, which will affect both the environment and society. Currently, there are several Green New Deal projects that address different perspectives and offer varied responses to the crisis at hand.

However, the debate between the economy and the environment did not begin with the GND. Since the Rio+20 Conference, environmental issues have become central to the international agenda. At that time, the terms "green economy" and "sustainable economic growth" were introduced.

Thus, the terms used guide the practices of international organizations, such as the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and, subsequently, the formulation of GND plans. The term 'green economy' was born as an opportunity to commodify and monetarily value environmental processes, a neoliberal way of dealing with the crisis. [2]

Neoliberalism is the form of existence of contemporary capitalism, it is a way of reorganizing the state in order to guarantee the domination of international finance to the detriment of equitable distribution and social rights. [3]

In the face of the increasingly pressing climate crisis, there is a compelling need for a comprehensive inquiry into our approaches and actions. This study endeavors to delve deeply into the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideologies on the nexus of environmental initiatives and economic endeavors.

Furthermore, it seeks to elucidate the degree to which socio-environmental considerations are incorporated into the discourse and implementation of such initiatives.

Moreover, this research aims to provide a nuanced examination of the origins and multifaceted consequences associated with the emergence of the 'green economy' paradigm. By exploring these dimensions in detail, it will be possible to have a more thorough understanding of the complex interplay between neoliberalism, environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic dynamics.

2. Ways to deal with the climate emergency

2.1 From the *New Deal* to GND

The Green New Deal (GND) can be explained as a green transition or a transition to a low-carbon economy, having policies focused on tackling climate change. To understand the GND's references, it is necessary to look back to the 1930s in the United States of America. During this period, between 1933 and 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented the New Deal as a way to combat the Great Depression of 1929 [4].

There are two main goals in Roosevelt's New Deal. The short-term, aiming at economic growth, and the medium/long-term, with a focus on making the economy more resilient to new recessions [X]. Therefore, according to Gonzaga, GND and ND are initiatives that intend to leverage economic growth through reforms both in the economic sphere and in institutions, incorporating a social perspective and a comprehensive approach that takes into account short, medium, and long-term horizons, being conducted by the State. The crucial distinction is that in the GND, the environment is a central aspect of policymaking.

The GND has as its starting point the Paris Agreement, highlighting the growing importance of environmental concern on global agendas. This discussion began at Rio+20, where terms such as "green economy" and "sustainable economic growth" were introduced.

Confirming the climate crisis scenario, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report finalized in February 2022, points out that humans and ecosystems are interdependent and that climate change tends to get more extreme and cause damage to both. As a way to combat these changes, since 2018, there has been an advance in the discussions by the GND, guided mainly by resolution 109 by Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Edward J. Markey and the European Green New Deal, in practice in the European Union.

2.2 Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD)

In 2009, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) initiated debates on the concept of "green growth", defined as the stimulation of economic development by ensuring that natural assets continue to provide environmental resources and services essential to our well-being [4]. The OECD discussion is based on the risk of climate change and its impacts on the decrease in the supply of raw materials, in addition to the loss of biodiversity and water scarcity [5].

In this sense, the institution seeks to create new forms of growth by increasing productivity, innovations and new markets. That is why investments in the efficient use of natural capital are necessary.

The relative mismatch, evidenced by economic growth in contrast to the proportional decrease in the use of environmental resources and services, becomes a central concern in this context. However, throughout the document, there is no mention of the eradication of poverty and mismatch between the generation of pollution.

2.3 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

In turn, the "green economy" approach by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) incorporates the social dimension. A more in-depth definition offered by UNEP on the subject is "[...] green economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (1) [6].

The addition of the term "green" in the economy is, in general, seen as a way of showing the need to take into account the ecological dimension in economic recovery, as José Seone points out. The term was put into practice after Edward Barbier's work in 2009 at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in which he explained the need to reorient an amount of public investment at the international level towards 'green' economic activities, as a way to preserve and create jobs, as well as to stimulate the world economy [2].

Furthermore, UNEP also claims that new commercial rules could benefit the environment, but it does not develop this subject. The most detailed responses to climate change are about ecological agriculture and urban development [7].

The green economy emerged as a response to the various environmental policy dilemmas under discussion between 1970 and 1990, in which economic development was opposed to the preservation of nature [2].

3. Green Economy and Neoliberalism

3.1 Green Economy and its counterpoints

The green economy receives criticism for being a means of imposing value on ecosystem services, being a new phase of the commercialization and privatization of the environment. Since this process ignores the needs of the local population. Nature becomes a commercial item for speculation, resulting in expulsion from locals.

Thus, in order to attract international finance capital, the environment as a whole needs to be attractive for profit, from the forest, to the soil and the capacity to store CO₂ [5].

Therefore, this concept seeks an economic transition without political involvement and without imposing guidelines for the economy, being defended a neutrality and freedom of operation. Politics is only an instrument for establishing general conditions that provide a path and general conditions for the transition.

However, this type of approach is criticized for not proposing an economy integrated into society. Fundamental issues related to human rights, resource distribution, democratic participation and gender equality are barely mentioned. This is because the concept of the 'green economy' was formulated from the main international organizations, with market-based instruments and without a public and comprehensive debate, which listened to different voices. In this context, companies are considered the main economic agents, leaving no room for different social actors to show their demands. [7].

3.2 Socio-environmental conflicts

Socio-environmental conflicts are connected to the availability of natural resources and also to the damage caused by their destruction. Also according to the author, the way in which economic growth takes place brings with it the exclusion of the territory, generating slums in the city and rural exodus in the countryside [8].

For Maristella Svampa [9], the current development models manifest a common thought: intensive occupation of the territory, increasing environmental impacts with the presence of large corporations, in addition to low-intensity democracy and human rights violations.

3.3 Political ecology

As a way of responding to these problems, there is the problematization of the environmental issue from the perspective of the use of natural resources as scarce gives characteristics of control and protection of such resources as a way of solving the "environmental crisis" together with environmental management, which is the result of the participation of the collective, social movements and individuals on natural resources. since society and the environment are inseparable. Moreover, political ecology has emerged as a critical response to increased spending within the dominant productive system. In addition to examining the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production, it seeks to highlight the alienation that exists between industrial society and the natural environment. [8]

In addition to the idea of political ecology, Acosta and Abrand [10] propose the concept of post-extractivism, which in addition to criticizing the exploitation of the environment and the social and economic problems it causes, also suggests that the current way of thinking about 'development' must be overcome. Therefore, the crisis of the destruction of Nature leads to a need for socio-political reordering, with clear policies that lead to a new way of organizing institutions.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the urgency of the climate emergency, as highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report of February 2022, underscores the critical need for comprehensive and decisive action. The emergence of various Green New Deal (GND) projects reflects a global recognition of the interconnectedness between environmental sustainability and socioeconomic development.

The roots of the debate between the economy and the environment extend beyond the inception of the GND, with environmental issues gaining prominence since the Rio+20 Conference. The introduction of terms like "green economy" and "sustainable economic growth" marked a pivotal moment in shaping international agendas and policy frameworks.

However, it is imperative to critically examine the underlying ideologies and paradigms guiding environmental initiatives. The neoliberal approach embedded within the 'green economy' paradigm raises concerns regarding the commodification and privatization of nature, often at the expense of social equity and democratic participation.

Furthermore, socio-environmental conflicts underscore the interconnected nature of resource availability and human well-being. The emergence of political ecology and concepts like post-extractivism signal a growing recognition of the need for socio-political reordering and alternative models of development that prioritize ecological

integrity and social justice.

Moving forward, addressing the climate emergency necessitates a holistic approach that integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations. It requires reimagining our relationship with nature and redefining notions of progress and development within a framework that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and resilience. Only through concerted efforts and transformative actions can we effectively navigate the complex challenges posed by the climate crisis and pave the way towards a more just and sustainable future.

5. References

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