

MOVEMENTS DECLARATION

**OUR FUTURE
IS PUBLIC**

**ENERGY
DEMOCRACY**



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The aim of this declaration is to strengthen, expand and unify the many social movements committed to energy and environmental justice. It is part of an open and ongoing political process to develop a common narrative, strategies and actions.

It is the result of a 2-day Energy sector meeting as part of the international Our Future is Public conference in Santiago, Chile, from 29 Nov – 2 Dec 2022. The declaration has been drafted by a diverse group of participants ranging from Indigenous representatives, trade unions, ecofeminists, climate justice organisations, solidarity collectives and NGOs, we wholeheartedly invite allies to sign on and join this effort.

More information can be found at:

<https://peopleoverprof.it/resources/news/our-future-is-public-santiago-declaration-on-public-services?id=13578&lang=en>

It has never been clearer: profit-driven energy corporations have influenced governments, international institutions and UN environmental conventions in support of policy decisions that favour greed and capital accumulation. As such, these policies are failing to prioritise ecological and human needs. There are severe and deep cracks in the blind faith in neoliberal market economics, founded upon decades of privatisation, extraction and exploitation.

As billions across the world face energy poverty and record high energy bills, this is a crucial moment to transition towards a public energy system rooted in justice, solidarity and democracy. It is time to unite globally to put the care of people and our planet before profit.

As we rise up against injustice, we work together for energy democracy. We see the fight for energy democracy as part of the wider struggle towards climate justice that acknowledges the intersections between racism, classism, capitalism, economic injustice, gender exploitation, and environmental harm. We need to make the necessary systemic changes to realign our economies with our natural systems. From local collectives to regional, national and international transformations: we have solutions. There are social and technological challenges ahead of us. There are also false solutions to the climate crisis which replicate colonial capitalist patterns. Yet groups fighting for energy democracy at all levels of society are leading resistance and remedies towards a better future.

AT THE CENTER OF THESE
FIGHTS KEY QUESTIONS ARISE:

ENERGY FOR WHAT?

FOR WHOM?

BY WHOM?

AND HOW?

We stand at a turning point at the intersection of multiple crises. How do we end energy poverty without further fossil fuel extraction? What does it look like to decolonise and dismantle exploitative energy policies at local and international levels? How do we actualise reparations with and for global South countries on the frontlines of the climate crisis so that they can decarbonise? How do we develop participatory planning and ensure equity in new energy models?

Ultimately, we have the choice of two energy transitions: green colonial imperialism or energy democracy underpinned by equitable public ownership. The latter ignites a fundamental shift in how we understand, value, consume and manage energy beyond economic cost.

IT IS TIME TO:

Decarbonise

Democratise

Deprivatise

Decolonise

Depatriarchalise

Demarketise

Decommodify

Degrow

our global, regional, national
and local energy systems!

WE STAND TOGETHER FOR:



I
Access to energy is a human right



II
Energy under public ownership



III
Against green colonialism



IV
Buen Vivir values: from profiteering to good living



V
Reducing energy consumption
and energy sufficiency for all



VI
Funding globally just energy transitions



REFLECTION I

Respect to Chilean and all regional Indigenous allies: Coming together in Santiago in December 2022 underlined the importance of putting the voices and experiences of frontline communities in the global South at the forefront of the energy democracy movement. We acknowledge that the Wallmapu land we met upon for this conference was annexed from the Mapuche people and continues to be controlled by colonial powers. We would like to honour the tireless work of environmental defenders in resistance across the world to protect ecosystems and the work these communities do to educate us in these and future spaces.

In Chile, state intervention in public services has been limited by the Constitution rooted in Pinochet's violent neoliberalism. In parallel, the State has an ongoing legacy of repressing Indigenous nations. Nevertheless, building on a history of social uprisings, Chile and the bigger Wallmapu territory has great potential to be a pioneer towards a socially and ecologically just energy revolution powered by renewables and innovative, democratic solutions.

I. ACCESS TO ENERGY IS A HUMAN RIGHT



> Universal access to clean, affordable and reliable energy must be recognised as a human right.

> Energy is a public good, a basic service and a common need.



> Energy is crucial to life for all beings. It allows us to pursue other human rights such as access to water, food, health, education, mobility and connectivity. It cannot be subjected to the laws of the market.

> The fight against energy poverty is a global struggle. We support bans on disconnections to ensure no one is left in the dark or without energy to cook food.



TESTIMONY FROM CATALONIA, SPAIN

In Catalonia, as energy multinationals like Endesa, Iberdrola and Naturgy are making sky-high profits, a growing number of people are in energy poverty. Enginyeria Sense Fronteres (Engineering Without Borders, ESF) is a Catalan organisation committed to advancing the human right to energy by strengthening collective action. ESF's struggle towards a democratic and ecofeminist energy system, which prioritises social and environmental global justice, is structured through two main platforms: the Energy Sovereignty Network (or Xse, from its initials in Catalan) and the Alliance against Energy Poverty (APE). Xse brings together individuals and organisations to challenge the privatisation- and profit-based energy system, and works with municipalities and cooperatives to advocate a shift to a municipal-owned energy model. APE is a mutual support and empowerment network, formed by people affected by energy poverty, which has developed pioneer legislation to protect vulnerable communities in Europe from private energy corporations.

III. ENERGY UNDER PUBLIC OWNERSHIP



- > All sources and types of energy must be under public ownership. A public mission and mandate are necessary to address social, political and technological hurdles ahead of us.



- > We cannot decarbonise within a neo-liberal, profit-driven energy model. To repair the harm that industrial energy systems have caused to Mother Earth, energy has to be in collective hands.
- > Public ownership must not be for profit. All investments must be reintegrated into sustaining a just energy system for people and planet. This should be organised, managed and delivered according to human rights and gender equality principles.
- > The State's role is to deliver equitable access to clean, affordable, reliable energy and to provide good and safe jobs for workers. States are well placed to coordinate the process of bringing back energy production, transmission and distribution infrastructure into democratic public ownership. However public ownership goes beyond the State.
- > No one size fits all: Energy democracy is contextual. Energy planning is required at local, national and regional levels. This must acknowledge cultural, social and political needs and acknowledge all forms of discrimination.

- > **A publicly owned energy system requires democratic, participatory energy planning and governance.** Public entities should collaborate with frontline communities, activists, workers and communities. Trade unions, community groups and grassroots organisations are well placed to support this process and must be sufficiently resourced.
- > **Oppressed and affected groups should inform energy policy and be compensated for their expertise in the energy transition.** These experiences must be heard and centred. This cannot be a last-minute add-on and these voices should influence decision-making processes.
- > **We call for accessible, democratic public spaces to discuss how, why and where energy is used and produced.** It is time to end technocratic, elitist and opaque decision making.
- > **Depending on the context, different scales and forms of public ownership are necessary.** This requires deeply democratic decision-making processes and can be a combination of public-public partnerships and public community collaborations, which may involve cooperative and more autonomous practices.
- > **National, regional and international public energy systems need to be underpinned by public-public partnerships within and between countries,** and developed in collaboration with trade unions. This includes ending precarious work.
- > **Only under a comprehensive democratic public ownership model will community solutions,** such as energy cooperatives, be able to meet their potential. Without it, local initiatives will likely be limited by the broader neoliberal framework.
- > **We support technological pluralism.** Public ownership gives the foundation to collectively decide what form and type of energy suits each context.



TESTIMONY FROM COSTA RICA

Costa Rica's efficient and egalitarian energy service is rooted in public ownership, with coverage of over 99 per cent. Founded in 1949, the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) is among the world's most advanced in terms of social development. Already in 2017, hydropower, geothermal, wind, solar and biomass energy sources constituted 99.7 per cent of the national electricity mix. ICE produces 66 per cent, working alongside municipal companies and rural energy cooperatives who generate another 7 per cent. The remaining power is delivered through power purchase agreements (PPAs) between the state and private power producers. ICE's public solidarity model is being challenged by internal corporatisation. Nevertheless, in the words of ICE's Chief Engineer: [As] the Costa Rican population became used to good quality electricity [...] our services are perceived as a fundamental right to which every person should have access, regardless of the location, social position or economic capacity of users.



REFLECTION II

Decision-making on climate and energy is currently dominated by capitalist global North perspectives which reproduce colonial oppression and domination. Historically, the expertise of Indigenous nations and ecofeminists has been excluded from the mainstream energy discourse. Community traditions and practices have been exploited and discriminated against. Their homelands and values have been undermined. Energy democracy requires the collective liberation from the oppressive and dominant forces of the global North.

III. AGAINST GREEN COLONIALISM



- > **Decolonisation must be at the heart of energy democracy.**

We cannot, and will not, accept patterns of exploitation and extraction of people, labour and natural commons.



- > **We oppose green colonial extractivism which dispossesses communities of their land.** Neither public nor private projects can be supported if people and nations are sacrificed. If communities are maltreated or dispossessed, it is not a just energy transition.
- > **If projects discard and undermine affected communities, we stand in solidarity by joining the resistance.** Projects must have an inclusive, democratic process to address environmental, social, cultural and economic costs and mitigate impacts. This will ensure the success and speed of the energy transition in the long term.
- > **We call for an active dismantling of the international financial architecture of green colonialism.** International financial institutions (European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Bank) should no longer provide finance for false solutions and colonial extractivist projects.

- > **We stand against international trade treaties that facilitate extraction globally**, for instance the Energy Charter Treaty, as these underpin a corporate architecture of impunity.
- > **All new green energy production must take the full global value** and supply chains into account and be built with equity and justice for all.
- > **Deprivatisation, depatriarchalisation and decolonisation must go hand in hand.**
- > **Reclaiming what has been stolen will be a long and difficult struggle.** This requires bringing back sovereignty for nations and people of the global South who have been dispossessed of their political, social and economic choices. This should begin with groups that have been historically discriminated against, such as peasant communities, Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples, women and youth.
- > **This requires decolonising our knowledge production**, listening to knowledge and integrating values which have been marginalised in order to transform how we produce and reproduce our socio-economic model.



TESTIMONY FROM TUNISIA

Tunisia's public energy company STEG, which achieved an electrification rate of 99.8 per cent, is facing creeping privatisation. Heavily influenced by international law firms and the German government agency GLZ, among others, the Tunisian government has embarked on a privatisation programme, offering market share to private investors in renewable energy. Their main long-term goal is energy exports to Europe instead of generating energy for local use. This reinforces colonial extractivism, at the expense of huge swathes of common agricultural land and much needed energy sovereignty. UGTT, the biggest Tunisian labour union, has been at the forefront of fighting energy privatisation. In support of this struggle, the Working Group for Energy Democracy has been developing a just and democratic energy transition model based on public collective energy production that also involves renewable energy generated by cooperatives.



IV. BUEN VIVIR VALUES: FROM PROFITEERING TO GOOD LIVING

- > Our perception of energy has been subsumed by competitive market forces. The concepts of cost and value have become tainted with capitalist greed.
- > It is time to apply the values of Indigenous, ecofeminists and frontline communities in how we discuss, generate and use energy. Women have historically given their energy in unpaid, undervalued care roles, therefore the transition to a democratic energy system needs to place care, well-being and reciprocity at the forefront of future economic and energy systems.
- > It is important to put respect for Mother Earth and all she nurtures at the core of our energy discourse and apply a life frame. As energy brings life and all life is energy, we endeavour not only to think with our heads, but also with our hearts and whole being.
- > Ecofeminist practices based on relationality and interdependency should be integrated into all levels of energy decision making. This includes nurturing feminist leadership that is based on mutual support and collective accountability to organise through cultural, spiritual, economic and social means.
- > By placing ecofeminist and Indigenous perspectives at the heart of our movements, we are able to move towards a systemic change, not only in how we discuss and challenge power, but how we build new equal power relationships collectively.





TESTIMONY FROM SIERRA NORTE DE PUEBLO, MEXICO

The Luces de la Resistencia (Lights of Resistance) campaign say ‘Yes!’ it’s possible to build local community energy alternatives that are fair, democratic and sustainable. Some already exist, thanks to community organising and different forms of knowledge coming together to champion the use of local technologies. For example, in Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico many Indigenous organisations and cooperatives are building a solidarity economy to achieve decent living conditions for the majority of the Masewal and Totonaca peoples. Having experienced multiple threats from extractive industries, these communities decided to build energy sovereignty for Yeknemilis (meaning good life in the Nahuatl language). They are collectively installing photovoltaic systems, providing training on electricity, and developing prototypes of energy-efficient stoves and dryers. In short, they are creating an alternative energy management model that centers rights and justice.



V. REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND ENERGY SUFFICIENCY FOR ALL

- > Global consumption is hugely inequitable. Domineering countries and communities who have profited the most from the exploitative, extractive energy system must take responsibility economically, politically, socially and environmentally.
- > Reduction of energy production and consumption is a collective, not an individual, responsibility that governments should lead on.
- > Reducing energy consumption in the global North is a **systemic issue**. The logic of privatising profits and socialising losses has let corporations and big, rich consumers off the hook for decades, if not centuries.
- > Those who consume the most, both locally and internationally, must take responsibility for their overconsumption. This burden should not fall on those who have been least responsible but most affected by the climate crisis.



> **We actively support a socially just reduction of energy consumption.** To break with the blind faith in economic growth and to support degrowth principles that explicitly address class injustice.

> **We must address industrial energy consumption.**

For instance, cement, mining, transport and agribusiness consume a huge amount of energy and should be targeted for energy reduction to stay within our planetary limits.



> **Energy sufficiency entails a good quality of life and dignity for all.** We should prioritise energy for essential goods, public services and other social and reproductive work.



TESTIMONY FROM FRANCE

Energy workers in France achieved an important victory in 2022, when the government backed down on its plan to privatise the public company *Électricité de France*. The government's objective was to open up the most profitable parts of the business (marketing and production of renewable energies) to the market and leave activities requiring significant investment, particularly maintenance, in the public domain. In response, the trade unions of the General Confederation of Labour propose an alternative based on a public system under democratic control that involves users, workers and elected officials, deploying forms of struggle to advance socio-economic equality. For example, the 'Robin des Bois' (Robin Hood) operations saw energy workers reconnect low-income homes as well as schools and hospitals to the grid, providing them with free power and gas. The task at hand is to find ways to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions while defending energy as a common good.

VI. FUNDING GLOBALLY JUST ENERGY TRANSITIONS



> Financial reparations from the global North to the global South are crucial to provide populations across the global South with the means and autonomy to develop low-carbon economies for their own benefit.



- > **Global South countries and communities should be fairly compensated to leave fossil fuels in the soil.** We must recognise that global North nations have benefited from this extraction and exploitation for centuries.
- > **Reparations should encompass technology, knowledge and capacity exchanges**, in combination with dismantling intellectual property regimes, to allow more ecological transition technology to be developed in interaction with the communities it should serve.
- > **We oppose public financing that is hijacked by corporate interests, regardless of the source or type of energy.** Public loans and subsidies that prop up the profits of private investments, including Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and Power Purchasing Agreements (PPAs), incur unsustainable debt to the public and must stop immediately.
- > **Public ownership and funding for the energy transition has to ensure that any profits are reinvested** into maintaining and developing socially and environmentally just infrastructure.



REFLECTION III

This joint statement is part of a broader process that encourages collective listening and learning. We recognise that the search for perfectionism and rigid radicalism will impede our process to grow as a movement. We come to this space with a deep awareness that there is more that unites than divides us. Pioneering just transitions towards energy democracy will be challenging and full of contradictions. We hope in this shared endeavour to learn, fall and work in solidarity. We aim to use this space to learn from each other's struggles and build common alternatives.

BUEN VIVIR

A concept drawing from the Indigenous traditions of Latin America that aims to provide an alternative model beyond neoliberal capitalism based on collective well-being, democracy, solidarity, and sustainability. Its proponents seek to promote a plural vision of a new world that challenges dominant notions of progress and development.

CAPITALISM

Capitalism is an economic, political and social system in which the means of production (resources, machines, tools and everything else needed to produce the goods people need), are owned and controlled by private actors, with profiteering as their prime purpose. The majority of people must therefore sell their own labour in order to be able to meet their basic needs.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

A vision that focuses on addressing the root causes of the climate crisis through acknowledging the intersections between racism, classism, capitalism, economic injustice, gender exploitation and environmental harm. Climate justice supports a Just Transition for communities and workers away from a fossil fuel economy and focuses on making the necessary systemic changes to address unequal burdens to our communities and to realign our economy with our natural systems. For more information: <https://ggjalliance.org/program-activities/climate-justice>

COLONIALISM

The practice of expanding a country's territories by military, political and economic means. In this process colonies are established, settlers encouraged to move to the colony, and generally the colonising state imposes its language, culture and religion on the people already living in the state they have colonised. Colonisation is carried out for the purpose of gaining control over additional resources and people, and expanding the economic power of the colonising state.

DECARBONISE

The process to reduce and eventually stop all greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, that are produced by human activity and are driving the climate emergency.

DECOLONISE

The process of liberation from political, economic and cultural colonisation. Removing the institutional foundations of colonialism from the physical, ecological and mental processes of a nation and its people. For more information: https://darajapress.com/publication/decolonization_and_afro-feminism

DECOMMODIFY

The process that reduces the scope and influence of competitive markets in everyday life, for example by reversing the commercialisation of public services such as energy, so that these are collectively held and available to all, adequate and of good quality, and people are no longer dependent on having money to pay for them.

DEGROWTH

A theory that challenges the pursuit of economic growth (measured as GDP growth) as the key strategy for achieving development and economic prosperity. It intentionally promotes the decrease of market-based consumption as a mean to achieving well-being within planetary boundaries.

DEMARKETISE

The process to reverse the marketisation of state-owned enterprises (through which they became for-profit entities that prioritised cost recovery, private investment and a reduction in labour costs) by recovering public governance and reinstating their public mandate to deliver socially and environmentally desirable outcomes. For more information: www.tuedglobal.org/tued-working-papers

DEMOCRATISE

Ensure that the ownership, management and delivery of energy services are public and all members of society can participate actively and meaningfully in decision-making processes, whether directly or through effective representation.

DEPATRIARCHALISE

Collective action to overhaul the socio-economic structures that underpin uneven power imbalances between persons of different genders, which privilege wealthy white men over people of other genders and identities.

DEPRIVATISE

The process to reclaim a privatised public good, service or resource, such as energy supply, into public hands, which can happen at all levels of government. Deprivatisation at the national level is called nationalisation, while deprivatisation at the municipal level is known as remunicipalisation. For more information: <https://publicfutures.org>

ECOFEMINISM

Theory and practice that recognise that the exploitation of the environment and women in all their diversity have common roots in the patriarchal-capitalist system. It seeks to highlight the importance of centring care and the reproduction of life as the basis of alternative paradigms that can deliver a sustainable and gender equal future for all. For more information: www.tni.org/en/article/ecofeminism-fueling-the-journey-to-energy-democracy

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

The amount of energy that is used (consumed). This can be at different levels, including by a building, a country, a state and an individual.

ENERGY DEMOCRACY

The provision of energy services by and for people. A system in which everyone has access to clean, affordable energy which is democratically owned and governed to ensure that people's essential energy needs are equitably met, with as little harm to the environment as possible. For more information: <https://energy-democracy.net>, <https://mpowerlearn.co.uk/course/chunks/energy-democracy-what-is-it-and-how-can-it-drive-just-transitions?sessionId=50>

ENERGY REDUCTION

Cutting down on energy production and consumption. This can range from phasing out energy-intensive production of luxury goods, such as SUVs, to implementing energy efficiency measures such as housing insulation so that people require less heating or cooling to live comfortably.

ENERGY SUFFICIENCY

Ensuring everyone has access to the amount of energy needed to have an adequate living standard within planetary boundaries. This implies promoting sustainable patterns of energy production and consumption, quality public energy services that distribute energy resources fairly, and a reduction in non-essential energy use.

GREEN COLONIAL IMPERIALISM

The practice of land or resource grabs by one state in the territory of another, for the benefit of the colonising state, often with negative environmental, economic and social impacts for local peoples and communities. This is done in the name of addressing climate change, usually for renewable energy expansion.

IMPERIALISM

The imposition of influence over another country or state through military, political or economic means. Inherent within imperialism is the perception and belief of superiority over the other nation, which acts as a justification for such actions.

INDIGENOUS

Nations, peoples, and individuals that are native to or descend from those who inhabited a country or a geographical region before the arrival of colonists and who have been subjected to historic injustice as a result of, among other things, colonisation, racism, and dispossession of their land and natural resources. This has often prevented Indigenous peoples from exercising their rights and leading alternative paths and solutions to achieve human well-being in harmony with nature.

JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

The energy aspect of a Just Transition. A just energy transition ensures that workers and service users will not be made worse off, and that their needs and rights will be centred and prioritised, when moving from a fossil fuel-based energy system to a renewable-based energy system. For more information: <https://transicion-energetica-popular.com/en>

JUST TRANSITION

A systemic turn, through genuinely democratic means, away from exploitation, extraction, and alienation, and towards systems of production and reproduction that are focused on human well-being and the regeneration of ecosystems. This requires centring the interests of those who will be most affected by the transition, for example precarious workers and impoverished, rural communities. However multinationals by and large use this term to greenwash capitalism. For more information: www.tni.org/en/publication/from-crisis-to-transformation, www.tni.org/en/publication/just-transition

JUSTICE

Processes that lead to a society of free citizens holding equal basic rights and cooperating within an egalitarian economic system.

NEOLIBERALISM

This term is used to describe the phase of capitalism where the global flows of commodities and capital, including capital in the form of finance, have been substantially deregulated. This happens under pressure from international finance, ensuring that public policies such as austerity, deregulation, free trade, privatisation, and a reduction in government spending are pursued by all countries across the globe. For more information: www.networkideas.org/news-analysis/2017/10/neo-liberal-capitalism

PATRIARCHY

A social system in which positions of dominance and privilege are primarily held by men. Patriarchy is associated with ideas that attribute distinct, fixed and intrinsic qualities to women and men (i.e. masculinity vs femininity), and is embedded in the social, legal, political, religious and economic organisation of many cultures and states.

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