

Climate Emergency Teach-In Report Milano Whole Earth Task Force

This report communicates the findings, reflections and recommendations from the Milano Whole Earth Task Force's (hereafter 'Task Force') Climate Emergency initiative at The New School (TNS). This includes, inter alia, the Climate Emergency Teach-In (Monday, March 2, 2020), its associated survey, the Climate Emergency public engagement syllabus, broader discussions about curriculum transformation and other processes and reflections leading to and following the teach-in. This initiative has been organized and undertaken over the period spanning from the Summer of 2019 to Spring/Summer 2020; reporting and deliverables are being completed during the Summer 2020. The MilanoSchool.org page on the Climate Teach-In (<https://www.milanoschool.org/climate-teach-in/>), which is still a work in progress, contains, summarizes and offers some examples of the work, items and deliverables of this initiative. Consider also the blogpost article recapping the Climate Emergency Teach in (<https://www.tishmancenter.org/blog/climate-emergency-teach-in-recap?rq=climate%20teach%20in>).

The Task Force was led by Leonardo E. Figueroa Helland (Milano/EPISM Faculty), Mindy Fullilove (Milano/Urban Policy Faculty), and Genesis Abreu (EPISM Graduate Research Assistant/BIPOC Earth Student Collective/Climate Solutions Collective). Other participants in the Task Force at different times and during the Climate Teach-In include John Clinton (Milano Dean/EPISM Faculty), Ana Baptista (Milano/EPISM Faculty, TEDC Assoc. Director), and Mark Lipton (Milano/Management Faculty). The Climate Teach-In event itself also had the key participation and presentations of Decolonize this Place (<https://decolonizethisplace.org/>) and Jess Serrante from Radical Support (<https://www.radicalsupport.org/>). Moreover, the Teach-In included the key role of a group of EPISM students that helped run, shape, coordinate and build on the discussions and outcomes of the event, including: Christian Tandazo, Andrea Torres, Laura Langner, Ludovica Martella, Anastasia Standrik, Marisa Valdez, Kaija Xiao, and Sabrina Chapa. This process, including the Teach-In, has been undertaken with the logistical and funding support of the Tishman Environment and Design Center (TEDC), and the Milano School of Policy Management and the Environment. We especially thank TEDC for its support through the 2019-2020 Tishman Center Faculty Grant.

This report has three sections: (1) purpose, process, goals and deliverables of the initiative (p. 1-5); (2) Milano and broader TNS community input, "findings" and proposals (e.g., from the Teach-In, and Survey) for transforming curricula and other dimensions of the university in line with the climate emergency/climate justice (p. 5-11); and (3) broader considerations and (changing) contexts (NOTE: this last section contains ongoing work, with efforts still in progress).

1. Purpose, Goals of the Milano Whole Earth Task Force Climate Emergency Initiative

The Task Force first came together in the Summer of 2019 in response to calls from Milano Faculty to assemble a group that would implement a process to discuss, examine and gather participatory contributions from different constituencies (students, staff and faculty) regarding how the Milano School and the broader university should transform itself in response to the climate emergency (for brief context on how the Task Force has framed the climate emergency, please consider the account and supporting materials at <https://www.milanoschool.org/climate-teach-in/>). Periodic meetings were held by the Task Force, usually bi-weekly from the Summer 2019 and until March 2020 to address these matters. The meetings became a space for key critical reflections concerning how such transformations should be guided by participatory processes and transformative democratizing values that would orient change in curriculum, governance, representation, and institutional engagement with, as well as accountability to the

broader community, both beyond and within the university and the Milano School. The Tasks Force meetings also led to a shared agreement in relation to the pursuit of specific deliverables that would result from its work. These specific deliverables, in addition to the discussions and this report, have been (a) a public syllabus, (b) the Teach-In, and (c) the survey.

- a. *The Whole Earth Climate Justice Public Syllabus for Systemic Change, embedded within the Climate Teach-In web entry in the Milano School webpage.*

The Task Force agreed to produce a publicly accessible Climate Emergency/Climate Justice Syllabus for Systemic Change to be made available via the Milano School webpage. Alongside other resources, this public syllabus has been accessible since early March of 2020 at: <https://www.milanoschool.org/climate-teach-in/>. The public syllabus provides audiences from within and beyond the School a way to learn about and navigate the intricacies of the climate crisis and climate (in)justices, as well as the contested politics and policy frames around climate change. It also enables audiences to discern key transformative paradigms and pathways for systemic change through policy transformation and social mobilization. The syllabus not only centers matters of systemic (in)justice and systemic change, but also foregrounds the key role of the subaltern knowledges and movements of frontline, fenceline and marginalized communities (including Women, Indigenous, People of Color and Global South communities) in defending, embodying and advancing sustainable alternatives to the power structures that drive climate change and other global crises. As it currently stands, this syllabus is already a valuable instrument, e.g., for prospective students as well as other outside audiences interested in the critical and justice oriented analyses of climate change and climate politics/policy/movements. This syllabus is a living instrument which will be updated and adapted periodically in response to new research and activism, as well as broader unfolding events in the field of climate politics and policy.

- b. *The Climate Emergency Teach-In of Monday, March 2, 2020*

The Task Force also agreed on organizing a Climate Emergency Teach-In at TNS sponsored by the Milano School and TEDC. The teach-in was attended by 54 participants, including 35 students, 10 faculty, 1 staff, 3 alum and 5 community members from outside TNS. Participants were associated with different units with TNS, such as Milano, Parsons, Lang, NSSR,, and the Adult Bachelors program, with particularly significant participation from Milano and Lang. There were also participants from outside TNS, including from NYU and The Climate Reality Project.

Broadly stated, the event was organized in accordance with the following frame and rationale:

As a higher education institution committed to critical thought for transformative action, The New School generally as well as the Milano School specifically must be a space where students, faculty and staff can collaboratively share, build, acquire and exercise the knowledges and competencies needed to respond to the epochal climate and other global challenges we face. In the face of potentially irreversible planetary disruption and atrocious social, environmental and climate injustice, business as usual is not an option and all institutions, including educational and research entities like our own, must break away from their standard mode of operating and radically change. Particularly, as an institution committed to public engagement for social and environmental justice and sustainability, TNS must also develop a comprehensive plan built on participatory processes to address the emergency and advance climate justice. The Milano Climate teach-in aimed to contribute to this process, both with the goal of contributing to transform Milano internally and more broadly contributing to TNS-wide climate emergency declaration and action plan process.

The teach-in addressed these matters during a four hour, one day event, aimed at:

- Once again, raising the level of awareness and alarm about the climate emergency (as has been done in different previous and ongoing processes, such as the "Disrupt Climate Injustice" curriculum disruption of 2018 and the ongoing process for a New School-wide Climate Emergency Declaration and Comprehensive Action Plan, which the initiative of this report aims to support).
- Inviting the university community to take a participatory role in contributing ideas, critiques and proposals about what the institution can and should do, and how it must transform itself, to advance climate change and climate justice-centered education and actions, both internally and with the broader society, from local to global
- Drawing specific attention to the need to center climate justice as well as the experiences, voices, knowledges and leadership of frontline communities, subaltern and marginalized groups, social movements, and civil society organizations in university education, research, governance, representation and public engagement regarding climate change, climate politics and policy and transformative collective action for systemic change.

The Teach-In was designed in accordance with the following guiding questions:

- What changes, actions and steps should the School undertake to address the climate emergency and advance climate justice?
- How must it change to face this emergency?
- What can we do to challenge its root causes?
- How ought the School work to enable just and sustainable futures?
- How can the School center the knowledge and leadership of frontline communities, marginalized groups and social movements, as well as act in solidarity or as co-conspirators in grassroots drive, justice oriented systemic change?
- How can the School divest from and challenge any complicity with climate injustice and its intersections with other injustices?
- What ideas and proposals should be integrated into the climate emergency declaration and comprehensive action plan, both with implications for the Milano School and for TNS as a whole?

The teach-in was divided in six modules, plus a wrap up discussion, listed below:

- Module 1. Planetary Emergency: Urgency of Change for Just Sustainabilities (led by L. Figueroa)
- Module 2. Root Shock and Culture Shift: Crisis and Response (led by M. Fullilove)
- Module 3. Social Movements and Policy Change: Envi. & Climate Justice (led by A. Baptista)
- Module 4. Education and Teaching for Change in Times of Planetary Crisis (led by J. Clinton)
- Module 5. Management & Public Engagement for Change during Crisis (led by M. Lipton)
- Module 6. Direct Nonviolent Action in the Face of Climate Policy Deadlock: Social Mobilization Paths to Climate Justice (lead and moderated by G. Abreu and with speakers from Decolonize this Place and Radical Support)
- Wrap-up Discussion: Collective Contributions for an Emergency Action Plan.

Each module was designed as a space to enable audiences and participants to contribute ideas, critiques and proposals for transformation at different levels, ranging from curriculum, research, governance, representation and public engagement, among other matters. Contributions and input from participants were gathered through the teach-in's workshop format, including diverse co-learning and discussion exercises, extensive student note-taking by at least two graduate students at a time per module, and

through a survey (discussed later). The specific discussions, reflections, contributions and ‘findings’ of the teach-in will be addressed in Section 2 below. The Milano School Climate Teach-In webpage (<https://www.milanoschool.org/climate-teach-in/>) includes some sample slide-shows and other materials associated with the Teach in, such as the survey used during and after the teach-in to gather input and contributions from the community; which will be described below. Most modules were recorded and the videos will be uploaded to the same webpage once they can be re-accessed at the Milano School computer where they are currently held and are not yet accessible because of the COVID-19 measures that were implemented soon after the teach-in took place.

c. The Survey related to the Climate Emergency Teach-In

A Survey instrument was developed and distributed during and after the Climate Teach-In to gather specific ideas, critiques and proposals from the community on how specific dimensions of the institution should change to address the climate emergency and climate (n)justice. Respondents were invited to provide their qualitative input in relation to The New School as a whole, or to a specific unit, School or program within it relevant to them (e.g., the Milano School, SPE, the undergraduate Global, Urban and Environmental Studies programs). The survey was accessible online from the day of the Teach-In at the same webpage and until the end of May 2020. The survey was first distributed for participants at the Teach-In and then widely distributed online and via email with the help of faculty, Deans, staff and chairs from different programs and Schools. The survey was accessible through Google Survey link as well as through a QR code. The survey included the following questions; respondents could choose to provide answers to any one or more of these themes and questions:

01. KNOWLEDGE SKILLS, COMPETENCIES, AND CAPACITIES: What capacities, knowledges, competencies and skills should the School focus on building so that students, faculty, and staff are equipped to engage effectively with the climate emergency and to advance climate justice?
02. DEGREES, CURRICULUM, AND COURSE OFFERINGS: What changes or additions should the School make to our degrees, curriculum requirements and course offerings to build the capacities needed for effective climate change/climate justice education and action?
03. RESEARCH: What changes or initiatives should the School develop to build research capacity and shift research efforts towards projects that focus on producing knowledge that directly confronts the climate emergency and advances climate justice?
04. GRASSROOTS KNOWLEDGE AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION: People and movements on the frontlines, often marginalized communities, often know and do more on climate change and climate justice than established institutions (including universities), and can be less constrained by pressures of business as usual. But their knowledge and leadership is often hampered by the hierarchies of power, accreditation and “expertise” built into institutions (including universities). What initiatives and changes can the School implement to enable grassroots actors to reshape and guide educational, research and action/public engagement agendas on the basis of their hands-on knowledges, interests and expertise?
05. GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION: What changes or additions can be made to the School's governance structure, decision-making bodies/processes and cross-constituency organizing (involving students, faculty, staff and/or partners) so that it can better respond to the urgency of climate change and to the demands of climate justice?
06. RESOURCE ALLOCATION: How can the School change the way it allocates its financial or other resources to significantly raise the level of institutional commitment to address the climate emergency and advance climate justice? What types of initiatives or specific projects should the School endeavor to fund in this regard?

07. DIVERSITY AND JUSTICE: What initiatives or changes should the School invest in to substantially diversify its student, faculty and staff community in ways that centers diversity in participation, influence, voices, knowledges, concerns and experiences of populations impacted by environmental and climate injustice and of grassroots actors with hands on expertise and knowledge? (This could be, e.g., regarding curriculum design and implementation, recruitment, governance, budget allocations, public engagement, outreach; in relation to frontline communities, grassroots movements, Global South people, people of color, working-class people, women, Indigenous people, migrants)
08. DIVESTMENT AND WITHDRAWAL FROM HARMFUL PRACTICES: What actions should the School take to divest from practices, organizing structures and educational/research approaches that contribute to climate injustices and other related harms and shift to just and sustainable practices? What changes do we have to make as a School to avoid complicity in perpetuating climate/environmental injustice?
09. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH DIFFERENT OUTSIDE ACTORS: What public engagement changes and climate justice oriented initiatives should the School pursue to better engage with outside actors such as: (a) frontline/CJ/EJ communities (e.g., people of the Global South, people of color, working-class people, women, Indigenous people, migrants); (b) governmental and (c) intergovernmental actors and policy spheres, (d) non-governmental actors (social movements, civil soc. orgs, NGOs), (e) private sector, (f) media/media representation (whether outside and our own institutional media), and/or (G) youth?
10. ENHANCING IMPACTS BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY: What can colleges/universities/graduate schools do -- beyond teaching and research -- to have important impacts on climate change and to advance climate justice especially over the next 3-5 years?
11. BUILDING COMPETENCIES AND INITIATIVES ALONG WITH AND TO SUPPORT YOUTH AND MOVEMENT ACTIVISTS: What competencies are critical for youth cadres/cohorts/movement activists to develop that college/university/graduate school is (potentially) suited to collaborate or help in developing?
12. CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION & DRAFT ACTION PLAN: Share with us your ideas, contributions, thoughts or proposals in response to, or to be added to the Climate Emergency Declaration / Draft Action Plan (at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WHstVLjTHbXNPto3eNjACo_ZJupCPTOOOXAnWxxhgdl/edit?usp=sharing):

The qualitative contributions from this survey are discussed in Section 2, alongside those of the Teach-In.

2. Milano and Broader TNS community Participation, Input and “Findings” (e.g., from the Teach-In and Survey) for Transforming Curricula and Other University Dimensions in Line with the Climate Emergency (and other Intersecting Crises/Transitions)

Drawn from the input of participants, the Climate Teach-In and survey yielded three general findings for transforming curricula and other university dimensions in line with the climate emergency and climate justice, and other intersecting crises/transitions

- a. *Developing a critical and transformative systems-based curriculum: Building and strengthening student, faculty, and staff competencies to address the climate emergency and advance climate justice*
- b. *Uplifting frontline, fenceline and marginalized communities, including their leadership and knowledge in (co)designing education, research, governance and public engagement: Reshaping collaboration and centering grassroots knowledge*
- c. *Restructuring institutional resources, governance, property, and land: From a bureaucratic hierarchical system of power to a decentralized cooperative approach for community empowerment, rooted in decolonization*

We discuss each one of these below:

- a. *Developing a critical and transformative systems-based curriculum: Building and strengthening student, faculty, and staff competencies to address the climate emergency and advance climate justice*

Participants, particularly students, strongly voiced the need for curricular redesign to *foreground intersectional climate change/climate justice literacy across curricula, drawing on the implications of race, coloniality, class, gender, and North/South power relations which shape the drivers of and responses to the climate emergency*. They emphasized that *curricula and courses should be (re)designed in accordance with critical, justice-oriented, systemic and transformative frameworks*. Such should proceed from an analysis of power relations that highlights the intersecting structural dimensions and root drivers of the climate crisis while also covering discourse and practical pathways to real solutions (e.g., as opposed to market-based and techno-fixes). *Curricular (re)design should be rooted in the work of organizations, communities, scholar-activists and grounded intellectuals committed radical systemic change based on alternative paradigms and subaltern knowledges*. Survey respondents furthered this demand by indicating how the curriculum should go beyond Eurocentric/western-centric/patriarchal perspectives, theories, concerns and methodologies for analyzing the climate crisis and solutions by interpellating dominant/mainstream perspectives and reframing approaches with other knowledges, particularly those that are non-hierarchical, anti-racist, and decolonizing. This supports the aims of the Draft Outline of a Climate Emergency Action plan, such as in goal 1, the need to “Engage with and make explicit commitments to frontline, environmental justice (people of color, low income, poor communities) and indigenous communities to center their knowledge and align with their vision for action on climate change.”

During the teach-in, there was a shared demand by participants, but primarily students urging the creation of interdisciplinary courses and redevelopment of existing courses to *center climate change and climate justice across the curriculum, and not only in field-, program- or discipline-specific courses*. Moreover, *curricula should be redesigned in ways that require climate change courses and literacy and that intentionally prompt students to take such courses*. As one Anonymous Survey Respondent stated, “I think that The New School, especially, should have basic threads of climate change knowledge intertwined in every class as it affects all of us in every way.” This aligns with goal 3 of the Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan which calls for integrating “environmental justice, climate justice and climate change...into every school, program and campus initiative. As climate change affects nearly everything...we need to make it a priority to shift our curricula university-wide along with any outward facing programs that involve external partners and communities.” Another Anonymous Survey Respondent underlined that in many programs, there are little to no course offerings that center climate change or climate justice, nor is there much active incentivizing, through curricula or advising, for students to take such courses. The respondent added; “A climate change...class...is crucial [to all fields] and should be mandatory to all students!” An ambitious initiative should be implemented to mobilize programs to build climate literacy into their curricula by compiling and linking existing courses (e.g., by creating a Climate Change/Climate Justice course inventory, as proposed by the Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan), creating new courses, transforming established courses and creating systematic pathways, incentives and rewards for faculty to redesign their courses and teaching to center climate change/climate justice, whatever their field. This aligns with the Draft Climate Emergency Action plan, which calls for “Making the climate change emergency and climate justice a required part of every syllabus and an

explicit part of the orientation for new students, faculty and staff,” and establishing “Mandatory climate change training/activities for all first-year students

Aside from including climate literacy in the classroom, participants at the teach-in spoke about *creating a curriculum that includes opportunities for skills-based learning and practice in the classroom that go beyond theory*. One of the highlighted skills echoed throughout the teach-in discussion and survey responses included community organizing, outreach, and engagement with local communities. At the teach-in, a graduate student from the EPSM program, Christian Tandazo, reflected on his academic experience at The New School, feeling skills-based learning was missing from the current curriculum of his graduate program. “I tangibly learned about community organizing from conversations with friends. Through organizing, you learn how to engage and be empathetic...as academics, we extract a lot from communities, but we don’t build systems of reciprocity...and that’s not something we learn about [in The New School]. Through empathy, we can learn what the community needs, rather than coming in and telling them what they need.” Additional skills requested to be built into The New School curriculum include developing group structure to help build, maintain, and facilitate cross-sectoral coalition and alliances, fundraising and grant-making, civic engagement for participating in local decision making spaces and navigating government sectors, and media tools to help with framing and messaging. This aligns with the call in the Draft Climate Emergency Plan to develop “visceral, embodied, immersive, participatory,” and other teaching and learning skills that have a “bias for action.”

An additional proposal concerned the need to implement *broad and deliberate initiatives that advance capacity building for professors who do not have the skillset to teach climate change or climate justice*. One anonymous survey respondent stated that: “[The New School] should offer more climate related classes in general. Faculty of all departments should go through...educational training on how to include this crisis in all of their classes, [since] it affects all aspects of life and will continue to [do] so.” Another anonymous survey respondent added; “Providing teachers with paid training on how to integrate sustainability...into their classes would...be helpful. Stronger messaging from the school leadership on how important sustainability is to the school and the education it imparts would also drive this message home, this can be achieved through concrete actions.” Broad initiatives should be developed and tie climate change/climate justice to other urgent and long overdue efforts to center equity, racial and social justice and equity, and should be required in curriculum and course design. They can include training, compensation, grants and other incentivizing mechanisms, such as professional development opportunities of different kinds that guarantee that faculty and programs will foreground such matters. Faculty could be recognized and rewarded in different ways for investing in such capacity building. This reinforces the call in the Draft Climate Action Plan to create pathways for “Students and faculty to receive credits for collaborating with local communities on climate justice issues.”

Participants also highlighted *the need for better cross-unit/cross-program networking and planning to ensure that interdisciplinary collaboration is relevant to advancing climate change/climate justice teaching and research*. Interdisciplinary research centers, such as TEDC can continue to play a key role in helping build university wide plans for cross unit and cross-disciplinary curricular, teaching and research endeavors that center climate change and climate justice. Other centers should also be called upon to contribute in this endeavor, and as participants mentioned, this should be tied intimately with issues of social and racial justice. Participants saw the university as still too disaggregated and partial with regard to cross-field climate research and teaching, and in need of a more encompassing endeavor to ensure that diverse efforts across the university are coordinating according to shared horizons and common plans.

The Climate Emergency Declaration and subsequent Comprehensive Action Plan, including the committee or Climate Emergency Task Force to be formed in this regard, can play an instrumental role.

b. Uplifting and foregrounding frontline, fenceline and marginalized communities: Reshaping collaboration and centering grassroots knowledge in education, research and governance

Climate valuable knowledge that is relevant to communities will result only by radically democratizing curricula and research program design to ensure that knowledge production, sharing and transmission centers systems and traditions of knowledge *other* than the dominant ones that have contributed to create the climate crisis. This requires foregrounding subaltern knowledges. *This entails opening spaces to uplift BIPOC research, expertise, and knowledge systems regarding climate and multiple other related fields. They include but are not limited to, the embodied knowledge of frontline and fenceline communities, grassroots activist networks, Native/Indigenous Science, local place-based knowledge, pedagogies of the oppressed, knowledges from the South, and Black feminist thought and other feminisms of color and of the Global South.* One participant in the teach-in suggested inviting and compensating frontline and marginalized communities impacted by the climate crisis who are engaged in climate justice organizing and movement building to teach courses based on their expertise, and creating spaces where such voices can have educational and research impact. This aligns with the call in the Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan to “Create a climate justice lab, where faculty and students work with environmental justice, indigenous and frontline communities, including EJ communities...on climate justice efforts,” and this can be done both locally and globally (especially now given the rapid shift towards intensified virtual interaction) in ways that “Open up our [university] community uses and share space, resources and programming,” so that it becomes a “welcoming hub for climate justice communities.”

Indeed, throughout the process, event and survey, participants proposed that *deliberate initiatives should be implemented to create institutional access, spaces and positions of influence for knowledge-bearers, members and leaders of frontline, marginalized and social/environmental movement communities to collaboratively (re)design and carry out educational, governance and research programs at the university.* This includes implementing a plan with an associated funding structure to invite, compensate and appoint such actors, whether through part-time, full-time or visiting opportunities across the institution. Only thus can such actors have a central role in collaboratively (re)designing curricula, imparting or co-imparting courses, and co-developing and conducting research programs at the university, based on their expertise and ties to relevant communities. Many members of such communities, though having key and indispensable expertise in what relates to climate justice, have no substantial access to shaping the university, or even attending as students. A university cannot serve such communities if it does not place their members in positions of influence that can shape what a university does, whether as students, teachers, or decision-makers.

An additional set of ideas and proposals were made regarding the need to lay out initiatives concerning the obstacles to accessibility that members of frontline, fenceline, marginalized and social movement climate justice communities have to university education, funds, infrastructure and accreditation. Teach-in participants as well as survey respondents noted that members of such communities rarely have access to TNS education or to the privileges associated with the ‘formal’ university accreditation for their extensive knowledges and expertise. So, on the one hand, it was proposed that *comprehensive initiatives and plans should be implemented to provide access to university courses free of charge to such communities, especially when such actors can benefit from specific skills acquired in such courses to advance their own aims. A funding structure should be set up to transfer or shift resources from privileged sectors of the*

student population and executive decision makers towards subaltern actors in order to subsidize such access. As one Anonymous Survey Respondent put it, we should “Invite [frontline communities] to work with our students, faculty, and staff. Provide them with access to courses, degrees, equipment (e.g. video) and funding (e.g., collaborative grants that New School staff with grant-writing knowledge can train the grassroots organizations and youth on so they can bring it back to their communities). [Also, we should] invite youth to participate and lead research design.” Course access, format and location for such actors should be designed in accordance to their needs and conditions. While some may be in the NYC metro area, many others are elsewhere in the world, and so if online or satellite options are to be made available, they should be free *of charge for such actors* and designed to serve their specific needs. However, these options should not be designed from the top down and should emphatically avoid ‘parachuting’ into communities; course content and goals should be sourced and co-designed from the ground up in response to the needs of such communities and in accordance with their aims and objectives. It is important to underline that for many members of such communities, the acquisition of skills or degrees from universities cannot become an additional financial, time or social burden, nor should it be seen as a source of authentication, validation or recognition of status for the work they do, which is valuable in their own terms. But simply, as a practical and strategic instrument in the advancement of climate and social justice aims.

Following upon this, on the other hand, many members, activists and leaders of such communities and movements have extensive expertise and knowledge working in their own fields and locations, but the its immense potential to positively shape climate affairs is curtailed by the fact that mainstream institutionalized education filters out subaltern experiences, bodies and knowledges. Moreover, such education is inaccessible and inequitable, and lacks adequate mechanisms to accredit the subaltern knowledge of those who may strategically benefit from such formal accreditation. *Specific curricular, portfolio and financial models should be developed and implemented to promote and streamline the acquisition of university degrees and accreditation for members of such communities who, on their own terms, can benefit from obtaining such accreditation from our university in ways that help to strategically and efficiently advance their own aims.* Financially, one survey respondent suggested using a percentage of tuition to sustain frontline work and access to the university; another survey respondent suggested a decrease in executive compensation to release funds for such aims. Also, outside funders can be sought by university administrators, centers, units and faculty teams to co-sponsor such projects. Moreover, while the academic aspect of this can be done on a portfolio model that documents experience, practice, knowledge and expertise for some established degrees (as already done to some extent for some TNS programs), it must be more extensive so that such actors can co-design their own curricular paths and degrees customized to their own expertise and goals. University personnel (e.g., faculty and relevant staff) should undergo appropriate training in subaltern knowledges, expertise and practices to recognize the ‘non-conventional’ ways in which such actors bear and embody knowledge that should be formally recognized, accredited and amplified. This is different from conventional professional experience or expertise as usually recognized by portfolio models and is easier accredited; contrastingly, subaltern knowledges are often present even in the absence of formal professional statuses, experience or expertise. Organizations embodied by members, knowledge bearers and actors from subaltern communities should be invited to design/co-design customized curricular pathways, courses and programs that can enable their members to obtain accreditation for their knowledge and expertise *in their own terms* and to acquire other knowledges relevant to their goals and aims. Specific courses or course sequences can be co/ designed with such organizations leading to customized certifications, degrees or other forms of accreditation free of charge to subaltern actors themselves. It is important that this is not done in a way that adds financial,

geographical or other burdens to communities whose day to day work is already much too demanding and often more of a priority than the attainment of academic credentials per se.

Finally, discussion of a *knowledge exchange model* has also been put forward. Here, organizations and members from such communities would be able to access TNS courses, resources, degrees and the like, while also being hired into formal positions to take a central role in collaboratively (re)designing curricula, imparting or co-imparting courses, and co-developing and conducting research programs and public engagement initiatives, based on their expertise and ties to relevant communities. While this has been done in issue-specific ways before, in what relates to climate change/climate justice a comprehensive plan of action should develop adequate curricular, funding and research infrastructure to institutionalize such efforts at scale and in the long term.

c. Restructuring institutional resources, governance, property, and land: From a bureaucratic hierarchical system of power to a decentralized and decolonized cooperative approach for community empowerment

Institutions of higher education, colleges and universities have a responsibility to their students, faculty, and staff to end their complicity in the disastrous effects of the climate crisis and climate/environmental injustices and demonstrate the kind of civic leadership they expect. But, as student participants put it, if those institutions are invested in fossil fuel companies or in funds potentially associated with land grabs,¹ then university operations and students' educations are being subsidized by investments that guarantee they will not have much of a planet on which to exercise their degrees. Moreover, student participants emphasized that it is unconscionable to pay for an education with investments that will condemn the planet to climate disaster. Such renewed calls for fossil fuel and climate/environmental injustice divestment at The New School and in other higher education institutions are part of a worldwide movement to confront the political economy of financialization. Such a movement, emphasized repeatedly by Teach-In participants, has to place further pressure on the pool of investors willing to bet on coal, oil, and natural gas, and in other forms of environmentally/climate destructive operations such as agrofuels/biofuels, agroindustrial monoculture, industrial logging and large scale mining which harm communities and ecosystems across the planet. As the Draft Climate Emergency Plan states, any efforts towards climate neutrality pursued by TNS "should also seek to avoid investments in false solutions like offsets and natural gas", and this includes investments in so-called renewable energy transitions that in fact lead to land, water, ocean or green grabbing schemes, such as agrofuels/biofuels and many large scale hydro and wind power projects that serve corporate interests instead of local communities. Divestment is just one front in a recent global surge in climate change activism, much of it led by young people.

With a mission to confront real-world problems through bold and creative solutions, in 2015 The New School announced a comprehensive climate action plan to address the climate crisis head on. Approved by the School's Board of Trustees, this plan included divestment of all fossil fuel investments in coming years, reshaping the entire School curriculum to focus more on environment, sustainability and climate justice, and a study of the School facilities to find ways to reduce its carbon footprint and save energy

¹ The Draft Climate Emergency Plan calls for ensuring "Ensuring that TIAA, which manages the New School's faculty and staff retirement plans is aligned with The New School's commitments and is formally adopting similar commitments." As is known, TIAA has been associated with investments that drive land grabs. See:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/17/world/americas/tiaa-cref-us-investment-giant-accused-of-land-grabs-in-brazil.html>
- <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/29739-pension-giant-executives-sky-high-pay-package-angers-clients-and-brazilian-land-grab-victims>

costs, and reduce paper use and waste.² Many of the teach-in and survey participants were aware of the School's commitment and actions of divestment but were uninformed as to where those investments were transferred towards. Participants with varying levels of awareness all called for *more ambitious and extensive action in transforming governance to achieve climate and climate justice aims*. There was a call by all participants for more institutional accountability, enforcement, and transparency on all internal and external climate change and sustainability policies, practices, and procedures. A faculty respondent to the survey indicated that "...High level impact is great, but without the follow-through by the university you'll never get buy-in from students." Another Survey Respondent noted and suggested, "We need clearer reports from the financial offices and the faculty who do know, on where and what TNS invests in and how much. A clear list of names of companies who [we're] financially entangled with would help [us] demand [from TNS] what to divest from." These discussions further examined the current governance and power structures of the school and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees who did not escape scrutiny. Participants, mainly student participants, also discussed that it is well known by the student population that one of the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees is to approve budget proposals that usually come with a raise in tuition costs. Rising tuition prices make it difficult for low-income students to enroll and graduate and leave many with large debts. Inequality then becomes intergenerational. Participants issued calls for high level decision-making and university leadership bodies to equitably embody and integrate the voice and voting power of the whole diversity of constituencies that the institution endeavors to represent and benefit, ranging from staff, faculty, students, workers and the very social justice/environmental justice communities central to TNS mission and vision. Moreover, participants issued calls for such bodies to be constituted by people whose wealth has not been a result of unjust or exploitative resource accumulation. More radical calls were also issued by participants for the whole reorganization of university governance away from a bureaucratic hierarchical system of power based on executive decision-making. Calls were made for moving away from centralized decision making bodies to a decentralized and cooperative model of participatory governance and community based decision-making where constituencies democratically govern the university in the interest of open and accessible education for social, climate and environmental justice.

A second issue salient among participants and survey respondents concerns *the need to center the value of reproductive and regenerative labor and education, which are key to climate justice and resiliency*. Notwithstanding the university's commitment to social justice and sustainability, the university still operates within a dominant political economic environment where education is subservient to the exigencies of a growth oriented market economy that overvalues 'productivist' activities and devalues reproductive work; this makes the university dependent on such an economy including for income, and for the employability/placement of its graduates. In many ways, therefore, university income and the employability/placement of its students continues to be reliant on the reproduction of the market economy of growth and accumulation that drives climate change and climate injustice. Though a massive challenge, a comprehensive climate action plan of university-wide transformative impact should address the need for the university to advance a just transition towards forms of education, economic solvency and institutional resilience that are no longer reliant for its income or the placement of its graduates in economic activities that directly or indirectly continue to propel the economy that drivers climate and other planetary crises. At a more targeted scale, participants also emphasized that the university can and should do more to stop the erosion of care labor, self-care activities and social reproduction caused by the precarity which students, staff and faculty endure at the hands of the market economy and accentuated by

² See:

- <https://nyti.ms/1yR3eEM>
- <https://www.newschool.edu/pressroom/pressreleases/2015/ClimateAction.htm>

the exceptionally high and rising cost of life and education in the NYC metro area. The need for institution-wide efforts, plans and resources to help ensure free, university provided childcare, enhanced health services including mental health services, access and security related to housing, access to basic needs and employment were also discussed. Also discussed was the need for shifting further resources towards BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ students, staff and faculty who are disproportionately affected by economic injustices which intersect with and are co-constituted by other social injustices and ongoing crises (now including the health crisis). Finally, calls were made to enhance funding, scholarships, recruitment, and enrollment of people from the global South and international students (from anywhere) that are not from wealthy elite backgrounds. The university must avoid becoming dependent on the wealth of privileged global sectors whose interest may not converge with those of climate justice.

Another issue related to university governance raised by participants concerns *land and settler colonialism and the need for Indigenous reclamation and decolonization*. Climate change and climate injustice are rooted in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and their regenerative, bioculturally diverse land-based lifeways, and is driven by colonialism and settler colonialism. It was discussed by different participants that, like most contemporary universities, The New School still operates within the framework of a settler society, and it maintains its campus on the dispossessed and unceded lands of the Lenape nation.³ However, The New School is yet to develop a sustained institution-wide relationship with—or material commitment to—Lenape or other regional or diasporic Indigenous peoples, organizations or intellectuals from across the hemisphere or the world. It also remains a predominantly white institution, and participation/representation of faculty, students and staff of Indigenous nations and heritages, whether from Turtle Island or from elsewhere in the world, is still scarce. If the university is to live up to its own self-image, mission and distinctive history of critical thinking, it should develop an explicit commitment to the advancement of the Indigenous peoples of the region, including Lenni Lenape and other regional, as well as diasporic/migrant Indigenous nations, and to Indigenous movements for knowledge revitalization, sovereignty and land repatriation more broadly. The tri-state area is home to a large population of local, regional, continental, and diasporic Indigenous people from around the world. This calls for structural changes by which The New School centers Indigenous peoples, struggles and knowledges, as well as develops policies and undertakes concrete moves to divest from the continued reproduction of settler coloniality. Calls were made for each of these disparities to be urgently addressed in substantial and ongoing ways. For example, proposals were made to ensure accessibility of Lenape and other Indigenous and diasporic Indigenous peoples to positions of influence in faculty and administration, and the access of such communities to education, and infrastructure. Additional calls were made to center Indigenous voices, knowledges and interests in shaping curricular and research programs. Also, calls have been made to hold the university accountable to the demands of returning land and assets to Indigenous peoples, both in relation to the university's own real estate, its investments, and by ensuring that the university becomes a conduit for returning the land from other actors to Indigenous resurgence in different contexts and centering land based education (e.g., by supporting and co-sponsoring community land trusts, and other efforts at land devolution and access for BIPOC communities).

³ Barker, J. 2018. "Territory as Analytic: The Dispossession of Lenapehoking and the Subprime Crisis." *Social Text* 36(2): 19-39.

3. Broader Considerations and (Changing) Contexts: Accelerating Climate Emergency, University Governance and Curricula Transition in Response to Crises, now compounded by COVID-19 and propelled by Mobilizations against Systemic Racism (NOTE: this last section contains ongoing work, with efforts still in progress).

“Does a time of...crisis give us time to shift priorities and re-think our systems?” - Dr. Ana Baptista

We are living in an unsettling time where the convergence of systemic racism, environmental, climate, and health crises are evident. Globally, thousands of people continue to mobilize and organize on the streets against the militarization (police brutality, prison-detention-industrial complex, and the illegal occupation of territories) of our communities and systemic racism rooted in anti-Black rhetoric while worrying about the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19 which sees no state borders. Much like the climate and environmental crisis, this global health crisis shares the same overlapping root drivers that continue to exasperate and unveil the profound social, health, environmental, and climate injustice. These crises stem from the unequal political economy of colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. The marginalization of BIPOC communities who are disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste, undesirable land uses, and lax enforcement of environmental protection laws because of institutional rules, regulations, and policies which favor multinational fossil fuel companies such as oil, mining, fracking, gas, and coal tend to be communities that are burden with diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases like heart disease, and chronic respiratory illness like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Although these diseases are putting these communities at a greater risk for contracting and dying of COVID-19 we cannot talk about these underlying conditions without mentioning that systemic institutional racism through policies, process, and practices have played a pivotal role.

BIPOC communities suffering the highest COVID-19 infection and death rates in the U.S. will likely confront yet further threats in the shape of floods and heat waves with 2020 predicted to be the hottest year on record⁴. In the U.S., heat waves alone kill thousands every year⁵ with low income families at a greater risk because they cannot afford air conditioning and Black families who are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as white families⁶. Before COVID-19, one in three U.S households had trouble paying their energy bills.⁷ Public spaces such as libraries, schools, and community centers that provided refuge from the heat to those who needed it the most were closed due to the pandemic.

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4 NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, State of the Climate: Global Climate Report for March 2020, published online April 2020

<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/202003/supplemental/page-2>

5 <https://www.brown.edu/news/2017-07-25/warming>

6 https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf

7 <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=37072>

