



A Policy Package for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth

A joint contribution
by the REAL project
and friends

real
A POST GROWTH DEAL

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Policy Areas



Policy Area 1: Access to social protection and services (**P1**)



Policy Area 2: Labour policies and the care economy (**P2**)



Policy Area 3: Economic systems transformation (**P3**)



Policy Area 4: Climate, environment and resources (**P4**)



Policy Area 5: Trade, finance, debt and global solidarity (**P5**)

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1. Development and Delinking policies for low- and middle-income countries

Most extreme poverty is concentrated in low and middle-income countries (LMIC). Since global per capita income is far above the poverty line,¹ the existence of poverty is a consequence of inequality. There are two dimensions of inequality that plague LMICs. The first is intranational inequality, where resources and income are not equally distributed among the residents of a country. The second is international inequality; resources and income are not equally distributed between countries.

The problem of intranational inequality has been extensively studied in the field of development economics. From section 1.1 to Section 1.7, we discuss development policies that aim to eradicate domestic poverty directly through state intervention. These include labor policies, social protection, and access to land and energy resources.

Enacting these policies in isolation, however, addresses only part of the problem while

ignoring systematic international inequalities and injustices. Research shows that labor², resources^{4 5 6}, and value⁷ is drained from LMICs to high-income countries (HIC) through international trade. As a result, HICs have seen lower working hours for workers while working hours in LMICs continue to remain high and often growing. Structural adjustment programs have severely exacerbated human rights⁸ and increased poverty⁹. However, unilaterally undoing structural adjustments in LMICs poses the risk of capital flight, sanctions from HICs, and other forms of coercion that can lead to economic instability and exacerbate poverty. Therefore, we also propose a set of “Delinking” policies that are aimed at enhancing LMIC’s economic sovereignty. Section 1.8 provides a general overview of delinking policies while sections 1.9 to 1.14 provide extensive information on individual policies. These policies are directly aimed at reducing international inequalities and increasing economic sovereignty in LMICs.

1.1 Employment guarantee (P1, P2)

Suryadepto Nag

The problem:

High unemployment in many Low and Middle-income countries is a source of poverty and suffering in a context in which people rely on a source of income to make ends meet.

The policy:

Employment guarantees aim at providing meaningful work and a continuous source of sufficient income for people to live decent lives. If designed well, they could effectively address poverty and unemployment and provide possibilities for many people to participate in a concerted effort towards real development, meeting human needs and social ecological transition. They leverage control over wages also in sectors not affected by the program and prevent poverty within and beyond the workforce.

Implementation:

Job guarantee programs can be designed at national or regional scales. They can be formulated around a “right to work on demand”, wherein the government guarantees to provide jobs at a fixed wage rate to people who sign up to the program. In circumstances under which the government cannot employ an interested person, the government would be obliged to pay them wages, nonetheless. Individuals could be employed by the government for local development works, for the expansion of public services and public distribution schemes, and for facilitating a just transition of the economy.

Geographical scope:

These schemes are applicable to all low and middle-income countries (without similar policies already in place). Particular beneficiaries would be countries with high levels of unemployment (% in brackets) such as Eswatini (35%), South Africa (32%), Botswana (23%), Gabon (20%), the Republic of Congo (20%), Namibia (19%), Somalia (19%), Libya (19%), Jordan (18%), Yemen (17%), Lesotho (16%), Angola (15%), Tunisia (15%), Iraq (15%), and Montenegro (15%). Most of these countries are in the African Union, and the Union could play an important role in coordinating these policies, with support from the International Labor Organization¹⁰.

Timeline:

The policy could be implemented immediately or in the short term, with poverty-alleviating results potentially bearing effects within months. Additional impacts such as competing private or informal sector wages could be observable in the short-to-medium term (1-5 years).

Benefits:

An employment guarantee could directly address poverty by providing income to those who are in greatest need of it – the poor and the marginalized. A universal employment guarantee implicitly fixes a minimum wage through self-selection. Unless employers pay wages at least equaling the wage level fixed by the employment guarantee, workers would likely opt for the government's job guarantee program instead. Job guarantee programs can also be instrumental in women's labor market participation, especially in contexts where women are less likely to be hired or paid equal wages by private contractors, and more likely to be locked into low- or no-pay informal job markets. Furthermore, an employment guarantee could crucially improve the public provision of essential infrastructures, particularly in economically marginalized regions. Due to self-selection in signing up for the program, the poorest and marginalized are most likely to register, and could thus be engaged in development works in local communities with relative logistical ease. The program could also be used by governments for building infrastructure for a just social-ecological transition, notably decentralized renewable energy systems.

Evidence:

The largest and most successful instance of implementing an employment guarantee is from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) in India (NREGA). The scheme guarantees 100 days of assured employment per rural household in a year, 150 days of assured employment in drought-affected areas, and 200 days in certain states to benefit marginalized groups. There is strong evidence for the role of NREGA in poverty alleviation^{11 12 13}, rural development¹⁴, women's labor force participation^{15 16}, and crisis relief (evidenced by the expansion of the scheme during COVID-19). NREGA improved wages, especially with the actual payment of minimum wages, and people's awareness of minimum wages, and increased agricultural wages (although NREGA work seldom involved agriculture)³. This example shows that the employment guarantee brought benefits not only to the recipients of the scheme but to all workers in the village. Evidence also demonstrates that self-selection has been effective as many beneficiaries come from marginalized and deprived parts of the rural population¹⁷. Partial employment guarantee programs have been attempted in some European contexts such as the MAGMA project in Marienthal, Austria, or the Actiris program which is closer to employment exchange schemes rather than an actual employment guarantee^{18 19}.

1.2 Universal care income (P1, P2)

Giacomo D'Alisa

The problem:

The COVID-19 pandemic not only highlighted the importance of care work in sustaining life and ecosystems, but it also revealed the unsustainability of a growth-driven market system. Care work, both paid and unpaid, is essential for the reproduction of life and ecosystems, yet it is often undervalued in capitalist economies. Women, especially those from marginalized communities, bear the brunt of unpaid care work, leading to significant gender inequalities.

The policy:

The Universal Care Income (UCI) is proposed as an unconditional income for all adults, with the aim of recognizing and rewarding the care work performed by individuals. At the same time, it aims to address the historical “care debt” owed to women. Therefore, the UCI should be differentiated by gender, with women receiving more due to their disproportionate contribution to care work. It is a redistributive policy aimed at the general wealth produced by paid and unpaid workers, which is currently appropriated unfairly by capitalist dynamics. Unlike a Universal Basic Income, the UCI specifically recognizes and rewards care work, aligning with feminist and degrowth principles. In agrarian economies, an alternative or complementary approach to UCI could be a one-time, state-led redistribution of land to landless rural households. This approach is not universal in the strictest sense, as it only applies to agricultural households.

Implementation:

The UCI should be set above the poverty line and tailored to local conditions, guided by public debate and a democratic design process. This means the UCI can be thought of as either a universal, differentiated monetary transfer or as a redistribution of land access in a subsistence-driven society. It should be funded through progressive taxation, including taxes on income, wealth, resource extraction, and financial transactions, ensuring that high-income individuals do not benefit, and that public debt does not increase. Consequently, the UCI should be accompanied by other policies that promote non-commodified care, such as universal care services and job guarantees, delivered by the public sector and community-based care services. The UCI aims to address historical gender inequalities, but it should be implemented in a way that avoids reinforcing gender stereotypes. This can be achieved by supporting gender minorities and promoting diversity. The amount of the transfer can be determined by the local cost of living. For land redistribution, see the section on agricultural land redistribution for implementation details.

Geographical Scope:

The UCI can be enacted at the state or national level in all countries worldwide.

Timeline:

Implementation can begin immediately or in the short term. Poverty reduction benefits can be observed immediately, with impacts growing over time.

Benefits:

The UCI offers a transformative vision by centering care work as a fundamental pillar of progressive efforts to build a more equitable and caring society. It addresses gender inequalities, promotes environmental sustainability, and challenges the growth-driven economic model.

Evidence:

Although a universal care income has yet to be enacted in any country, one successful example of the Universal Basic Income comes from Kenya²⁰. Other countries have enacted similar cash transfers programs for women, with significant success in Brazil²¹, Mexico²², and West Bengal, India²³.

1.3 Universal basic service (P1)

Julia Steinberger

The problem:

Current economic development and growth are most often at the expense of the most vulnerable, creating large inequalities, multi-dimensional deprivation, and sacrificing vulnerable populations and livelihoods.

The policy:

Beyond growth policies thus include “Universal Basic Services” (or UBS), which ensure universal access to basic services vital to people’s basic needs, facilitating access to what Prof Narasimha Rao has defined as “Decent Living Standards”²⁴ or satisfying universal human needs^{25 26}. These include subsistence (food, water), protection (shelter, sanitation, safe infrastructure), and connection to the rest of society. Universal Basic Services thus include safe, universal, and affordable access to public transportation, electricity, and communication.

The goal of universal basic services policies is to ensure a material and social foundation, corresponding to universal human needs, below which no one in society can fall. For this foundation to be provided efficiently, it should be provided unconditionally to all. Versions of UBS have been proposed encompassing different aspects^{27 28 29}. UBS has also been implemented across sectors and countries, with examples like lifeline tariffs for electricity and water (the first unit of household use is free, with steeply increasing costs thereafter), the NHS in the UK, and free and universal public education from nursery to tertiary education in many countries of the world.

A monetary version of UBS, Universal Basic Income (UBI) can be considered as an alternative or a complement to UBS. UBI focuses on market-based consumption, and UBS on orienting equitable and accessible provision³⁰. Having only UBI might leave people entirely vulnerable to price changes, such as inflation or rent increases, whereas having only UBS may restrict choices and reduce consumptive autonomy.

Implementation:

The policies related to Universal Basic Services, and improving public services generally, require the creation of organizations tasked with providing the services, either directly (like a department of education is responsible for school buildings, hiring teachers, developing curricula and so on), or indirectly (for instance by regulation imposing lifeline tariffs on electricity providers). The provision of such services can be done in multiple ways: by economy-wide redistribution via taxation (as in the case of health, education, and most infrastructure and transport systems currently), by sector-specific redistribution (such as in the case of lifeline then steep tariffs for electricity or water), or by combinations of monetary and in-kind contributions (in-kind contributions of labor via universal community service, for instance).

UBI or cash transfers may be problematic if households are forced to purchase commodities and services from markets. This may also inflate prices due to profit motives. Both UBI and UBS can lead to black market or hoarding behavior on the supply side. This could be achieved through direct food transfers with proper accounting mechanisms leading to higher nutritional outcomes than cash transfers, making them preferable especially in situations of high food insecurity³¹.

It is also necessary for the services to be universal rather than targeted to poor households only.

This is because:

- *Targeted services are prone to inclusion and exclusion errors*
- *The beneficiaries of targeted basic services are, by definition, poorer, and hence less powerful, and will have lower bargaining power. Thus, flaws in implementation are less likely to be rectified, as opposed to the universal case.*

Implementing Universal Basic Services, and improving public services generally, requires major shifts in procurement policies, since provision should be reoriented to create conditions of universally accessible and affordable service delivery.

Procurement policies that favor UBS would include:

- *State procurement with a preference given to local procurement, since local expenditure implies investment in the local workforce, agriculture and industry, meaning that the beneficiaries and producers are bound to common interests. The government should procure grains directly from farmers and not from markets to provide insurance to farmers and avoid market fluctuations.*
- *Local management of UBS by boards made up of community members, workers and users, to ensure democratic control of provision.*
- *Strong transparency requirements and national oversight to guard against mismanagement, as well as to effectively deploy technical and social innovations.*
- *The interaction of public and private economies should be monitored and modeled by government and independent researchers.*

Geographical Scope:

To be enacted in all low- and middle-income countries that do not have existing policies for UBS. Several countries have public distribution systems in some capacity; however, this is typically targeted and not universal, and in these cases, the public distribution systems should be expanded and universalized.

Timeline:

Short-term (1 year)

Benefits:

Core goals for post-growth societies include (1) protecting the most vulnerable, with sufficient access to social connection and material living standards, and (2) prioritizing production and consumption that satisfies basic human needs at low levels of resource use. Public services play a key role in both these core goals, as demonstrated by empirical research.

UBS connects human rights to life and health with the obligations and priorities of societies, resolving this gap. Modern societies are characterized by wasteful overproduction driving overconsumption, with great inequalities accompanying persistent and worsening poverty. UBS ensures that the first priority for production and consumption is to meet the basic needs of the citizens/residents. UBS also enables massive sectoral shifts to occur without harm to livelihoods or well-being, since periods of professional retraining, or recovery from health incidents, can be covered without risk of poverty thanks to UBS. UBS thus stabilizes the economy and prevents natural disasters or economic downturns from disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable.

Evidence:

Public services play a significant role in securing universal well-being within planetary boundaries³². Empirical research at the international level³³ and national level³⁴ demonstrate the crucial protective role that access to sufficient levels of public services play in achieving high levels of well-being at low levels of resource use³⁵. Research from the REAL project using comprehensive data from the Gallup World Poll demonstrates that satisfying basic needs, both social and material, is far more important than economic growth for achieving well-being³⁶. For concrete case studies on the benefits of universal basic services, see Jing (2000)³⁷ Dev and Sharma (2010)³⁸ and Dreze and Sen (2013)³⁹

1.4 Schooling incentives (P1, P2)

Suryadepto Nag

The problem:

This policy aims to reduce child labor, encourage schooling, provide nutrition to children, and reduce child poverty overall.

The policy:

A schooling incentive scheme, enacted at the national or regional level and implemented at the local level, can encourage households to send their children to school and keep children from dropping out of school and taking up jobs. The incentive could be in the form of cash transfers to households, or as school meals programs. School meals programs can have the added advantage of ensuring sufficient and healthy nutrition.

Implementation:

Schooling incentives can be administered either directly by the government or indirectly via other institutions. If the incentive is in the form of conditional cash transfers, then these can be administered, for example, by a local government to directly target households. Conditional cash transfers would have to be larger than potential wages earned by children if engaged in labor and the cost of schooling (if any). If the incentive is in the form of school meals (or similar school incentives), they can be administered at the level of schools with finances provided by the government. The latter is likely to work better in countries with an expansive public school system.

Geographical scope:

The policy could be implemented (or strengthened) in all low and middle-income countries, especially in countries with high instances of child labor (% in brackets) such as Guinea-Bissau (64%), Cameroon (62%), Sierra Leone (59%), Chad (56%), Burkina Faso (50%), Malawi (49%), Niger (49%), Nicaragua (48%), South Sudan (44%), Somalia (44%), Nepal (43%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (41%) and the Kyrgyz Republic (41%). Other beneficiaries could be countries with low secondary school attendance (often overlapping with the former) such as the Central African Republic (15%), Uganda (24%), Tanzania (28%), and Ethiopia (35%). Countries with a prevalence of undernourishment would also benefit from school meals programs, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (45%), Madagascar (40%), Yemen (40%), Zimbabwe (38%), and Zambia (35%)⁴⁰.

Timeline:

The schemes can be implemented immediately and benefits regarding school enrollment, child labor and nutrition could materialize quickly (1-2 years) and benefits regarding skilling the labor force becoming apparent in the longer run (10 years).

Benefits:

Benefits of school incentive programs are multifaceted. They increase literacy and education rates, thus preparing the youth and developing a skilled workforce for the future. Furthermore, children attending schools are no longer subject to exploitation in the workplace. There are also policy-specific benefits:

- **Conditional cash transfers** – are relatively easy to implement: the government would only need to determine target households, develop a system to ensure that the conditions are met, and one to enable transfers. If the scheme is targeted rather than universal, costs would be lower for both the sums of transfers and for the cost of infrastructure required to support the scheme.
- **School meal programs (and other universal incentives)** have the added advantage of providing nutrition to children. If universal, they are not affected by inclusion and exclusion errors in determining target households, which can be particularly effective in countries where data on target groups is not robust. School meals programs also break social barriers (class, caste, etc.) as children from different social groups eat the same meal together.

Evidence:

There is a large body of evidence on the success of both conditional cash transfers and school meals programs from developing countries across four continents.

- **Conditional cash transfers** – A very successful example of conditional cash transfers as a schooling incentive is from Brazil's Bolsa Familia scheme⁴¹. Bolsa Familia targeted low-income households earning below a certain threshold per capita, with families with children, adolescents, and pregnant women receiving priority. The program was implemented as a cash transfer to the family on the condition of meeting certain conditions, one of which was an 85% school attendance requirement for children aged 6-17, along with other requirements related to healthcare. Bolsa Familia helped reduce inequality and extreme poverty, while substantially increasing education outcomes⁴². The impacts on education were even found to translate into long-term impacts in terms of better jobs⁴³. Similar conditional cash transfer programs have been implemented in Mexico with positive impacts on education and child health^{44 45}.
- **School meals programs** – There are multiple successful experiments with school meals programs in Asia and Africa. The largest body of evidence stems from India's mid-day meals program, which led to higher schooling enrollment⁴⁶, and nutrition⁴⁷. Evidence from China's rural school meals program demonstrates an improvement in child labor outcomes⁴⁸. School meals programs have also proved beneficial in Burkina Faso^{49 50}, Liberia⁵¹, and Kenya⁵².

1.5 Energy access (P1)

Ange Nkonko Kibelo Martin's

The problem:

Research indicates that at least 1.18 billion people in developing countries lack access to basic, clean and reliable electricity and cooking services⁵³. Furthermore, other scholars suggest that we may be underestimating how many people live without electricity access due to inconsistencies in electricity access measurements⁵⁴. This policy aims to address energy access in the Global South.

Policy & implementation:

Achieving universal energy access requires strong political commitment and substantial financial investments, which can be challenging for countries in the Global South. According to IRENA⁵⁵, reaching universal energy access before 2030 would require an annual investment of 36 billion USD. To put this into perspective, the total national budget of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for 2024 was 15.8 billion USD⁵⁶. Hence, overcoming financial barriers requires a balanced mix of policies and funding mechanisms.

When evaluating energy access, it is pivotal to distinguish access to electricity and access to clean cooking.

In the short term, subsidies for scaling up solar mini-grids, solar home systems (SHS), and solar lamps are key for expanding electricity access. PAYG (pay-as-you-go) and EaaS (Energy-as-a-service) models have demonstrated significant potential and should be complemented by grid extension in high-density areas. Government-backed guarantees can mitigate investor risks, lower costs, and enable access to low-interest loans.

In the medium term, energy sources with slightly longer development timelines such as wind and small hydro power (SHP), can be developed. Removing red tape, streamlining permits, offering tax exemptions/incentives, and enhancing capacity building will attract investment and support entrepreneurs. Strengthening institutional stability ensures sustainable energy transition benefits and prevents resource diversion to other sectors, such as defense.

In the long term, policies should leverage scientific tools to identify least-cost pathways, prioritizing grid modernization and expansion. Although government-funded utility-led electrification is costly, it is more effective for rural access than concession-led models, where private companies manage specific areas⁵⁷. Regional trade should also be explored, given the significant hydropower potential in countries such as DRC and Ethiopia.

For clean cooking, key challenges include cost reduction, the establishment of standardized labelling and repair systems, and overcoming socio-cultural barriers to adoption. A diversified investment approach - concessional finance, result-based finance, and tenders - could be pursued while considering social norms. To ensure successful implementation, each of these policies should be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of target communities.

In addition to expanding grid and non-grid electricity connections, governments should also focus on improving the reliability of electricity and aim towards minimizing the frequency and duration of disruptions in cases where universal access to electricity has already been achieved.

Geographical scope:

Countries with limited electricity access, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, developing Asia, and to a lesser extent, South America and the Middle East⁵⁸. Countries in Asia and Latin America, where universal electrification has already been achieved, should focus on improving the reliability of electricity connections.

Timeline:

Universal electrification can be achieved in the short-to-medium (1-7 years) run depending on the status quo. The benefits differ based on different indicators. Improvements in school enrolment can be expected in the short term (1-7 years) and improvements in income and fuel consumption can be expected in the long-term (7-17 years)⁵⁹.

Benefits:

Energy access is a fundamental driver of socio-economic development. Access to electricity can empower communities by boosting their income and educational performance. It also reduces health risks from air pollution, improves access to clean water,^{60 61}. Additionally, improving reliability has positive impacts on income^{62 63} and supply⁶⁴.

Evidence:

Kenya's KOSAP⁶⁵ program offers financial incentives for solar businesses, using a debt facility to mitigate investment risks and extend electricity access to last-mile users with the PAYG model. Togo's CIZO⁶⁶ scheme reduces SHS costs for end-users by offering tax exemptions. In rural Senegal, several companies are testing the EaaS model which provides basic energy access but lowers fees and eliminates repair responsibilities for the users.

Despite its potential, SHP remains underexploited in SSA⁶⁷, while it has played a significant role in expanding electricity access in Pakistan⁶⁸. SHP is cost-effective, reliable, and can be deployed rapidly when bureaucratic barriers are minimized as red tape can negatively impact⁶⁹.

Evidence shows that Senegal's concession-led model struggles with rural electrification because low energy demand in rural areas makes them less commercially attractive to private investors. In contrast, Morocco's utility-led model increased electrification from 18% in 1990 to nearly 100% by 2010⁷⁰. In the long term, cross-border electricity trading will be crucial, with the African Union highlighting the benefits of a unified electricity market, including improved electricity access, grid reliability and shared transmission line development⁷¹. Capacity building programs are key to enhancing local energy planning. SE4All partnered with Nigeria to identify least-cost electricity access pathways through geospatial modelling.

1.6 Internet access (P1)

Additiya Mukherjee

The problem:

The Internet is a major contributor to global growth, resulting in 21% of economic growth in mature economies⁷². The internet could be linked to several fundamental rights like the right to freedom of speech and expression, economic, social, and cultural rights, the right to access information, and much more. Internet access is now widely accepted as a 'derived right' or an enabler of fundamental human rights - especially freedom of expression, education, the right to work, and participation in public life. The internet is not a luxury but a critical tool and an enabler of many other fundamental rights. Recognizing internet access as a right is therefore central to building an inclusive, rights-based economy where all people can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.

Large segments of the population in the Global South, particularly in rural and low-income communities, remain digitally excluded. The intention of this recommendation is not to show a crisis but rather a reflection of an evolving opportunity that is potentially an untapped tool for inclusion, empowerment, and poverty alleviation. The internet enhances an individual's freedom to choose the kind of life they have a reason to value. It is not merely a tool for convenience but a means to expand one's capabilities.

The policy:

This policy recommends enhanced internet access to improve access to information and communication and further enable participation in education, work, and civic life. While no single model can be mirrored perfectly across regions, India's experience offers valuable lessons for shaping locally adapted, inclusive internet access policies in the Global South. The success of the BharatNet rural connectivity program shows how the internet has a huge role to play in strengthening local economies and alleviating poverty. It is recommended that governments⁷³ to achieve universal, inclusive internet access. The aim of the policy recommendation is not to replicate India's strategy but to take elements from its approaches to craft a model that works best for low and middle-income countries.

Geographical scope:

Countries with low rates of internet access.

Timeline:

Short term (1-2 years)

Implementation:

The approach recommended draws on two successful Indian examples: the BharatNet project, which focuses on building high-speed broadband infrastructure in rural areas, and Reliance Jio's market-driven model, which significantly reduced mobile data prices and expanded access. Both these programs were siloed in India but have proved beneficial for the population. Here, an amalgamation of the two is recommended:

In this model, the government leads the rollout of digital infrastructure. It does so by laying out fiber optic networks and ensuring last-mile connectivity, particularly in underserved regions, much like the BharatNet initiative. Once the infrastructure is in place, telecom providers (where markets exist) operate on top of it. It is most ideal if telecom operators are in the public sector. Then the government can offer through state subsidies, low-cost data services for greater accessibility.

Benefits:

High rates of internet access are not merely expansions of human rights to information and communication; they also have long-term economic and social benefits. These technologies, once diffused and absorbed by the domestic economy, enhance innovation, improve service delivery, and create new economic opportunities—particularly in emerging markets. In this way, internet access becomes a catalyst for inclusive development, industrial modernization, and long-term competitiveness⁷⁴. Access to the internet improves access to information among marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities which can benefit from financial inclusion and communication access.

Evidence:

India's experience with Reliance Jio in 2016 is a powerful example of how affordable internet access can drive inclusive development. The average cost of one GB data fell to one tenth of its value in 2016. A race to the bottom in the pricing of competing firms reduced the cost further by 2020⁷⁵.

1.7 Land ceiling and redistribution (P1, P2, P3)

Suryadepto Nag

The problem:

A large fraction of the population of low and middle-income countries is engaged in agriculture. However, inequality in landownership continues to be high⁷⁶. Although feudal titles have ceased to exist in most countries, modern forms of landlordism such as land rents, sharecropping, and hired agricultural labor continue to persist. These practices deprive actual agricultural workers of the fruit of their labor.

The policy:

Governments should enact land ceiling laws that limit how much agricultural land an individual can own. The land ceilings should be enacted such that only wealthy landowners are affected by it. Landholding beyond the ceiling is then expropriated by the government. This land can then either be redistributed directly to peasants in the village or be collectivized by the government, which can then lease the land to farmers without rent.

Implementation:

To be most effective, ceilings should be enacted as laws at the level of the nation state, with support from regional organizations. The laws should be designed such that the ceiling is determined by the nature of the land and its productivity. For instance, fertile land with multiple cropping seasons should have lower ceilings, while arid land should have higher ceilings. Depending on political support and the state of inequality in the country, the government can either implement land acquisition from private owners, or confiscate land without payment. The redistribution can be administered at the local level.

In addition to land ceilings and redistribution, the government can also enact prohibitive measures on agricultural land leasing. If a complete ban does not have the necessary support, governments can ban land leasing in the form of rent while permitting share cropping, i.e., the farmer pays a fraction of the crop yield to the landowner as rent. The advantage of the latter over the former is that in the case of land rent the farmer pays a flat fee irrespective of the product. Since farm yield is susceptible to a variety of environmental and market factors, the entire risk is borne by the farmer while the landowner receives a constant income without labor inputs. In case of sharecropping, the risk and revenue are shared by the farmer and landlord. In the event of crop failure, the farmer would then not have to pay rent to the landlord, making the farmers' circumstances less debilitating. The policy should further be supplemented by regulating the corporate ownership of agricultural land, which should be phased out in the long term to enable farmers to receive appropriate remuneration for their work. The policy, like all policies, should be tuned to the local and national contexts.

Geographical scope:

Low and Middle-income countries with large agrarian populations (% in brackets) such as Burundi (85%), Niger (71%), Central African Republic (71%), Laos (70%), Mozambique (69%), Madagascar (69%), Chad (69%), Mali (68%), Uganda (66%), Tanzania (65%), Ethiopia (62%), Malawi (62%), Nepal (61%), and Eritrea (61%)⁷⁷.

Timeline:

The policy can be implemented in the short-to-medium term (1-5 years), while the phasing out of corporate agriculture would have to be more gradual (5-10 years) depending on the prevalence.

Benefits:

Introducing land ceilings, redistributing land and abolishing landlordism directly increase farmers' incomes and prevent exploitation. Furthermore, owning land would give farmers access to capital without having to pay rent, which would lead to lower risks in the face of climate change.

Evidence:

There are several successful examples of land ceilings, expropriation and redistribution, including but not restricted to China (1949), Vietnam (1954 in North Vietnam, and 1970s in the South), West Bengal in India (1978), South Korea (1949), and Japan (1947). Examples of expropriation of corporations included Cuba (1959), Nicaragua (1979), Bolivia (2006). More specifically, in Bolivia 31.5 ha were redistributed, compared to the previous period (1996 - 2006), in which only 9.2 ha were titled⁷⁸.

1.8 General delinking strategies (P3, P5)

Jason Hickel and Ndongo Samba Sylla

The problem:

Global South economies face severe development challenges. They have high levels of unemployment or underemployment⁷⁹, low social indicators⁸⁰, and large portions of their populations are deprived of access to the basic goods and services necessary for decent living standards. In addition, their productive capacities tend to be organized around exports to the core/Global North, largely in subordinate positions within global supply chains, rather than organized around human needs and national development objectives.

Consequently, Global South countries suffer severe drain through unequal exchange. This occurs because Southern exports are systematically cheapened relative to their imports (which often carry artificially high prices due to monopoly power and patents). This results in net transfers (exports minus imports) of resources, embodied labor, and hence value from South to North through trade, draining the South of productive capacity. Global South countries are exposed to this drain because they tend to be dependent on imports of capital goods and high-technology goods from the core, due to colonialism and the post-colonial economic order, or are otherwise dependent on foreign currency (e.g. in order to service external debts) and must export to the core to obtain it.

To address this structural international inequality and orient their economies towards sovereign production which prioritizes their own population's needs, Southern governments need to escape drain through unequal exchange and mobilize national production around well-being and policy objectives. This can be achieved by implementing the following strategies.

A. Reduce material-technical dependency on the global North.

- (a) Curtail imports of unnecessary luxury goods from the core (e.g., SUVs, private jets, etc).
- (b) For necessary goods, substitute them where possible with domestic production (e.g., food is a major import category, which in most cases can be reduced dramatically by pursuing a policy of increased food sovereignty).
- (c) For goods that cannot be provided domestically (e.g., rare materials or advanced technologies), establish swap lines (or technology transfer agreements) to obtain these through trade with other Global South countries (e.g., with regional neighbors and with China) in a way that circumvents the use of dominant currencies and promotes trade with national currencies.
- (d) For goods that can be produced domestically but are made prohibitively expensive due to patents and other regulatory barriers, such as medication, reduce regulatory barriers, and increase domestic production through increased industrial capacity.
- (e) For durable products that must be imported from the North, ensure they are long-lasting and repairable in order to reduce total import requirements. These steps enable a country to either reduce its exports to the core (thus making production available for other purposes, including for South-South solidarity trade) and/or increase its international payment possibilities.
- (f) Regional planning can coordinate and develop productive capacities beyond what single national economies can achieve. For instance, if Latin American countries need to reduce their dependence on the core for computing technologies, pharmaceuticals, and high-speed trains, they may collectively determine that Chile will develop the computing technologies, Cuba will develop pharmaceuticals, and they will collectively produce transit parts and infrastructure (in the way that the EU collectively produces Airbus).

(See Section 1.13 for details on trade protections)

B. Regain national control over foreign exchange earnings.

At present, foreign exchange earnings are generally controlled by private actors – often multinational corporations – who send their profits to tax havens and use accounting tricks to avoid taxes and appropriate real resources. Even when private producers invest in their foreign exchange domestically, it is most often in activities that are profitable to capital rather than necessary for development. The result is that foreign exchange earnings are not available to the state or local populations and cannot be used for their priorities. Governments can increase control over foreign currency earnings in the following ways:

- (a) Socialise resource deposits and major export industries where possible, so that foreign exchange goes directly to the public pocket.
- (b) Coordinate with other Global South producers to increase the prices of exports (e.g., OPEC).
- (c) Introduce capital controls and other similar measures to prevent destabilizing profit repatriation and illicit outflows of foreign currency by private exporters.
- (d) Tax the foreign currency earnings of private exporters (and reduce taxes on the national currency earnings of firms producing socially necessary goods).

(See Section 1.9 for a detailed policy on withholding taxes and foreign exchange regulations.)

C. Make strategic use of foreign exchange for national development.

Foreign currency should be leveraged strategically. It should only be used for necessary imports that cannot be substituted domestically. As much as possible, it should be used in the following ways:

- (a) To import capital goods and technologies that are necessary to develop national industries that can help reduce dependence on imports.
- (b) To increase the value-added production (e.g., to develop capacity to refine resources or to manufacture finished products rather than exporting raw materials or intermediate parts).
- (c) Finance industrial projects that will earn more foreign exchange than they require as inputs or that will have an import-substitution effect.

D. Mobilize production around human well-being and national development.

Reducing dependence on imports from the North means countries can reduce their export-orientation (and therefore reduce the scale of drain through unequal exchange), thus liberating productive capacities (like labor, land, resources and factories) to be used for other purposes. This remobilization can be done by issuing the national currency to employ domestically available labor and resources for development. Because the state is the currency issuer, there is no limit to the state's capacity to finance projects whose inputs can be paid in the national currency,⁸¹ so long as it is within the productive capacity of the economy (as Keynes put it: anything we can actually do, we can afford, meaning that the investment within productive capacity is not inflationary).

- (a) Establish a national public job guarantee, with a living wage, to employ people in necessary public works. (See section 1.1 for a detailed policy on job guarantees), establish training centers to improve the skills of the labor force and to increase capacity for innovation.
- (b) Produce necessary goods and universal public services (nutritious food, good housing, water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, education, public transit, recreational facilities, etc). (See section 1.3 for a detailed policy on universal public services).
- (c) Ensure that these are available on a decommodified or price-controlled basis to all, as this is critical to achieving rapid improvements in social outcomes (see section 1.3 on universal public services).
- (d) Initiate a state program to achieve rapid decarbonization (by increasing renewable energy capacity) and ecological regeneration.
- (e) Establish centers for research and innovation, to develop appropriate indigenous technologies that can further reduce dependence on Northern imports.
- (f) Invest in building national industrial capacity (e.g., capacity to produce appliances, vehicles and pharmaceuticals) that can further reduce dependence on Northern imports. (See section 1.10 on a policy on intellectual property rights deregulation for pharmaceuticals.)

E. Establish industrial policy focused on well-being, ecology, and sovereignty

The primary national development objective should not be to increase aggregate GDP as such (i.e., just any form of production). The objective should be to increase specific forms of production that are necessary to improve human well-being, develop economic-industrial sovereignty, and meet ecological objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an industrial policy to determine what new industries need to be started, what existing industries need to grow, and what industries are unnecessary and should be scaled down so that capacity can be diverted elsewhere.

- (a) **Use subsidies and tariffs to support strategic industries** in their early stages of development and protect them from being crushed by foreign competition.
- (b) **Use credit regulation** to increase private investment in targeted industries and reduce private investment in unnecessary industries.
- (c) **Use public finance and planning** to invest in industries and activities that are necessary but not profitable.

F. Cooperate for collective abolition of debt and structural adjustment

If the above measures are precluded by creditors or under the terms of a structural adjustment program, those terms should be ignored, and a managed default should be pursued, if necessary, in order to assert sovereignty over economic policy. This is best done in cooperation with other governments (a “debtors club” or cartel) to improve the negotiating position and collectively negotiate terms. Default can make it more difficult to access international finance for a time, but the steps indicated above can help to mitigate this problem by reducing dependency on foreign finance.

(See Section 1.11 for a detailed discussion on debt cancellation)

Other strategies:

- (a) Create regional development banks as an alternative source of finance.
- (b) Pool foreign exchange reserves between countries.
- (c) Create alternative financial and payment systems that facilitate trade in national currencies;
- (d) Implement programs to attract skilled emigrants back to the country.
- (e) Form South-South alliances to collectively negotiate better terms of finance and trade with the imperial core, and to resist external pressure.
- (f) Develop renewable energy capacity to reduce dependency on fossil fuel imports.

In sum, by implementing these policies, Global South nations can reduce dependency on the imperial core, reclaim economic sovereignty, and reorient production toward national development and human well-being.

1.9 Withholding taxes, foreign exchange regulations, and profit repatriation (P3, P5)

Suryadepto Nag

The problem:

A major hurdle for low and middle-income countries that are enacting policies to improve domestic labor conditions is the threat of capital flight. Decades of structural adjustment programs coerced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank deregulated labor conditions and compressed wages in the Global South, as strong labor regulations were perceived to be antagonistic to the “ease of doing business”. Cheap labor and resources brought large sums of foreign investments, which Global South countries now depend on, and strengthening labor regulations poses the risk of this capital taking flight.

The policy and implementation:

Countries should impose high withholding taxes on profit repatriation, i.e., high taxes on profits being moved abroad, before money leaves the country. Withholding taxes should be designed such that profit dividends are taxed substantially higher than domestic re-investments, incentivizing foreign investors to reinvest profits rather than repatriate them. Additionally, foreign exchange regulations should be tightened to make it difficult to convert currencies for the purpose of repatriation. Regulations should include detailed accounting requirements that prevent illicit repatriation via dishonest accounting. Additionally, foreign exchange transactions should be taxed higher than transactions in domestic currencies. Taxing foreign exchange gives governments direct access to foreign exchange, which can then be used to finance development without currency volatility.

Geographical scope:

Such policies are most appropriate in low and middle-income countries that have been left with large foreign direct investments to GDP ratios (% in brackets) after structural adjustment such as Namibia (19%), Liberia (17%), Palau (17%), Grenada (17%), Antigua and Barbuda (16%), Senegal (16%), Bahrain (15%), Estonia (13%), Mozambique (13%), Maldives (12%), Oman (12%), Laos (11%), Seychelles (11.2%), and Mongolia (11.1%).⁸⁹ Large countries with large volumes of foreign investments due to historical patterns like India, Brazil, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico, Bangladesh and Pakistan would also substantially benefit from such policies.

Timeline:

The timeline for the policies depends on the macroeconomic conditions of the country, its legal system, and the dependence on foreign investments. For countries that already have large amounts of foreign investments, the policy can be executed in the short term. However, countries that are looking to increase their foreign investments would need to execute these policies in the medium-to-long term. Enacting the policies prematurely may thwart new investments and thus should be planned carefully.

Benefits:

The first benefit of withholding taxes on profits, and foreign exchange regulations, is that they restrict capital flight and incentivize reinvestments in profits. This creates jobs and leads to more stable economies. This also allows governments to mandate wage regulations and increase labor regulations without risking divestments. The second set of benefits comes in the form of tax revenue. Withholding taxes increases government's financial capacities in domestic currencies, which can then be used to strategically develop the country.

Evidence:

The most compelling evidence is from China. China's withholding taxes, and regulations on accounting and currency exchanges has restricted profit repatriation and incentivized domestic reinvestment^{90 91}.

1.10 Intellectual property rights deregulation for pharmaceuticals (P3)

Additiya Mukherjee

The problem:

A major barrier to healthcare access is the monopolistic pricing practices of certain pharmaceutical companies. Many of these companies hold patents for life-saving drugs and set exorbitantly high prices under the guise of innovation. This creates artificial scarcity; limits supply and makes essential treatment unaffordable for large segments of the population. Such unchecked pricing power undermines the right to health. The issue is compounded by gaps in regulatory oversight, where states often lack proper pricing mechanisms.

The policy and implementation:

To ensure access to life-saving medicines, patent extensions should only be granted for drugs that show genuine therapeutic advancements rather than minor modifications. Furthermore, the existence of patent restrictions on life-saving medication should be abolished. Stricter standards can prevent evergreening and block unjustified extensions of monopoly rights.

States should also support the production and quick approval of generic drugs at the very least, after patent expiry or rejection by compulsory licensing. Governments should go beyond occasional interventions under 'extraordinary circumstances' and set up a permanent, independent regulatory body tasked solely with reviewing and approving the prices of life-saving patented drugs at the point of market entry.

Pharmaceutical companies should be required to submit a detailed breakdown of costs, including R&D, manufacturing, and distribution, along with the justification for pricing. The committee would evaluate this data, conduct independent research, and determine whether the proposed price is fair and affordable based on the country's economic viability.

The body could include medical professionals, scientists, public policy experts, and representatives from both government and opposition to ensure transparency and accountability. A drug would be allowed to enter the market only after pricing approval by this committee.

Geographical scope:

All low and middle-income countries. International support for the policy can be promoted and coordinated by the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Timeline:

New laws to (de)regulate patent laws can be brought immediately (0-1 year) and provisions to retrospectively address patents already assigned can be followed up in specific cases as required.

Benefits:

A proactive regulatory framework for drug pricing is essential to uphold the right to health and reduce healthcare inequality. By prioritizing affordability and accessibility, states can reduce the financial burden on individuals and public health systems, while still encouraging innovation through fair and transparent processes.

It is not enough for the State to act only when damage is already done. The State bears a positive obligation, not just to restore rights once infringed, but to ensure they are never violated in the first place. When it is allowed for life-saving treatments to remain unaffordable due to unchecked pricing power, the State becomes an enabler in the denial of the right to health. This puts the State in a position to devise mechanisms that ensure that rights are not infringed. Instead of leaning on extraordinary powers as a last resort, governments should establish a robust, forward-looking system. States should scrutinize and regulate the prices of patented lifesaving drugs at the point of market entry. Such a framework would shift the focus from curative justice to preventive justice. Furthermore, these policies would benefit from international co-operation against resistance from big pharmaceutical corporations.

Evidence:

India addressed this issue meaningfully by the Supreme Court judgment in *Novartis AG v. Union of India* 2013⁸². The case involved Novartis' attempt to patent the beta crystalline form of imatinib mesylate (Glivec), a drug used to treat chronic myeloid leukemia. The Court evaluated the patent application under Section 3(d) of the Indian Patents Act. It is a provision designed to prevent "evergreening". This means patents for minor modifications of known substances would be rejected, unless they offer significant therapeutic benefits. The Court ruled that Novartis' version of Glivec did not demonstrate enhanced efficacy and thus was not patentable.

As a result, generic manufacturers were allowed to produce the drug, reducing the price from INR 150,000 (USD 2,200 then) to INR 6,000 (USD 88 then) per month. According to YK Sapru, founder of the Cancer Patient's Aid Association, this price drop enabled around 500,000 patients to access life-saving treatment until 2018⁸³. This case sets a powerful precedent for placing public health above monopolistic profit. It also highlighted the need for systemic change and a preventive approach to drug pricing regulation.

1.11 Debt cancellation (P5)

Morena Hanbury-Lemos

The problem:

In 2023, developing countries collectively paid a record \$1.4 trillion to service their external debt⁸⁴. Interest payments alone amounted to \$406 billion during this period. For the poorest nations, these costs have quadrupled over the past decade, totaling around \$36 billion. On average, these countries now allocate 6% of their export earnings to debt service, a level unseen since 1999.

This policy addresses the structural constraints imposed by external debt on the sovereign development of low- and middle-income countries. High levels of external debt divert resources away from investment in public services and climate adaptation, while also restricting policy space, perpetuating cycles of austerity and underdevelopment.

As Minsky's Financial Instability Hypothesis (FIH)⁸⁵ explains, the current international financial system forces poor countries into perpetual borrowing, often just to service existing debt, creating a refinancing trap that resembles a Ponzi scheme. The alternative is not more debt, but a strategic shift toward building domestic capital and progressively reducing reliance on foreign financing. To enable this shift, countries must first reclaim the financial resources currently drained by debt servicing.

The policy:

An initiative for debt cancellation should be coordinated internationally so that it can release countries from the financial burden of debt repayment, enabling them to redirect funds toward meeting the needs of their own populations. Debt cancellation should be framed not only as a form of reparative justice – recognizing the historical and structural inequalities that have created and sustained debt dependency– but also as a way to efficiently advance the original objective of poverty eradication. Cancellation should be unconditional and apply to bilateral and multilateral debt.

Implementation:

Debt cancellation could be implemented through plurilateral coordination. Creditor countries and institutions would formally write off debts owed by eligible countries via the unconditional suspension of external public debt payments across bilateral, multilateral, and private lenders for all countries in need. Eligibility could be assessed using indicators such as debt-to-GDP ratios, climate vulnerability, and social needs. National and citizen-led audits should guide the identification of illegitimate or harmful debts, supporting governments in opposing unjust obligations.

A binding plurilateral framework should replace creditor-dominated mechanisms, assessing repayment capacity based on human rights and policy priorities. Debt cancellation should be paired with safeguards to prevent new cycles of unsustainable borrowing, including the regulation of finance. Resources freed by cancellation should be directed toward public investment in healthcare, social protection, and climate resilience. Beyond debt relief, the goal is to enable countries to regain financial sovereignty and build just, sustainable, and sovereign economies.

Geographical scope:

All countries currently facing debt distress should benefit from cancellation. These countries could be identified by, but not limited to, high debt-to GDP ratios, such as, for example, Sri Lanka (128%), Zambia (104%), Ghana (93%), Egypt (92%), Pakistan (80%), Tunisia (79%), and Kenya (67%). Most countries with high debt-to-GDP ratios are in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, indicating that regional bodies could play important roles in advocating for and coordinating debt relief.

Timeline:

Cancellation should be pursued as an immediate priority. Implementation, by halting debt repayments, should begin as soon as possible, with broader multilateral coordination and institutional reforms occurring over the short to medium term.

Benefits:

Debt cancellation would liberate financial resources and policy space for public investment in essential sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and climate resilience. It would reduce the dependence of low- and middle-income countries on external capital and restore economic sovereignty. Without the burden of servicing debt, governments can also better respond to local needs and focus on the necessary social-ecological transition. Debt cancellation also promotes justice by acknowledging the historical exploitation and ecological debt owed by the global North to the Global South.

Evidence:

Cases of debt relief implemented in the past, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) offer limited insights, since they have mostly been limited to neoliberal reforms, with conditionalities and structural adjustment in exchange for relief, that led to austerity and privatization and prevent debtor countries from truly benefiting from the debt write-off. In contrast, the recommended approach to debt cancellation should be unconditional and centered on the rights and priorities of the debtor nations.

1.12 Organized price control (P5)

Morena Hanbury Lemos

The Problem:

The global trading system operates for the benefit of capital and the powerful economies of the North, contributing to the perpetuation of global inequalities. For countries in the Global South, commodities remain a primary source of foreign exchange, yet the terms of trade are profoundly unequal. Prices for agricultural goods like cocoa and coffee, or strategic minerals such as cobalt and lithium, are set in markets shaped by multinational corporations, financial speculation, and institutions in the North, not by the producers themselves.

The case of cocoa is emblematic. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire produce over 60% of the world's cocoa yet capture less than 7 percent of the value of the global chocolate industry. Their attempt to establish a Living Income Differential in 2019 was actively undermined by corporate buyers who used opaque contracts and evasive purchasing tactics to avoid collective pricing⁸⁶. This is not an exception: across sectors, producer countries remain trapped in an unfavorable trade regime.

The Policy:

These injustices cannot be solved by marginally improving trade terms within an exploitative system. Rather, countries in the Global South should regain control over the production and pricing of strategic resources and products. Organized price controls in the form of "commodity cartels", i.e., producer-led alliances that coordinate supply and set floor prices, offer a possibility of breaking with dependency. Organized price controls such as these are often (informally) undertaken by big firms of the Global North already^{87 88}.

Commodity cartels emerged in the 1960s as part of wider efforts by newly independent states to reclaim economic sovereignty. G-77 countries, working through UNCTAD, backed initiatives in commodities such as coffee, cocoa, rubber, tin, and sugar, aiming to secure better terms of trade for the Global South⁸⁹. While most of these efforts achieved less than hoped, they remain part of a longer struggle to move away from neo-colonial trade structures.

The obstacles to building cartels are real: managing perishable goods, competing with synthetic substitutes, the lack of branding power, and the overwhelming influence of multinational corporations. But these challenges do not negate the value of the strategy. Rather, they point to the need for coordinated political will, state control over marketing, and protection from financial speculation. After all, the coordinated power that capital in the global North has over Global South producers did not emerge overnight.

Implementation:

Structural reforms such as transparent supply management, public enforcement mechanisms, and investment in domestic processing are needed to protect pricing strategies from corporate sabotage.

For alliances to be effective, they must be part of a broader political project. This means setting binding production quotas and floor prices, enforced through strong public marketing boards with the power to regulate trade. They must be integrated into national industrial strategies that prioritize processing and value addition, rather than continued export of raw commodities. Just as crucial is building and maintaining regional and international solidarity—to resist divide-and-rule tactics and withstand pressure from corporate and financial interests.

Benefits:

Cartels would enable producer countries to stabilize export revenues and plan beyond the interests of global markets. They could support meaningful investment in health, education, infrastructure, and the creation of local industries. Higher and more stable incomes for producers would also help address deep social inequalities and improve working conditions across supply chains.

In sectors like cocoa, collective pricing could serve as a foundation for eliminating child labor, supporting land rights for women, and enforcing environmental protections. But this is only possible if producer countries act in concert, challenge corporate power, and build democratic control over trade.

Evidence:

OPEC is often cited as an example of commodity cartels, though its structure is politically fragile. In contrast, cartels in tin, coffee, and bauxite developed clearer mechanisms—quotas, price floors, and direct market interventions. The International Tin Council, for instance, successfully defended minimum prices in dozens of market interventions between the 1950s and 1970s⁹⁰.

These efforts were far from perfect, and many were eventually dismantled under pressure. But they show that collective action by producers can shift pricing power, if backed by political will, institutional coordination, and broader strategies for economic sovereignty.

1.13 Reparations (P5)

Tonny Nowshin

The Problem:

Global poverty today is a direct result of colonialism, ecological degradation, and a global economic system that enables wealth accumulation in certain parts of the world at the expense of others. The dominant growth-oriented development model has deepened inequalities within countries while exacerbating the climate crisis⁹¹. Despite commitments to reduce emissions and alleviate poverty, wealthier nations continue to externalize environmental costs and accumulate resources through unequal trade and financial systems. At the same time, the countries and communities that have contributed the least to these crises face disproportionate climate impacts, and hence constrained policy options.

Despite discussions of loss and damage in international climate negotiations, the largest historical emitters are failing to contribute their fair share to such funds. Moreover, the current discussion frames these historical emissions as being due to historically wealthy countries having “developed” earlier and using global commons as a space free to pollute. This fails to recognize the role of these countries in destroying economies around the world while in their early stages, displacing population to exploit human bodies, and the ongoing exploitation facilitated by today’s markets through unequal trade relations, global monetary system, mining and production.

The Policy:

The policy combination to ensure reparations would entail two parts. First, compensation for historical exploitation, resource extraction, and appropriation of global ecological commons. Second, the promise of non-repetition. Compensation would entail transfers from the North to the South, and debt cancellations in post-colonial states. Promise of non-repetition would include planned downscaling of production and consumption in wealthy nations to reduce resource use, emissions, and environmental harm, introducing localized, low-impact industries.

Ecological reparations would include debt cancellation, unconditional cash transfers, funding for climate adaptation and loss & damage, technology transfers, land reforms, and support for Indigenous stewardship.

There is also a need for narrative work around implementation of these collective policies. As this overall contribution already includes several of the policy areas - e.g. land reform, debt cancellation, this segment will also highlight the narrative area.

Geographical Scope:

- **Global North** countries (e.g., U.S., EU, Japan) are responsible for implementing degrowth measures domestically, financing reparations, and withdrawing from extractive economic practices abroad.
- **Global South** countries are to receive reparative support, with sovereignty over how resources are used to build socially and ecologically sustainable futures.
- **Multilateral bodies** such as the UN, IMF, and World Bank should transform their mandates to support this dual agenda, democratizing global governance.

Timeline:

They can be implemented in **three phases over 15 years**:

- **Phase 1 (Years 1–5):** Immediate cancellation of debts, consolidation of global climate reparations fund, and legislative adoption of downscale-aligned targets (e.g., resource caps, aviation limits) in the colonizer and early industrialized nations.
- **Phase 2 (Years 6–10):** Full implementation of unconditional cash transfers and climate adaptation financing. Systemic trade, financial, and extractive industry reforms take effect.
- **Phase 3 (Years 11–15):** Structural stabilization—measured by reduced economic inequalities between countries/regions and reduced emissions and material throughput—combined with equitable development in the Global South and dismantling of colonial power dynamics with continued collaboration with civil society and political actors.

Implementation:

Implementation would require coordination across UN agencies, national governments, civil society, and grassroots movements. This could be done by:

- Establishing a **Global Reparations Commission** under the UN to monitor and disburse funds based on ecological debt and historical responsibility. Include indigenous leadership as an integral part of the commission.
- Enforcing legally binding non-repetition transition frameworks in the Global North.
- Reforming institutions like the IMF to support monetary justice, including SDR redistribution, capital controls, and taxing wealth and emissions.
- Promoting localization, especially in trade and production, while ensuring Global South ownership of their natural resources and supply chains.

Benefits:

Integrating reparations offers a powerful path to global justice and poverty reduction. Reparations support the Global South with debt relief and climate funding, while the promise of non-repetition from the Global North curbs emissions and resource extraction. This dual approach tackles both the roots and impacts of global inequality by transforming unjust economic systems and promoting sustainable, care-centered societies. It creates space for equitable development and strengthens global resilience in the face of climate and social crises.

2. Post-growth policies for high-income countries

Lea Agnes Tamberg and Suryadepto Nag

The international poverty line for extreme poverty is set at 3.00 PPP USD per capita per day. While income-based poverty lines are useful for tracking extreme monetary deprivation, poverty is fundamentally multidimensional, encompassing unmet needs in health, housing, education, energy, care, security, and social participation. Most of those under poverty reside in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. However, several high-income countries have non-negligible rates of poverty. According to World Population Review, in 2025, the United States had 18% of its population living in poverty, and most European countries having between 10% and 20% of their population living in poverty⁹². The average income in these countries ranges

between 40,000 PPP USD and 90,000 PPP USD per capita, roughly 110-250 PPP USD per capita per day, or 50-100 times the international poverty line⁹³. Conventional trickle-down rhetoric relies on economic growth and its benefits to rescue those in poverty. However, existing rates of poverty in high-income countries demonstrate that one may have to turn to other options to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, the high levels of consumption in high-income countries often rely on the appropriation of resources and labor from low and middle-income countries hindering development in the latter, thus leaving hundreds of millions in poverty^{94 95}. Additionally, persistent growth increases environmental impacts, most of which are felt by developing countries^{96 97}, with

climate change exacerbating poverty around the world⁹⁸. In this light, truly eradicating poverty in high income countries without compromising the citizens of low and middle-income countries would require an alternate paradigm of policymaking that emphasizes fair redistribution of resources and income, without relying on economic growth. Post-growth is based on the insight that further economic growth in high-income countries is neither ecologically feasible nor socially desirable⁹⁹.

On the ecological side, post-growth opposes green growth, i.e. the idea that technological improvements allow returning economic throughput within planetary boundaries while expanding economic activity¹⁰⁰. There is currently no empirical evidence for resource use or carbon emissions decoupling from GDP growth at a scale even close to necessary^{101 102 103 104}. Given the evidence available, assuming that green growth will work is magical thinking in front of the existential threat of ecological breakdown. In contrast, post-growth acknowledges that reducing environmental impacts at the necessary scale and speed will most likely lead to reductions in economic throughput in high-income countries¹⁰⁵.

Regarding social desirability, post-growth points towards research showing that undirected economic growth is an inefficient, if not unnecessary, well-being strategy^{106 107 108 109 110 111}. At the same time, its ecological consequences hit the world's poor hardest. In high-income countries, average consumption levels are higher than necessary to ensure the material requirements for universal well-being^{112 113 114 115 116}. Any remaining deprivation is due to the unequal distribution of this consumption (leaving some below decent living standards), economic insecurity, and aspects not measured by GDP, such as insufficient social support or freedom. Reducing consumption in high-income countries is compatible with improving human

well-being if accompanied by the redistribution of economic and political power as well as the decommodification of human need satisfaction^{117 118}. Reducing inequality, changing the power balance, and de-commodifying human need satisfaction are also necessary in low-income countries. Untargeted economic growth and unlikely trickle-down effects will not eradicate poverty on this planet¹¹⁹. However, while the eradication of poverty in high-income countries can be achieved at lower levels of economic throughput, securing the material requirements for well-being in low and middle-income countries would still lead to higher overall consumption levels than today¹²⁰. Therefore, high-income countries urgently need to make room for this necessary increase in consumption (in low and middle-income countries) by drastically reducing their own impacts on the ecosphere.

In this section of the policy package, we describe post-growth policies to be implemented in high-income countries. These include policies like universal basic services, and employment guarantees that would directly contribute towards poverty eradication, but also strategies around finance and foreign policy that would be crucial to support such direct policies for poverty eradication. These policies are designed to redistribute economic benefits while reducing environmental degradation and breaking dependence on economic growth and the unequal appropriation of Global South labor and resources that underpin it. Most policies highlighted here can be enacted in the short-term, while others may take longer to implement, with benefits realized along the way. Since these policies are designed for high-income countries, international organizations such as the OECD and the European Union would play a crucial role in encouraging and enforcing these policies.

In this package, we describe 12 policies and strategies, and finally also include a discussion on how these policies would work together.

2.1 Job guarantee with working time reduction (P1, P2)

Charles Stevenson and JP Arellano

The problem:

Capitalist economies create structural unemployment that cripples communities. Simultaneously, many workers are overworked, suffering from chronic stress and other health issues. These imbalances have ecological as well as social implications.

The policy:

A job guarantee with working time reduction is a program to end involuntary unemployment by providing paid work for all those who seek it. It is federally funded but locally administered so that communities can make their own decisions about the work they deem to be most pressing. It is paid at a living wage for 30 hours of weekly work. The job guarantee provides the labor required for the social-ecological transformation of our societies in line with the scientific consensus on ecological breakdown and social deprivation. In this way, it is crucial for rolling out universal basic services (see brief on UBS) in places where public services are not well-developed.

Implementation:

By setting standards in terms of working time and living wages, the job guarantee with working time reduction could catalyze a broader shift in domestic economies as the private sector must compete with the standards set by the government (shorter workweeks and higher wages). Implementing a job guarantee could have knock-on effects extending to improved working conditions and deepened workplace democracy. In the short- to medium-term, providing early retirement or retraining workers from sectors that must be phased out and preparing them for the jobs required to address the greatest challenges of the 21st century is a top priority. The job guarantee represents a major transfer of power from capital towards communities and workers. Indeed, the policy means that the latter are no longer reliant on the former for their livelihood¹²¹.

Geographical scope:

A job guarantee with working time reduction in the Global North should be funded at the national level (see brief on fiscal-monetary coordination) whilst administered locally. It should be tailored to the specific location in which it is implemented. Having workers and community members feeding into decisions about which projects to prioritize can complement nationally determined objectives (see brief on democratic planning).

Timeline:

A job guarantee with working time reduction can be implemented tomorrow, even in countries where the government does not have the capacity to employ everyone in the labor market.¹²² Indeed, the government could increase its commitment to paying the wages of workers in key industries in the private sector as it builds up its capacity to employ workers directly. This is the model for the Swiss civil service, in which conscientious objectors to the military service are distributed to for-profit and non-profit organizations with a social and/or ecological focus.

Benefits:

The job guarantee with working time reduction alleviates the physical and mental costs of involuntary unemployment. It also can have major impacts on poverty eradication. While job guarantee programs have been criticized for failing to lift families out of poverty over the long term¹²³, the program outlined here stresses the importance of retraining as a core component. In this way, it could allow workers to escape low-skilled work permanently.

It acts as a powerful automatic fiscal stabilizer, as more workers would enroll during an economic downturn, increasing government spending¹²⁴. Furthermore, it has also been shown to increase women's participation in the economy, encompassing an important gender component¹²⁵. It can also drive sectoral shifts toward more labor-intensive work and away from material- and energy-intensive work, thereby reducing total energy and resource throughput¹²⁶.

Reducing working hours can lead to major ecological and social benefits. Not only do shorter workweeks lead to lower ecological footprints and enhanced well-being^{127 128}, but workers participating in four-day workweeks have shown they are just as productive as those working longer hours^{129 130}.

Evidence:

In 2005, India implemented the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. It remains the largest job guarantee in the world, ensuring that every adult member of a rural household could receive at least 100 days of paid work annually, particularly in public works like infrastructure development, water conservation, and rural road construction. It has also increased women's participation in the economy, providing a formal source of income, autonomy, and recognition for their work¹³¹. In 2002, Argentina implemented a job guarantee under the Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Desocupados program. Extreme poverty fell by at least 25%¹³².

Unpublished results from the REAL project on post-growth policy perceptions in Italy and Spain show that a reduction of working time and a job guarantee are two of the most popular post-growth proposals. The Center for Working-Class Politics in the United States also found that the job guarantee appeals across identity and political divides¹³³.

2.2 Universal care income (P1, P2)

Giacomo D'Alisa

The problem:

The COVID-19 pandemic not only highlighted the importance of care work in sustaining life and ecosystems, but it also revealed the unsustainability of a growth-driven market system. Care work, both paid and unpaid, is essential for the reproduction of life and ecosystems, but it is often undervalued in capitalist economies. Women, especially those from marginalized communities, bear the brunt of unpaid care work, resulting in significant gender inequalities.

The policy:

The Universal Care Income (UCI) is proposed as an unconditional income for all adults, with the aim of recognizing and rewarding the care work performed by individuals. At the same time, it aims to address the historical “care debt” owed to women. Therefore, the UCI should be differentiated by gender, with women receiving more given their disproportionate contribution to care work. It is a redistributive policy aimed at the general wealth produced by paid and unpaid workers, which is currently appropriated unfairly by capitalist dynamics. Unlike a Universal Basic Income, the UCI specifically recognizes and rewards care work, aligning with feminist and degrowth principles.

Implementation:

The UCI should be set above the poverty line and tailored to local conditions, guided by public debate and a democratic design process. This means the UCI can be thought of as a universal, differentiated monetary benefit. It should be funded through progressive taxation, including taxes on income, wealth, resource extraction, and financial transactions, ensuring that high-income individuals do not benefit, and that public debt does not increase. Consequently, the UCI should be accompanied by other policies that promote non-commodified care, such as universal care services and a job guarantee, delivered through the public sector and community-based care services. The UCI aims to address historical gender inequalities, but it should be implemented in a way that avoids reinforcing gender stereotypes. This can be achieved by supporting gender minorities and promoting diversity. The amount of the transfer can be determined by the cost of living.

Geographical Scope:

The UCI can be enacted at the state or national level in all countries worldwide.

Timeline:

Implementation can begin immediately or in the short term. Poverty reduction benefits can be observed immediately, with impacts growing over time.

Benefits:

The UCI offers a transformative vision by centering care work as a fundamental pillar of progressive efforts to build a more equitable and caring society. It addresses gender inequalities, promotes environmental sustainability, and challenges the growth-driven economic model.

Evidence:

Although a Universal Care Income has yet to be enacted in any country, one successful example of a Universal Basic Income comes from Kenya¹³⁴. Other countries have enacted similar cash transfer programs for women, with significant success in Brazil¹³⁵, Mexico¹³⁶, and West Bengal, India¹³⁷.

2.3 Universal basic services (P1)

Julia Steinberger

The problem:

Current economic growth is most often at the expense of the most vulnerable, creating large inequalities, multi-dimensional deprivation, and sacrificing vulnerable populations and livelihoods.

The policy:

Beyond-growth policies thus include “Universal Basic Services” (or UBS), which ensure universal access to basic services vital to people’s basic needs, facilitating access to what Prof Narasimha Rao has defined as “Decent Living Standards”¹³⁸ or satisfying universal human needs^{139 140}. These include subsistence (food, water), protection (shelter, sanitation, safe infrastructure), and connection to the rest of society. Universal Public services thus include safe, universal, and affordable access to public transportation, electricity, and communication.

The goal of universal basic-public services policies is to ensure a material and social foundation, corresponding to universal human needs, below which no one in society can fall. For this foundation to be provided efficiently, it should be provided unconditionally to all. Versions of UBS have been proposed encompassing different aspects of human needs satisfiers^{141 142 143}. UBS has also been implemented across sectors and countries, with examples like lifeline tariffs for electricity and water (the first unit of household use is free, with steeply increasing costs thereafter), the NHS in the UK, and free and universal public education from nursery to tertiary education in many countries of the world.

A monetary version of UBS, Universal Basic Income (UBI) can be considered as an alternative or a complement to UBS. UBI focuses on market-based consumption, and UBS on orienting equitable and accessible provision¹⁴⁴. Having only UBI would leave people entirely vulnerable to price changes, such as inflation or rent increases, whereas having only UBS may restrict choices and reduce consumptive autonomy.

Implementation:

The policies related to Universal Basic Services, and improving public services generally, require the creation of organizations tasked with providing the services, either directly (like a department of education is responsible for school buildings, hiring teachers, developing curricula and so on), or indirectly (for instance by regulation imposing lifeline tariffs on electricity providers). The provision of such services can be done in multiple ways: by economy-wide redistribution via taxation (as in the case of health, education, and most infrastructure and transport systems currently), by sector-specific redistribution (such as in the case of lifeline then steep tariffs for electricity or water), or by combinations of monetary and in-kind contributions (in-kind contributions of labor via universal community service, for instance).

Implementing Universal Basic Services, and improving public services generally, requires major shifts in procurement policies, since provision must be reoriented to create conditions of universally accessible and affordable service delivery. Procurement policies that favor UBS would include:

- *Local procurement, since local expenditure implies investment in the local workforce, agriculture and industry, meaning that the beneficiaries and producers are bound to common interests.*
- *Local management of UBS by boards made up of community members, workers and users, to ensure democratic control of provision.*
- *Strong transparency requirements and national oversight to guard against mismanagement, as well as to effectively deploy technical and social innovations.*
- *Monitoring and modelling the public-private interactions of relevant sectors by the government and independent researchers.*

Geographical Scope:

All high-income countries, implemented by the national government. In the European Union, the policy could be proposed, advocated, and coordinated by the European Parliament, along with additional funding, while the direct enactment of the law and the implementation would be overseen by national and local governments.

Timeline:

Short-term (1 year)

Benefits:

Core goals for post-growth societies include (1) protecting the most vulnerable, with sufficient access to social connection and material living standards, and (2) prioritizing production and consumption that satisfies basic human needs at low levels of resource use. Public services play a key role in both these core goals, as demonstrated by empirical research. Universal basic/public services are necessary in modern societies for a variety of reasons. UBS connects human rights to life and health with the obligations and priorities of societies, resolving this gap. Modern societies are characterized by wasteful overproduction driving overconsumption, with great inequalities accompanying persistent and worsening poverty. UBS ensures that the first priority of production and consumption is to meet the basic needs of the citizens' residents. UBS also enables massive sectoral shifts to occur without harm to livelihoods or well-being, since periods of professional retraining, or recovery from health incidents, can be covered without risk of poverty thanks to UBS. UBS in the long-term thus aims to shockproof the economy and prevent natural disasters or economic downturns from disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable.

Evidence:

Public services play a central role in securing universal well-being within planetary boundaries. Empirical research at the international level¹⁴⁵ and national level^{146 147} demonstrate the crucial protective role that access to sufficient levels of public services play in achieving high levels of well-being at low levels of resource use and hence environmental impact. Indeed, recent research from the REAL project using comprehensive data from the Gallup World Poll demonstrates that satisfying basic needs, both social and material, is far more important than economic growth for achieving well-being¹⁴⁸.

2.4 Wealth taxation

Yannick Oswald and Joel Millward-Hopkins

The problem:

Wealth inequality within and between countries is far larger than both income and consumption inequality¹⁴⁹. It shapes income flows and consumption decisions and, moreover, confers power and influence to those with significant wealth. It is therefore directly related to the erosion of democracy¹⁵⁰ and environmental problems¹⁵¹ because the wealthy often gain direct or indirect influence over important economic and political decisions (for example, via lobbying). Hence, it is now often acknowledged that reducing wealth inequality is an important cornerstone of a sustainable and just future.

The policy:

Wealth taxation can address these problems by redistributing wealth and by generating tax revenue for social or environmental purposes. Wealth taxation comes in various forms such as inheritance taxation, direct wealth taxation, land taxation or related policies such as capital income taxation¹⁵². The specific policy design chosen may depend on the geographical scope and the regional socio-economic conditions. In Germany, for example, large quantities of wealth are often passed on from generation to generation among top wealth owners and this process drives wealth inequality¹⁵³. Hence, here, a 90-100% inheritance tax on the super-rich and their wealth above a certain threshold, such as more than 10 million Euros, would be impactful and justifiable considering economic limitarianism¹⁵⁴. In the United States, inheritance is also a significant driver of wealth inequality, but here extreme private wealth often originates from privately owned businesses, hence it might be more urgent to implement limits on how much stock a single person can own¹⁵⁵.

Geographical scope:

Wealth taxation could be useful in every country. The biggest limitations to implementation are political-economic hurdles¹⁵⁶, notably in countries with large authoritarian and oligarchic influence over political decision. Hence a focus on democratic countries for designing detailed policy proposals is reasonable even though similar arguments about political influence from oligarchs can be made for some democracies too, for instance the USA¹⁵⁷. Given the persistent problem of the high international mobility of wealth, internationally coordinated wealth taxation policies are preferable to unilateral policies¹⁵⁸ - which in turn seems 'utopian' because vast international policy coordination seems unlikely. Therefore, advocating for coordinated wealth taxation in 'allied' economic blocs like the EU or APEC might be a feasible first step.

Timeline:

Wealth taxation in democratic countries could realistically be implemented within the next election cycles. Introducing wealth taxes in the near term (2–5 years) is crucial, as reducing wealth inequality is a fundamental precondition for maintaining democratic resilience.

Evidence and benefits:

State-of-the-art economic theory and modelling demonstrates that wealth taxation is, against conventional wisdom, not detrimental to innovation because it incentivizes productive entrepreneurs to use their wealth to move to the next business opportunity instead of hoarding it¹⁵⁹.

The literature on empirical evidence is more mixed. A substantial amount of empirical evidence demonstrates that the response to wealth taxation in terms of hiding wealth or moving it abroad is significant¹⁶⁰. This evidence confirms that wealth taxation should be internationally coordinated. Furthermore, the economy must be viewed as a complex system with emergent and sometimes counterintuitive outcomes. For instance, a study in Norway revealed that wealth taxation led to an unexpected increase in household savings. This effect was attributed to taxpayers' motivation to increase labor efforts and earnings to offset the wealth tax, thereby boosting their savings¹⁶¹.

Despite these caveats on the implementation of wealth taxes, there is also clear evidence for its benefits. For example, Switzerland levies a net wealth tax (which varies from Canton to Canton) and generates yearly about 1.1% of GDP revenue with tax rates as low as approximately 0.1% to 1% per year¹⁶². Lastly, extensive bequests and inheritances have been associated with reduced social mobility in Sweden¹⁶³. And it is estimated that social mobility and equality of opportunity in OECD countries would greatly benefit from inheritance taxation¹⁶⁴.

2.5 Luxury carbon taxation (P4)

Joel Millward-Hopkins and Yannick Oswald

The problem:

Uniform carbon taxes treat necessary consumption (such as household heating) no differently than unnecessary consumption (such as flying for leisure). This is problematic both morally – as it risks exacerbating energy poverty – and practically – as it risks provoking political backlash, which may be exploited by political actors wishing to push climate change down (or off) the political agenda. Under uniform carbon taxation, the only way to avoid such issues is to keep carbon prices to levels that may leave them ineffective.

The policy:

Luxury carbon taxation can address these critical issues while maximizing mitigation potential. Such taxes can be designed so that basic goods essential for human wellbeing are exempt, while luxury and non-essential goods are taxed (at least) in proportion to their carbon emissions. Tax revenues can be recycled into carbon mitigation schemes, such as retrofitting low-income housing, which further improves the tax progressivity and reduces precisely those emissions exempt from the luxury tax. Alternatively, they can be funneled into climate loss and damage funds to address global climate justice; or simply redistributed to citizens.

Geographical scope:

The policy clearly has most relevance in high-income countries, where per-capita emissions are high, luxury consumption is most prevalent, and consumption of necessities is, on average, a much smaller share of people's total consumption. However, where there is capacity for implementation, it may be useful to also target luxury consumption of high-income classes in less affluent countries.

Timeline:

The policy does not rely upon substantial investments in infrastructures, nor the upskilling of labor forces, etc., and hence can theoretically be implemented immediately. It does, however, require public dialogue to communicate its benefits, and to help distinguish luxury forms of consumption.

Evidence and benefits:

While carbon taxes on both the supply-side and on consumption have achieved substantial emissions reductions in recent decades¹⁶⁵, the former remain inadequate and the latter extremely rare. A key barrier to carbon taxes on household consumption is the perceived and real¹⁶⁶ distributional impacts of the uniform versions that have been implemented, and the political backlash this has caused in places like France¹⁶⁷. Luxury carbon taxes address this by recognizing the long-argued difference between luxury and subsistence emissions¹⁶⁸, and the evidence that high-consumers are responsible for a disproportionate share of warming – since 1990, the top 10% of global emitters were responsible for four times more carbon emissions than the bottom 50%¹⁶⁹. Luxury taxes are also suggested to have the social benefit of tackling environmentally damaging forms of consumption before they become entrenched and normalized, or sanctioning consumption that has already reached this point (like SUVs)¹⁷⁰. Global modelling work suggests that, by 2050, a luxury carbon taxation could move household emissions ~75% of the way towards being within a two-degree budget¹⁷¹. The same modelling work shows the substantial benefits of redistributing tax revenues to alleviate poverty and make low-carbon investments.

The elephant-in-the-room is how to distinguish luxuries from necessities. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that many forms of consumption become unnecessary luxuries only when the quantity consumed exceeds a certain level (e.g. consuming animal-products far beyond one's nutritional requirements) or the consumption is used for a particular purpose (a rare transatlantic flight to visit relatives may be considered a necessity, while the same flight to visit Disneyland is a luxury). But these difficulties should not be used to rule out luxury taxation.

First, consider that the Value Added Tax placed on goods and services in the UK – one of the oldest and most influential VAT systems in the world – attempts to distinguish essential and non-essential goods and exempt the former from taxation¹⁷². Goods receiving exemptions include children's clothing, medications, and many food stuffs¹⁷³. However, many other categorizations are arbitrary and highly controversial. Betting and lottery ticket sales are tax free, while tampons and sanitary products were subject to VAT up until 2021, when campaigners successfully won the battle for this to be removed¹⁷⁴. Biscuits are not subject to any VAT, unless coated in chocolate, in which case they become non-essential and subject to a 20% tax. The point is that a luxury carbon tax does not have to distinguish luxuries from essential goods perfectly. Existing tax systems attempt similar categorizations, often with messy results.

Second, many forms of luxury consumption are unambiguous and easy to identify – private jets, first and business class flights, cruises, expensive cars, and conventional luxury products like jewelry, perfumes, and high-end alcoholic drinks. Indeed, proposals exist for fairer carbon taxes based upon consumption elasticities⁷ and existing administrative data², which could allow reasonably high tax rates to be set without impacting the prices of essential goods.

In summary, a luxury carbon tax that is well designed for implementation, and which allowed for ongoing refinement based upon public consultation while being sheltered from corporate lobbying, could be an effective mitigation policy, and its basic design is similar to existing consumption taxes.

2.6 Rationing of luxury commodities and services (P4)

Vivien Fisch-Romito

The problem:

Limiting overall household consumption is a crucial lever for staying within planetary boundaries¹⁷⁵. This implies focusing on the households that consume the most, not only to avoid worsening environmental destruction, but also to ensure that existing resources and environmental budgets are available for the universal satisfaction of essential needs¹⁷⁶.

The policy:

Rationing, defined as a ceiling on the consumption of certain goods or services, is an appropriate post-growth policy to complement more traditional policy instruments such as market-based/tax regimes and efficiency standards. First, although taxes on specific products or associated effects (e.g. carbon tax) have reduced negative impacts (e.g. emissions)¹⁷⁷, they still allow a segment of the population (with high income or status consumption for instance) to consume these 'problematic' goods and services. This can be considered as an appropriation of commons, such as resources and carbon budget, by a small number of individuals – given that the additional quality of life derived from luxury goods is often negligible. Secondly, policies focusing on efficiency - reducing inputs for the same level of consumption - have led to lower unit costs and hence rebound effects, which have partially cancelled out the initial benefits^{178 179}. Rationing can circumvent these problems.

Implementation:

Defining rationing levels could be achieved by combining three principles: individual well-being, societal fairness and planetary boundaries¹⁸⁰. For individual well-being, the rationing point corresponds to the threshold point beyond which increases in consumption bring negligible wellbeing benefits and is considered non-beneficial. For societal fairness, it corresponds to the point above which, in reference to a minimum level, consumption is considered unfair. For planetary boundaries, it corresponds to the point above which, for a certain inequality level, the average consumption is above a predefined per-capita target (e.g. average carbon budget per capita) and is considered unsustainable.

Geographical scope:

High-income countries (high priority), Low and middle-income countries (low priority).

Timeline:

Short-term or immediate for high income countries, and medium-term for low- and middle-income countries.

Evidence:

Rationing has been so far not been considered often as policy. Real-life examples of large-scale implementation are scarce, except during the world wars for food and fuel¹⁸¹. However, recent years have seen the emergence of proposals and implementations of rationing schemes on a smaller scale in the housing and mobility sectors. In Switzerland, most of the non-profit housing sector (cooperatives and municipal ownership) have defined occupancy requirements where the number of residents must be equal to the number of rooms minus one¹⁸². For mobility, flight quotas received public support during deliberative workshops in the UK¹⁸³. Following a proposal from the Citizens' Climate Convention, the government introduced in 2024 a ban on domestic short-haul flights where a rail alternative under 2.5 hours exists¹⁸⁴.

2.7 Policies for economic democracy (P3)

Julia Steinberger and Ben Hinder

Motivation:

Economic democracy addresses the process of socio-ecological decision-making rather than specific socio-ecological goals. The purpose of extending democratic decision-making into the realm of the economy, i.e. decisions on investment, production, consumption and distribution, serves to ensure that core social and ecological goals are prioritized, and that vulnerable populations (whether vulnerable to socioeconomic exclusion or to ecological impacts) are protected. Economic democracy favors forms of economic activity that are egalitarian, innovative, and community centric.

The policy:

Policies for economic democracy require the placing of decision-making powers within the hands of those people who are closely affected by such decisions, in a context of national and regional coordination. They would be constituted by community members, end-users, and workers, selected by election or sortition or other forms of deliberation.

Their core responsibilities would be the organization of the provision of essential goods and services, to be most suited to the local conditions, inhabitants, workforce, and ecological sustainability. Provisions of transparency are essential to prevent corruption or accumulation of wealth and power.

Geographical scope:

Enacted at the national or subnational level in countries across the world.

Timeline:

Short-to-medium term.

Benefits:

Economic democracy places crucial decisions on investment, work, distribution and use within the reach of the people most concerned, and thus has a principle of “subsidiarity”, where the most localized unit capable of taking and implementing a decision is responsible for it, and larger units coordinate it, rather than direct it. The localized nature also enables innovation and experimentation, suited to the specific conditions of the local community, and prevents the one-size-fits-all rigidity of centralized planning.

Economic democracy concerns all sectors of production and consumption, from food to transportation, from housing to health, from energy to water and land. In an economic democracy, citizens are trained and involved in democratic decision bodies, alongside their normal work, and as part of their role as citizens. The expectation is that each person, if they are capable, will be involved, by application, selection or even sortition, in at least one sectoral economic decision-making body, such as a water, health or transportation board. The responsibility of these bodies is to organize investment, production and distribution to serve the needs of end users, while remaining within planetary boundaries, guided by independent expert knowledge (such as universities; as opposed to more biased private interests).

Evidence:

When considering options for the democratization of economic activity, it is useful to consider the scales at which the sector operates. Energy, for example, should be structured in a way that is amenable to local, national, and even international cooperation. In this sector, technological innovations in computers and programming enable new options such as peer-to-peer energy trading and local energy networks which can enable collaboration and bring community members into the production process¹⁸⁵. Peer-to-peer energy trading has been found to help lift people out of poverty through the redirection of revenues from energy production back into their pockets, giving them spillover benefits beyond energy security¹⁸⁶.

In comparison, housing functions primarily at the local level, and so options around direct control are likely more appropriate. Housing cooperatives achieve multiple goals in this case, untethering asset prices from returns on investment and giving tenants’ rights over how their living spaces are managed directly¹⁸⁷. This serves the dual purpose of cooling the housing market, thereby reducing prices overall, and providing control for those living in them.

A common argument against democratic interventions in the economy is that it is impossible for “a central planner” to have enough information on production and consumption needs. In recent years, this problem has become less and less relevant with the increases in computing power but can also be inoculated against by institutional changes that integrate education and deliberation¹⁸⁸. Nationalizations can be a step towards democratizing a sector as it enables public needs to be prioritized over profit.

2.8 Democratic ecological post-growth planning (P3)

Elena Hofferberth

The problem:

Much of economic activity is coordinated through growth- and profit-oriented markets. Globalization and financialization in the last decades have increased the influence of multinational corporations and financial actors on the provisioning of essential goods and services. Continued shortfall of human need satisfaction and the aggravating ecological crises are an expression of the inadequacy of capitalist market coordination to ensure universal wellbeing within planetary boundaries.

The policy:

Democratic ecological planning constitutes an alternative to social provisioning through growth- and profit-driven markets. Instead, people take the driving seat of deliberating and governing social provisioning while ecological limits take center-stage through in-kind accounting.¹⁸⁹

Implementation:

Democratic ecological planning can be implemented via various institutions and instruments, depending on the specific politico-economic context. "Post-growth commissions" could be fora in which different stakeholders such as trade union representatives, climate experts, members of civil society and ordinary citizens deliberate specific social needs and resource availabilities and constraints. The socialization of investment, e.g. via stronger monetary-fiscal coordination and monetary financing is a means to democratize investment decisions and reduce their growth and profit orientation. In-kind resource accounting constitutes an important complement to these processes as it renders possible the direct matching of resource needs and availability with sustainable resource use.

Geographical scope:

Democratization of social provisioning and replacements of purely monetary accounting with an in-kind assessment of available, necessary and sustainable resource use can be useful in many countries. Coordination between countries would facilitate the implementation.

Timeline:

Depending on the specific context, the elaboration of adequate democratic institutions for ecological planning may take more or less time. Some institutions such as citizens assemblies can be established in the short run, even if longer preparation may improve the process. The establishment of more permanent and far-reaching institutions as well as legislative change may rather be a medium-term option.

Benefits:

Democratic ecological planning offers mechanisms to put universal need satisfaction and respect of planetary boundaries at the heart of economic coordination, simultaneously replacing the primacy of growth and profit. The benefits of democratization also include the empowerment of people, simultaneously fostering legitimacy of transformation processes. Democratic planning also makes it possible to tackle past and present inequalities and injustices head-on (including but not limited to class, race, and gender) by explicitly organizing planning institutions for that purpose and ensure participation of diverse groups.

Evidence:

The proposal for “Post-growth commissions” draws on “modernization commissions” that were established in France after the Second World War¹⁹⁰. Despite differences in purpose, the latter may inspire the former in terms of institutional design because they were imagined by Jean Monnet to bypass established economic interests that may be hostile to deprioritizing growth and profit today. Citizens assemblies have been implemented for public deliberation of critical societal questions in many contexts¹⁹¹. Lessons for targeted monetary-fiscal coordination can be drawn from post-war France¹⁹² and Canada¹⁹³, interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁹⁴ and proposals for Sovereign Money Creation¹⁹⁵. Accounts of material extraction and use¹⁹⁶, labour time and socio-economic impact¹⁹⁷ can constitute the bases for in-kind social-ecological accounting and planning.

2.9 Repression of private for-profit finance (P5)

Elena Hofferberth

The problem:

Private profit-oriented finance keeps chasing profitable investment opportunities, including fossil resources, thus undermining sustainable living conditions on the planet. The general profit-orientation of private financial institutions is a driver of growth at all costs, sidelining other priorities such as leaving fossil fuel reserves unexploited or producing more socially necessary goods that are less lucrative.

The policy:

Measures for financial repression are key for the phase-out of socially and environmentally unsustainable economic activities by limiting their funding through private profit-oriented financial institutions. Repression of private profit-oriented finance contributes to a more general shift away from the priority of growth and profit in the economy and enables us to focus on poverty eradication, well-being and care as superior normative goals.

Implementation:

Several measures exist to rein in the power of private profit-oriented banking and private finance and restrict finance of socially or ecologically harmful sectors. One is to increase bank equity capital ratio requirements to much higher levels to limit financial leverage¹⁹⁸. Another approach aims at banning trading activities at commercial banks, to separate commercial and investment activities (cf. New Deal, Glass-Steagall Act, 1933). Raising reserve requirements to elevated levels weakens fractional reserve banking, and raising these requirements to 100% would terminate the ability of private banks to expand the money supply independently^{199e}. Another option consists not in targeting a specific balance-sheet item, but in imposing an obligation of outcome in terms of sectoral credit targets that banks must achieve in line with democratically deliberated goals, e.g. via the imposition of credit quota, lending ratios or outright portfolio restrictions²⁰⁰. Beyond credit guidance as a form of indicative planning²⁰¹, rapid phase-out of fossil (and other dirty) assets can be achieved by public institutions that outlaw (i.e., regulatory ban), confiscate (i.e., expropriation) or buy these assets (i.e., nationalization and socialization of the sunk cost of stranding)²⁰². Financial repression should be coupled with the expansion of public money creation capacities (see “monetary-fiscal coordination”) to compensate for the reduction of private funds. It should be tied back to participative degrowth and post-growth planning (see “Democratic ecological post-growth planning”) to ensure alignment with democratically deliberated social and ecological priorities.

Geographical scope:

Dependencies on private finance both domestic and foreign between countries differ according to the place in the global economic and monetary hierarchy. Economically powerful and monetarily sovereign countries in the Global North may find it easier to implement measures for financial repression. Yet, Multilateral Development Banks²⁰³, regional cooperation and the strategic use of domestic resources may reduce dependencies on foreign exchange and create scope for measures of financial repression in the Global South²⁰⁴.

Timeline:

Economically and monetarily powerful countries can implement these policies in the short- and medium run. Countries lower in the global economic and monetary hierarchy and more dependent on (foreign) private finance may need longer to ensure adequate resource mobilization.

Benefits:

Financial repression coupled with an expansion of public spending power is one way of reducing the economy's primacy of growth and profit and strengthening the scope for democratic control and governance of social provisioning. It would reduce the systemic instability of private finance and capitalist economic organizations more generally.

Evidence:

See literature in section "implementation".

2.10 Monetary-fiscal coordination (P5)

Elena Hofferberth

The problem:

Important investment in essential social services and infrastructure is often blocked by political restrictions on public expenditure and the dogma of balanced budgets. Yet, large-scale public funding is needed for the social-ecological transformation of our societies.

The policy:

Monetary-fiscal coordination can establish or rehabilitate the power of public money creation to ensure adequate funding for socially necessary and desirable and environmentally sustainable goods and services, such as Universal Public Services and renewable energy infrastructure.

Implementation:

Monetary-fiscal coordination can take different forms depending on the specific political and economic context. The proposal for Sovereign Money Creation has been spelled out for the United Kingdom, for instance. The central bank and ministry of finance would coordinate to match democratically determined investment priorities with adequate funding. Ensuring democratic participation and legitimacy as well as social-ecological orientation of monetary-fiscal coordination are essential parts of this proposal. Concrete measures for democratization include the strengthening of parliamentary accountability²⁰⁵, the institution of a People's Credit Council²⁰⁶ or of dedicated democratic commissions²⁰⁷ or citizens assemblies²⁰⁸. The inclusion of social and ecological factors in institutional mandates²⁰⁹ or "green constitutions"²¹⁰ are ways to ensure social-ecological purpose of monetary-fiscal coordination.

Geographical scope:

Due to global economic and currency hierarchies, monetary-fiscal coordination can more easily be deployed by countries that have a high degree of monetary sovereignty. Yet, the strategic use of domestic resources may reduce dependencies on foreign exchange and expand economic self-determination even in countries lower in the currency hierarchy²¹¹.

Timeline:

These policies can be implemented in the short-term and medium-term. Countries lower in the global economic and monetary hierarchy may need longer time to ensure adequate resource mobilization.

Benefits:

In addition to mobilizing financial resources to ensure funding of essential goods and services as well as the reduction of funding for undesirable and unsustainable one, monetary-fiscal coordination can be a means to strengthen democratic decision-making and participation in the economy. It would transfer the power of shaping “the economy” in qualitative and quantitative ways from (financial) capital to public institutions and people. Moreover, it can help countries to reduce dependence on global financial capital and (re-)gain greater room for maneuvering for political and economic self-determination.

Evidence:

Monetary-fiscal coordination in Canada²¹² and France²¹³ after the Second World War are two historical examples for purpose-driven public mobilization of financial resources. Interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic in various countries are further examples²¹⁴. Crucially, the purpose of these interventions was to maintain or restore a growth-based economic system. A clear social-ecological mandate to reduce energy- and material throughput and private consumption, for instance through rationing schemes, is thus an essential complement to these proposals. The same holds for democratic governance and accountability.

2.11 Credit guidance (P5)

Charles Stevenson and JP Arellano

The problem:

Under capitalism, money (given as credit) is allocated to projects based on their potential to make a profit. Many of the most urgent projects of our time (i.e., ending social deprivation while reducing ecological impacts) are not profitable. In addition, conventional monetary policy has failed both to maintain macroeconomic stability and to confront the social and ecological crises of our time.

The policy:

Credit policy encompasses the range of measures that determine how credit is distributed in the economy. Credit guidance takes the form of direct credit regulations – monetary policies that set standards regarding the type of loans that commercial banks are allowed to make. Credit regulations can take either a qualitative or quantitative form. Qualitative credit regulations prevent banks and other financial institutions from making loans to companies engaged in a specific type of activity. An obvious application in a post-growth transition is to use credit guidance to cut off all loans to the fossil fuel, arms, meat, and private jet industries. Quantitative credit regulations set up a ceiling for the amount of credit commercial banks and other financial institutions can allocate. This ceiling can either apply to the economy as a whole, to a specific sector or company.

Implementation and Geographical scope:

Credit guidance is implemented via the central bank. In the UK, US, Japan, and China, for example, it must be implemented at the national level. In the Eurozone and other regional monetary blocs, it must be implemented at the supranational level, such as by the European Central Bank (ECB).

Timeline:

Even in places where the central bank is fully independent (like the ECB), credit guidance could be implemented tomorrow following central bank mandates according to “the need for precautionary policy action to prevent the emergence of potentially catastrophic [climate] risks” (p.22)²¹⁵.

Benefits:

Credit policy is central to developing an industrial policy that aims to fulfill human needs within ecological limits (see brief on fiscal-monetary coordination). It can channel funds towards social-ecological sectors while cutting off finance for damaging sectors.

Credit policies can also perform a prudential function in financial markets by preventing the emergence of credit bubbles. They remain more relevant than ever, given the extent to which speculation linked to expanding volumes of loans contributed to recent macroeconomic crises, including the Great Financial Crisis²¹⁶.

In addition, credit guidance constitutes a nimbler tool for regulating inflation than the blunt (and socially harmful) alternative of interest rate hikes. By intervening in a specific sector, credit guidance can mitigate inflationary pressures. In this way, they can be used to offset policies that require an increase in public spending (see, e.g., briefs on the job guarantee and universal basic services). By reducing demand in some sectors, they allow demand to rise in others without threatening price stability. For this reason, credit guidance has been described as a “non-fiscal payfor”²¹⁷.

Evidence:

Credit guidance is the central tool of Chinese monetary policy²¹⁸. It has helped China achieve spectacular results in terms of poverty alleviation while avoiding economic crisis. Credit guidance was also a core tenet of French industrial policy in the postwar period²¹⁹. It allowed France to turbocharge its recovery while maintaining macroeconomic stability. Similar policies were in place in other advanced capitalist economies like the United States until the 1970s²²⁰. These examples would have to be adjusted to the specific task of not indiscriminately boosting growth per se but specific social and ecological activities.

2.12 Post-growth foreign policy (P5)

Victor Cannilla

The problem:

The world today is marked by escalating geopolitical tensions and dire ecological projections. Conflicts in regions such as Ukraine, Palestine, and Sudan highlight the persistent threat of state-based aggression and conflicts. Military budgets have been rising over the past three decades, now at their highest since the Cold War.

These worrying events and trends are likely to intensify over the twenty-first century and its destructive ecological projections. The transgression of at least six out of nine planetary boundaries underscores the urgent need for sustainable practices to prevent irreversible environmental damage, which would threaten the basic provisioning systems of hundreds of millions of people and lead to forced migrations and exile. The obvious global social injustice of the dominant classes of a few industrialized countries bearing the greatest responsibility while most lower-class people in non-Western regions face the consequences has been pointed out repeatedly. Contrary to the frequently heard expression, we are not all on the same boat; we are in the same storm. But some have contributed more and are better equipped to face it, notably by military means.

These challenges necessitate a comprehensive and peaceful defense policy that addresses both geopolitical and ecological crises, while updating our economic policy compasses beyond endless exponential growth.

The policy:

The proposed post-growth foreign policy aims to foster global peace and stability through the three following pillars:

- **Pillar 1 – Soft power and self-defense only:** Unfortunately, forms of competition and even hostility are likely to stay present in human affairs for the foreseeable future, and given the historical paths on which we are embedded, it is wishful thinking to advocate for their simple and abrupt end. Rather, the first principle that states and militaries should abide by is a commitment to restrain the means of competition to soft power, and the use of force to self-defense. Concretely, this means favoring diplomatic, cultural, and economic tools over military intervention. Hard power should be employed strictly in self-defense scenarios.
- **Pillar 2 – Subordination to multilateralism and international rule of law:** International actors should commit to multilateral agreements and institutions, particularly concerning the regulation and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, basic human rights and humanitarian law, including judiciary rulings made by international courts and international migration law. Common frameworks to set common limits to military spending should also be negotiated. These commitments are not merely altruistic – they are in everyone’s interest. Even dominant states have everything to lose in generalized conflict on a warming planet: their best strategy is not belligerent in unilateral power pursuit but establishing common rules in which to cooperate and compete in smarter ways. Diplomats are much cheaper than missiles and achieve better long-term rewards.
- **Pillar 3 – No demonization of the enemy:** The primary cause of warfare in documented history is border dispute and land grabs – states primarily fight their neighbors. These aggressions almost always rely on forms of ideological demeaning of one’s neighbor – vectors such as historical revisionism, racism, and their twins of nationalist glorification and self-proclaimed superiority have been undeniable tools of large-scale military damage. Politically, leaders face difficulty when attempting to mobilize troops to face death, convincing their families to accept the war efforts, or enrolling the general population into committing state resources to wars they see as unnecessary. Hence, by avoiding dehumanizing rhetoric, especially in ethnic conflicts or border disputes, civil society agents can foster mutual understanding, trigger de-escalation, and enable reconciliation.

Benefits:

Implementing this policy offers several advantages. First, and most importantly, global stability and security would be favored. By prioritizing diplomacy and multilateralism, states can reduce the likelihood of conflicts, build stronger international alliances, and ensure that cooperation is fostered whenever natural tragedies or man-made conflicts threaten their physical integrity. Second, ecological limits and post-growth policies will be easier to accept and implement once security dilemmas and military growth imperatives are overcome. This is therefore a pre-requisite to ensure long-term planetary health²²¹ and fairer societies. Third, humanitarian progress and moral progress would be fostered, for respecting humanitarian law and supporting international courts will enhance human rights protections and accountability for war crimes.

Geographical scope:

The pillars outlined above need coordination and adherence at multiple levels of the global arena, to break away from “prisoner’s dilemma” types of security dynamics. In Western, industrialized and established military and economic powers, commitments to fairness must be perceived not as a burden, but as a new compass for civilizational glory. At the crossroads of barbary and peace, the powerful can choose to adopt cultural and moral leadership as a normative project, over zero-sum games that endanger the totality of human ventures. On the other hand, rising powers, new challengers and “revisionists” should commit to limit arms races, including abiding to regulation of dual technologies and next-generation armament such as the development of AI in weapons systems or hypersonic missiles. Less powerful countries should aim at carrying new projects of non-alignment and neutral zones to pacify the globe, instead of furthering escalation between poles.

Implementation:

Establish diplomatic channels and multilateral agreements, initiate cultural exchange programs, and begin integrating sustainable practices. The European Union and its most powerful member states can seize opportunities given the tensions in the current crisis with the United States to drastically reform NATO governance or even leave it altogether. Instead, a post-growth EU would be focused on new forms of power to replace exponential economic growth, such as building meaningful partnerships with countries from the Global South. A positive example of multilateralism is the role played by the Hague Group, which aims at strengthening international institutions while preventing their overuse in imperialist or neocolonial fashions. Similarly, newly formed alliances can continue building pressure to reform the governance structure of international institutions such as the IMF or the UN-SC, to build improve global representation. Meanwhile, all states can already commit to ceilings on military spending.

Evidence:

- **Pillar 1:** The European Union construction, through its Marshall Plan and OSCE / ECSC ancestor, provides an example of how soft power can replace military competition. After World War II, European empires (soon-to-be nations) sought cooperation and integration rather than conflict, under the hegemony and interests of the United States. These nascent European institutions, with their economic collaboration and shared regulatory frameworks, helped turn former enemies into competitors only, or even allies. Economic aid allowed rebuilding war-torn economies, fostering long-term political partnerships and demonstrating how diplomacy and economic cooperation can maintain peace without resorting to military force.
- **Pillar 2:** The Helsinki Accords (1975) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (1968) exemplify how multilateral frameworks can foster peace through shared commitments to security and international law. The Accords promoted cooperation despite the Cold War tensions, by addressing security, human rights, and economic ties, leading to peaceful dialogue between East and West. Similarly, the NPT has been instrumental in limiting nuclear weapons proliferation by binding countries to the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation. Both examples highlight how multilateral agreements can manage tensions and avoid military escalation by creating common rules for cooperation.
- **Pillar 3:** The peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa demonstrates the power of reconciliation and avoiding the demonization of one's adversary. Nelson Mandela and his allies prioritized mutual understanding over retribution, using the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address historical injustices and promote national healing. This approach prevented civil war and allowed for a peaceful transition, showing how avoiding dehumanizing rhetoric can lead to long-term peace even in deeply divided societies.

2.13 Resource use reduction targets for the EU (P4)

Diego Francesco Marin

The problem:

The EU's current material footprint averages close to 14 tons per capita, far exceeding sustainable limits. The mobility sector drives a disproportionate share of the EU's material footprint due to its reliance on fossil fuels, metals, plastics, and infrastructure materials. Urban areas face particular challenges due to car-centric planning that prioritizes individual vehicle ownership. This creates inefficient resource use patterns that perpetuate high material consumption across the transportation ecosystem.

The policy:

We propose establishing a cascading material footprint reduction framework for the EU based on a target of 65% reduction by 2050, with the mobility sector playing a crucial role in achieving this overarching goal. This target would be in line with the material requirements for securing decent living standards (3-14 tons per capita), while being well below the threshold of 8 tons per capita suggested to be sustainable by scientists²²². The target of 65% reduction would cascade from the EU level to member states with differentiated responsibilities calibrated to each country's unique circumstances - including existing transportation infrastructure, population density patterns, economic development stage, and historic consumption. Member states would then further distribute these targets to regions and urban areas, creating sector-specific targets including those for mobility. For the mobility sector specifically, cities would be required to develop Material-Efficient Mobility Plans (MEMPs) that quantify current transportation-related material footprints and implement comprehensive reduction strategies aligned with the broader EU target.

Implementation/geographical scope:

Implementation follows a multi-level governance approach beginning with the EU Commission establishing the overarching framework and methodology. Member states then develop national strategies and enabling legislation tailored to their circumstances. Regions create implementation plans focusing on inter-city connections and rural-urban networks. The most concrete actions occur at the city level, where urban mobility plans undergo revision to prioritize vehicle-sharing systems, modal shifts to public and active transportation, space-efficient infrastructure, extended lifespans for existing assets, and material-efficient design standards.

Timeline:

The implementation timeline begins with measurement framework development and baseline assessments in 2026-2027, followed by establishment of EU-wide and member state targets in 2028. We propose five-year interval milestones: 10% reduction by 2030, 30% by 2035, 45% by 2040, 60% by 2045, and full target achievement of 65% by 2050.

Benefits:

This policy delivers multiple benefits beyond material reduction. Environmentally, it significantly decreases raw material extraction and processing impacts. Socially, it creates more livable urban spaces with less congestion and pollution. Economically, it reduces material costs while creating new business opportunities in sharing economies and mobility services. The innovation ecosystem creates benefits through accelerated development of lightweight construction and modular design. Public health improves through increased active transportation, while valuable urban space currently dedicated to parking becomes available for community needs. Strategically, Europe's dependency on imported raw materials decreases, enhancing autonomy.

Evidence:

Material footprint research conclusively demonstrates that mobility systems significantly impact overall resource consumption in the EU. The automotive industry accounts for approximately 10% of EU plastic demand, while consuming roughly half of the EU's share of several critical raw materials.²²³ The transformation of mobility systems offers substantial societal co-benefits. Research by Wolff and Haase (2019)²²⁴ confirms that redirecting urban space from vehicle infrastructure to public use enhances social cohesion and public health outcomes by fostering community interaction and physical activity. Trillo's (2016)²²⁵ analysis further documents how neighborhoods with abundant public green spaces facilitate social connections, reduce isolation, and enhance quality of life compared to car-dependent layouts.

3. How do these policies work together?

Suryadepto Nag

3.1 Low- and Middle-income countries

The policies recommended for low and middle-income countries are designed to serve empowering them to ensure sustained prosperity and enhanced autonomy, providing a better standard of living. They largely cover four policy areas – access to social protection and services, labor policies and the care economy, economic systems transformation, and trade, finance, debt and global solidarity. Access to social protection ensures that all persons have access to necessary commodities and services such as food, healthcare, education, income, and social protection. Under labor policies and the care economy, we address worker protection, labor conditions, child labor, and ensuring recognition and remuneration for unpaid care workers. These policies are supported by broader policies on economic systems transformations that enable the successful implementation of these policies at the domestic level, along with policies on trade, finance, debt, and global solidarity that allow for economic sovereignty at the international level. Several policies cover multiple policy areas. For instance, an employment guarantee provides social protection, while simultaneously regulating wages and providing a labor force for development purposes and for a social-ecological transition.

For the highest degree of effectiveness, the policies listed and described from Section 1.1 to 1.13 would

work best if they were implemented in tandem. The employment guarantee implies that the government would need to create a large number of jobs. These jobs can be created following nationalization of key industries but can also be used to introduce (where absent) and expand (where present) universal basic services. The employment guarantee, universal basic services, energy and internet access, and the universal care income would necessitate fiscal expansions by most governments. However, the costs incurred by each policy should not be assumed to be additive or mutually exclusive. For instance, the cost of paying wages for the employment guarantees would be included in the wage-related costs of providing universal basic services if the workers who sign up for the employment guarantee are employed in universal basic services. Nevertheless, the cost of financing these development policies would be large.

To enable paying for these policies, governments could therefore also enact delinking policies that generate revenue for the government. Debt cancellations could play an instrumental role in reducing existing sovereign debt, and withholding taxes, tariffs, and reparations in the form of cash transfers could provide more capital to governments to enact these policies. Taxes on foreign exchange trade would provide governments with foreign exchange reserves which would enable the import of key commodities. Trade protections would promote the growth of domestic industries and reduce reliance on imports. Organized price controls would

reduce unequal exchange and bring greater income without increasing environmental damage and labor exploitation. Intellectual property rights deregulation can further reduce reliance on imports. Labor regulations would also need to be accompanied by policies that retain investments. For instance, if the minimum wages are perceived to be too high by investors, it may lead to capital flight. Therefore, countries need to enact policies such as withholding taxes on profit repatriation which can help retain investments by incentivizing reinvestments over repatriation.

Most of these policies can be implemented in the short and medium term. However, the economic capacities of the implementing governments would determine the timeline. Ideally, policies that increase government revenue (such as withholding taxes) should be implemented before or at least, at a similar time as policies that would increase government expenditure (such as universal basic services). Governments with greater existing economic sovereignty can be more flexible with the timeline of policy implementation. This is because these governments would be less reliant on immediate tax revenue for financing development schemes and have a smaller burden of repaying onerous debt. Meanwhile, governments that are more financially constrained would benefit from an early execution of delinking policies that increase government revenue, retain investments, reduce sovereign debt, and provide greater economic sovereignty over domestic resources and industries. Such policies would enable a successful implementation of progressive development programs that improve access to basic goods, improve labor conditions, and strengthen social and environmental protections.

3.2 High-income countries

Post-growth policies enacted in high income countries, as described in Section 2, are key to addressing poverty globally, and complement policies in Section 1. Post-growth policies in these countries

have two main aims, i.e., completely eradicating extreme poverty domestically, while radically altering economic systems to prevent environmental damage, abolishing unfair international dynamics and undoing historical injustices and inequalities. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to depart from a growth-oriented economic system, which concentrates wealth in high income countries through unsustainable extraction in the Global South. Several policies in Section 1 would also make it difficult for high-income countries to continue business-as-usual terms, forcing lower or negative economic growth, further linking the reduction of unsustainable consumption and production in high income countries to the eradication of poverty globally. These objectives can be achieved through policies that curtail overconsumption and excessive exploitation of natural resources - resource-use-reduction targets, ecological planning, coupled with wealth taxes, luxury carbon taxes, and rationing of luxury commodities.

However, such economic transformations do not mean simple contractions in GDP. Rather, they are enabled through a planned reduction of economic throughput whilst prioritizing redistribution, so that the brunt of low/negative growth is not felt by poorer classes or marginalized groups. In addition to curbing overconsumption, wealth and carbon taxation generate revenue for the government, which can then be used for redistribution and financing an ecological transition. Redistribution can also be enabled through universal basic services, job guarantees and a universal care income, which ensure economic security and needs satisfaction for all domestically. These key policies would guarantee that the already disadvantaged are not left behind. Instead of a uniform reduction in everybody's income and consumption in high-income countries, these policies recalibrate and balance living standards, such that the poorest benefit while the overconsumption of the richest is curtailed.

However, simple taxation may be insufficient in bringing about the desired economic change in

isolation and therefore should be coupled with the repression of for-profit-financial institutions, planned monetary-fiscal coordination, and credit guidance policy to ensure that the policies are executed properly. The overall restructuring of the economy to meet social-ecological targets would further require democratic planning, improved economic democracy, and detailed resource use reduction targets for planned degrowth. However, it is important to note that it may be difficult for some small rich countries to implement degrowth policies in isolation, and therefore, truly achieving a post-growth economic regime in high income countries would also require an appropriate post-growth foreign policy i.e., international coordination among high income countries to enact degrowth, enabling smaller countries to do so with support from larger economies, and to reduce resistance from powerful private actors.

3.3 Global

While postgrowth policies in high-income countries may rectify present and future international economic relations, eradicating extreme poverty worldwide would require further international coordination to acknowledge historical inequalities. In most of the world, poverty at its current levels is a legacy of colonial underdevelopment and neo-colonial arrangements that continue to this day. Most post-colonial nations have large debts whose repayments hinder development expenditure. Through the past five decades, most development loans to low- and middle-income countries have been accompanied by structural adjustment conditions that have only worsened labor conditions and exacerbated poverty²²⁶.

Thus, to truly enable development and eradicate poverty, an important step would be reparations. Reparations would be on the basis of colonial exploitation and disparate environmental damage, in line with the Rio Formula on Common and Differentiated Responsibilities. Reparations can

also be executed in the form of organized debt cancellations by low and middle-income countries.

Reparations, either through direct payments or debt cancellations, would allow developing countries to increase their development expenditure. It would also reduce their reliance on foreign currency and thus reduce the need to export commodities at low prices at the cost of their own population. Apart from reparations, low and middle-income countries enacting the delinking policies listed in Section 1 such as organized price controls or intellectual property deregulation, would reduce their reliance on foreign imports and increase the value of their exports. As a result, developing countries would either have large trade surpluses which would increase income and reduce poverty without increasing economic throughput. On the other hand, rich countries will not be able to sustain large trade deficits and be forced to import less, which could limit consumption. Since export prices from poor countries would be higher, lower demand from rich countries would not exacerbate poverty in poor countries and simply enable degrowth in rich countries.

Enacting post-growth and delinking policies, however, cannot be done by a single country in isolation, and will require a significant amount of international coordination to guard against the existing co-ordination of international capital. A single country raising the price of a commodity, such as cocoa, would not be beneficial unless all other cocoa producing states also employ a price increase. Similarly, debt cancellations can only work if they are organized, coordinated, and supported internationally. Policies such as nationalization, wage controls, carbon taxes and rationing can be directly in conflict with corporate interests, such as those of fossil fuel corporations. Historically, governments acting against the interests of multinational corporations have often brought international opposition to uphold private interests. Considering these globalized financial interests, international co-ordination both in terms of economic and foreign policy is indispensable.

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