# ND21 – 1AC – Germany – NT

### Plan

#### The Federal Republic of Germany should recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

### Contention 1 – Framing

#### The ROTB is to vote for the debater who best opens up spaces for collectivity

Dean and Mertz 16 [Jodi Dean and Chuck Mertz, 1/23/16, Donald R. Harter ’39 Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences @ Hobart and William Smith Colleges and Host at This is Hell! “The JFRP: For a New Communist Party,” Antidote Zine 1/23/16, [https://antidotezine.com/2016/01/23/for-a-new-communist-party /](https://antidotezine.com/2016/01/23/for-a-new-communist-party%20/) ]

CM: Great to have you on the show. Let’s start with Occupy. What, to you, explains the impact that the Tea Party had on Republicans, relative to the impact that Occupy seems to have had on the Democratic Party? All of the sudden there were “Tea Party Republicans.” There weren’t “Occupy Democrats.” JD: That’s a good point. The Tea Party took the Republican Party as its target. They decided that their goal was going to be to influence the political system by getting people elected and basically by trying to take over part of government. That’s why they were able to have good effects. They didn’t regard the mainstream political process as something irrelevant to their concerns. They thought of it as something to seize. The problem with many—but not all—leftists in the US is that they think the political process is so corrupted that we have to completely refuse it, and leave it altogether. The Tea Party decided to act as an organized militant force, and too much of the US left (we saw this in the wake of Occupy) has thought that to be “militant” means to refuse and disperse and become fragmented. CM: So what explains the left turning its back on the collective action of a political party? It would seem like a political party would fit into what the left would historically want: an apparatus that can organize collective action. JD: There are multiple things. First, the fear of success: the left has learned from the excesses of the twentieth century. Where Communist and socialist parties “succeeded,” there was violence and purges and repression. One reason the left has turned its back is because of this historical experience of state socialism. And we have taken that to mean that we should not ever have a state. I think that’s the wrong answer. That we—as the left—made a mistake with some regimes does not have to mean that we can never learn. Another reason that the left has turned its back on the party form has been the important criticism of twentieth century parties that have been too white, too masculine, potentially homophobic; parties that have operated in intensely hierarchical fashion. Those criticisms are real. But rather than saying we can’t have a party form because that’s just what a party does, why not make a party that is not repressive and does not exclude or diminish people on the basis of sex, race, or sexuality? So we’ve got at least two historical problems that have made people very reluctant to use the party. I also think that, whether or not you mark it as 1968 or 1989, the left’s embrace of cultural individualism and the free flow of personal experimentation has made it critical of discipline and critical of collectivity. But I think that’s just a capitalist sellout. Saying everybody should just “do their own thing” is just going in the direction of the dominant culture. That is actually not a left position at all. CM: So does identity politics undermine collectivism? And did that end up leading to fragmentation and a weakening of the left? Because there are a lot of people we’ve had on the show—and one person in particular, Thomas Frank—who say that there is no left in the United States. JD: First I want to say that I disagree with the claim that there is no left. In fact, I think that “the left” is that group that keeps denying its own existence. We’re always saying that we’re the ones who don’t exist. But the right thinks that we exist. That’s what is so fantastic, actually. Did you see the New York Post screaming that Bernie Sanders is really a communist? Great! They’re really still afraid of communists! And it’s people on the left who say, “Oh, no, we’re not here at all!” The left denies its own existence and it denies its own collectivity. Now, is identity politics to blame? Maybe it’s better to say that identity politics has been a symptom of the pressure of capitalism. Capitalism has operated in the US by exacerbating racial differences. That has to be addressed on the left, and the left has been addressing that. But we haven’t been addressing it in a way that recognizes how racism operates to support capitalism. Instead, we’ve made it too much about identity rather than as an element in building collective solidarity. I’m trying to find a way around this to express that identity politics has been important but it’s reached its limits. Identity politics can’t go any further insofar as it denies the impact of capitalism. An identity politics that just rests on itself is nothing but liberalism. Like all of the sudden everything will be better if black people and white people are equally exploited? What if black people and white people say, “No, we don’t want to live in a society based on exploitation?” CM: You were saying that the left denies its own collectivity. Is that only in the US? Is that unique to the US culture of the left? JD: That’s a really important question, and I’m not sure. Traveling in Europe, I see two different things. On the one hand I see a broad left discussion that is, in part, mediated through social media and is pretty generational—people in their twenties and thirties or younger—and that there’s a general feeling about the problem of collectivity, the problem of building something with cohesion, and a temptation to just emphasize multiplicity. You see this everywhere. Everybody worries about this, as far as what I’ve seen. On the other hand, there are countries whose political culture has embraced parties much more, and fights politically through parties. Like Greece, for example—and we’ve seen the ups and downs with Syriza over the last two years. And Spain also. Because they have a parliamentary system where small parties can actually get in the mix and have a political effect—in ways that our two-party system excludes—the European context allows for more enthusiasm for the party as a form for politics. But there’s still a lot of disagreement on the far left about whether or not the party form is useful, and shouldn’t we in fact retreat and have multiple actions and artistic events—you know, the whole alter-globalization framework. That’s still alive in a lot of places. CM: You mentioned the structure of the US electoral system doesn’t allow for a political party to necessarily be the solution for a group like Occupy. Is that one of the reasons that activists dismiss the party structure as something that could help move their agenda forward? JD: We can think about the Black Panther Party as a neat example in the US context: A party which was operating not primarily to win elections but to galvanize social power. That’s an interesting way of thinking about what else parties can do in the US. Or we can think about parties in terms of local elections. Socialist Alternative has been doing really neat work all over the country, organizing around local elections with people running as socialist candidates not within a mainstream party. I think that even as we come up against the limits of a two-party system, we can also begin to think better about local and regional elections. The left really likes that old saw: “Think Globally, Act Locally.” And then it rejects parties—even though political parties are, historically, forms that do that, that actually scale, that operate on multiple levels as organizations. That we have a two-party system makes sense as an excuse why people haven’t used left parties very well in the US, but that doesn’t have to be the case. And one more thing: there is a ton of sectarianism in the far left parties that exist. Many still fight battles that go back to the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, and haven’t let that go. That has to change. We don’t need that kind of sectarian purity right now. CM: You ask the question, “How do we move from the inert mass to organized activists?” You mention how you were at Occupy Wall Street; you write about being there on 15 October 2011 as the massive crowd filled New York’s Times Square. And you mention this one young speaker, and he addresses the crowd; they’re deciding if they should move on to Washington Square Park or not, because they need to go somewhere where there are better facilities. You then quote the speaker saying, “We can take this park. We can take this park tonight. We can also take this park another night. Not everyone may be ready tonight. Each person has to make their own autonomous decision. No one can decide for you. You have to decide for yourself. Everyone is an autonomous individual.” Did that kind of individualism kill Occupy Wall Street from the start? JD: Yeah, I think so. A lot of times I blame the rhetorics of consensus and horizontalism, but both of those are rooted in an individualism that says politics must begin with each individual, their interests, their experience, their positions, and so on. As collectivity forms—which is not easy when everyone’s beginning from their individual position—what starts to happen is that people start looking for how their exact experiences and interests are not being recognized. I think that the left has given in too much to this assumption that politics begins with an individual. That’s a liberal assumption. Leftists, historically, begin with the assumption that politics begins in groups. And for the left in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the operative group is class. Class is what determines where our political interests come from. I try to do everything I can in the book to dismantle the assumption that politics, particularly left politics, should begin with the individual. Instead I want people thinking about how the individual is a fiction, and a really oppressive fiction at that. And one that’s actually, conveniently, falling apart. CM: You write about Occupy Wall Street having been an opening but having had no continuing momentum. You mention that the party could add that needed momentum. That’s one of the things that parties can do. The structure of the party can continue momentum and keep the opening alive. When you say that a party could be a solution for a movement like Occupy, you don’t mean the Democratic Party, do you? JD: I’ve got a lot of layers on this question. My first answer is that no, I really mean the Communist Party. My friends call this “Jodi’s Fantasy Revolutionary Party” as a joke, because the kind of Communist Party I take as my model may not be real, or may have only existed for a year and a half in Brooklyn in the thirties. And I don’t mean the real-existing Communist Party in the US now, which still exists and basically endorses Democrats. My idea is to think in terms of how we can imagine the Communist Party again as a force—what it could be like if all of our left activist groups and small sectarian parties decided to come together in a new radical left party. So no, I don’t envision the Democratic Party as being that. That’s not at all what I have in mind. I’m thinking of a radical left party to which elections are incidental. Elections might be means for organizing, but the goal isn’t just being elected. The goal is overthrowing capitalism. The goal is being able to build a communist society as capitalism crumbles. Second, it could be the case—as a matter of tactics on the ground in particular contexts—that working for a Democratic candidate might be useful. It could be the case that trying to take over a local Democratic committee in order to get communist/socialist/radical left candidates elected could also be useful. But I don’t see the goal as taking over the Democratic Party. That’s way too limited a goal, and it’s a goal that presupposes the continuation of the system we have, rather than its overthrow. CM: But how difficult would it be for a Communist Party to emerge free of its past associations with the Soviet Union? Can we even use the word “communist” or is it impossibly taboo? JD: We have to recognize that the right is still scared of communism. That means the term is still powerful. That means it still has the ability to instill fear in its enemies. I think that’s an argument for keeping the word “communism.” It’s also amazing that close to half of Iowa participants in the caucuses say that they are socialist. Four or five years ago, people were saying socialism is dead in the US. No one could even say the word. So I actually think holding on to the word “communism” is useful not only because our enemies are worried about communism, but also because it helps make the socialists seem really, really mainstream, and that’s good. We don’t want socialism to seem like something that only happens in Sweden. We want it to seem like that’s what America should have at a bare minimum. One last thing about the history of communism: every political ideology that has infused a state form has done awful things. For the most part, if people like the ideology, they either let the awful things slide, or they use the ideology to criticize the awful things that the state does. We can do the same thing with communism. It’s helpful to recognize that the countries we understand to have been ruled by Communist Parties were never really communist—they didn’t even claim to have achieved communism themselves. We can say that state socialism made these mistakes, and in so doing was betraying communist ideals. I don’t think we need to abandon these terms or come up with new ones. I think we need to use the power that they have. And people recognize this, which is what makes it exciting. CM: You write, “Some contemporary crowd observers claim the crowd for democracy. They see in the amassing of thousands a democratic insistence, a demand to be heard and included. In the context of communicative capitalism, however, the crowd exceeds democracy. “In the 21st century, dominant nation-states exercise power as democracies. They bomb and invade as democracies, ‘for democracy’s sake.’ International political bodies legitimize themselves as democratic, as do the contradictory and tangled media practices of communicative capitalism. When crowds amass in opposition, they pose themselves against democratic practices, systems, and bodies. To claim the crowd for democracy fails to register this change in the political setting of the crowd.” So are crowds today, the protesters today, opposed to democracy? Or are they opposed to the current state of, let’s say, representative democracy? JD: Let’s think about our basic environment. By “our,” now, I mean basically English-speaking people who use the internet and are listening to the radio and live in societies like the United States. In our environment, what we hear is that we live in democracy. We hear this all the time. We hear that the network media makes democratic exchange possible, that a free press is democracy, that we’ve got elections and that’s democracy. When crowds amass in this setting, if they are just at a football game, it’s not a political statement. Even at a march (fully permitted) that’s registering opposition to the invasion of Iraq, for example, or concern about the climate—all of those things are within the general environment of “democracy,” and they don’t oppose the system

. They don’t register as opposition to the system. They’re just saying that we want our view on this or that issue to count. But the way that crowds have been amassing over the last four or five years—Occupy Wall Street is one example, but the Red Square debt movement in Canada is another; some of the more militant strikes of nurses and teachers are too—has been to say, “Look, the process that we have that’s been called democratic? It is not. We want to change that.” It’s not that we are anti-democratic. It’s that democracy is too limiting a term to register our opposition. We want something more. We want actual equality. Democracy is too limiting. The reason it’s too limiting is we live in a context that understands itself as “democratic.” So democracy as a political claim, in my language, can’t “register the gap that the crowd is inscribing.” It can’t register real division or opposition. Democracy is just more of what we have. CM: We are so dependent. We use social media so much, we use Facebook so much, we use so many of these avenues of what you call communicative capitalism so much. How can we oppose or reject this system without hurting ourselves and our ability to communicate our message to each other? Can we just go on strike? Can we become the owners of the means of communicative production? JD: One of the ways that Marxism historically has understood the political problems faced by workers is our total entrapment and embeddedness in the capitalist system. What makes a strike so courageous is that workers are shooting themselves in the foot. They’re not earning their wage for a time, as a way to put pressure on the capitalist owner of the workplace. What does that mean under communicative capitalism? Does it mean that we have to shoot ourselves in the foot by completely extracting ourselves from all of the instruments of communication? Or does it mean that we change our attitude towards communication? Or does it mean that we develop our own means of communication? There’s a whole range here. I’m not a Luddite. I don’t think the way we’re going to bring down capitalism is by quitting Facebook. I think that’s a little bit absurd. I think what makes more sense is to think of how we could use the tools we have to bring down the master’s house. We can consolidate our message

together. We can get a better sense of how many we are. We can develop common modes of thinking. We can distribute organizing materials for the revolutionary party. I don’t think that an extractive approach to our situation in communicative media is the right one. I think it’s got to be more tactical. How do we use the tools we have, and how do we find ways to seize the means of communication? This would mean the collectivization of Google, Facebook, Amazon, and using those apparatuses. But that would probably have to be day two of the revolution. CM: Jodi, I’ve got one last question for you, and it’s the Question from Hell, the question we might hate to ask, you might hate to answer, or our audience is going to hate the response. How much did the narrative that Occupy created, of the 99% and the 1%, undermine a of collectivity? Because it doesn’t include everyone… JD: Division is crucial. Collectivity is never everyone. What this narrative did was produce the divided collectivity that we need. It’s great to undermine the ~~stupid~~ myth of American unity, “The country has to pull together” and all that crap. It’s fantastic that Occupy Wall Street asserted collectivity through division. This is class conflict. This says there is not a unified society. Collectivity is the collectivity of us against them. It produced the proper collectivity: an antagonistic one.

#### The aff is revolutionary imagination – we must remain committed to the future commons to carve out bubbles of potential within the status quo

**Haiven 17** – [max haiven, Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice at Lakehead University in Northwest Ontario and director of the ReImagining Value Action Lab Max, “Commons as Actuality, Ethos, and Horizon,” in Educational Commons in Theory and Practice Global Pedagogy and Politics, Ch 2]

The horizon of the commons might be said to be three things: First, it is the forums and venues, physical and textual, in which commons-oriented efforts can meet, debate, strategize, agree to disagree, make inter-collective decisions, trade or barter, and party or plot. It is the infrastructure of collaboration, the syntax of struggles, or the connective tissue that binds together a variety of initiatives, movements, people, and tendencies. It might take the form of a social center, or an online discussion space or a conference or an international meeting. In a way, crypto and alternative currencies can also play this role. In this sense, the horizon of the commons overlaps with many actualities of the commons, and it is in or through these forms of venues that the ethos of the commons is cultivated, grows, and spreads. Second, the horizon of the commons is a shared capacity to create a narrative about the past, the present, and the future. It is our ability to tell stories about our own powers. Sometimes these stories are local and sometimes they are global, sometimes they are personal and sometimes they are theoretical. Sometimes they delineate a process that has occurred over three weeks, sometimes one that has occurred over 300 or 3000 years. Each commons will be animated by many such stories and theories, sometimes in confluence, sometimes in conflict, sometimes resonating with one another and sometimes in contradiction. Between commons, the sharing of such narratives and theories is a key task. For instance, my housing cooperative has a story about how, over 30 years ago, our predecessors started the coop, the values they held, and processes they used, and these, in turn, affect how we conduct our business in the present and plan our future. Meanwhile, we work within a local milieu where a number of commons-oriented initiatives share a historical and theoretical narrative , of which we see our present efforts as a part. But we also live on stolen Indigenous land in Canada, which overlays another narrative. We are continually discovering ways to weave these narratives together to arrive at a greater capacity for solidarity and a more potent place of collective power. Finally, the horizon of the commons demands a vision, however hazy, of a future society, one forged largely out of the power of negation. The world we want to build must be imagined through a combination of, on the one hand, an extrapolation of the imperfect ethos and actuality of the commons we are building here and now and, on the other, a liberating and incomplete conjecture about what life might be like in the absence of exploitation, domination, racism, gender-based oppression and so on. The horizon of the common in this sense is not so much our capacity to perfectly map a future society, but our ability to hold the future open. More accurately, it is our ability to travel, through collective acts of the imagination, into the future and “bring back” the resources to enable us to struggle in the present (Jameson, 2005). In the first instance, this requires a utopian imagination; we must be able to perform the exercise of envisioning the light of our utopian dreams not only in order to bask in a nice daydream but to be able to illuminate the contours of power and possibility in our present society. This utopian projection is not pure fantasy: it is the sort of world we know we could create, that we ought to be allowed to create, were it not for the exploitation of, and the limits placed on, our cooperation today (Suvin, 1997). We exercise this utopian imagination not to envision an end-point of our struggle, but as a way to bring into greater clarity the structures and patterns of our present day society and organizations. We envision it so we can more accurately ask ourselves: what prevents that utopia from becoming a reality? What would it take to achieve it? What stands in our way? What must we do to calibrate our organizations and movements toward this end? Equally: how do today’s structures and systems of domination, oppression and exploitation shape our thinking, behavior and struggles in the present? What would community look like and feel like in their absence? And how can we bring those lessons "back" from that imagined tomorrow to catalyze and improve our capacity for solidarity and care here and now?

### Contention 2 – Strike Law

#### German workers unions are powerful, but membership is declining as companies undermine collective bargaining negotiations

O’Connell 2-26-21 (David O’Connell is a trade unionist from the United Kingdom currently writing his doctoral thesis in Germany. With a background in workplace organising in both countries, he completed his masters degree in ‘Labour Policies and Globalisation’ in 2016. His current research is funded by the Hans Boeckler Foundation and focuses on the role of unions in buying out and converting existing firms to employee ownership. He is also a member of the National Center for Employee Ownership in the United States, an elected alumni representative of the Global Labour University, and an active member of both IG Metall and Ver.di in Germany. He is a contributor to Jacobin Magazine, writing about cooperatives, employee ownership and trade union strategy in Germany – the latest of which is being converted to a chapter in an upcoming publication titled ‘Mutualist Humanity at Work: Accelerating the Global Diffusion of the Mondragon Cooperative Experience’.) “As German Unions Struggle to Save Jobs, Worker Buyouts Are on the Rise”, Jacobin Magazine, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/02/worker-buyouts-germany-ig-metall> NT

In some ways, this isn’t entirely new. IG Metall is following in the footsteps of a number of its sister unions around the world, notably the Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos do ABC in Brazil (SMABC) and the United Steelworkers (USW) in America. These unions have each used employee buyouts, conversions, and cooperatives as early as the 1980s to successfully resist the effects of industrial decline. The German model of industrial relations and union practice itself have historically differed from each of these other contexts, placing much greater stress on sectoral collective bargaining, but as **this model comes under significant pressure**, unions like IG Metall are now being forced to look for other means of protecting jobs. The German Context Europe’s largest trade union and a trendsetter in improving workers’ conditions nationally, IG Metall is a force to be reckoned with. In 2018, it secured for its members the right to a twenty-eight-hour week, a 4.3 percent pay raise, and an extra eight days of vacation (or of extra pay) for workers with children. Unlike bargaining models in the anglophone world, the German model has unions negotiate primarily with employers’ associations rather than individual firms. This form of “sectoral bargaining” ensures collective agreements apply to vast swathes of the industry covering numerous firms. This model is **based in large part on good faith** and voluntary codetermination between the social partners **rather than on law**. IG Metall has thus tended to neglect strategies that may undermine or draw resources away from this highly successful model of collective bargaining, which has hitherto delivered increasing returns for its members. Dependence on this model also comes at a cost. While IG Metall’s own constitution commits the union to the “democratization of the economy,” in practice any serious application of this policy has had to be left on the shelf. Far from seeking to establish a “cooperative commonwealth” or “solidarity economy” in which the union actively develops employee ownership, this clause has traditionally (though not universally) been interpreted as committing the union to codetermination and support for shop-floor–based “works councils” as institutions of workplace democracy. Ownership questions are subsequently not raised, and **the union takes the mantle of a “loyal opposition”** within the prevailing codetermination structure. Unlike workers in most other countries, Germans have the right to elect a Betriebsrat, or “works council” — a body consisting of shop floor employees who represent staff interests within the company. The impressive “Works Constitution Act” (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz, BetrVG), which governs the practice of these works councils, gives them significant legal powers, including insights into the firm’s financial status, the right to review all hirings and firings, and to oversee the application of collective bargaining agreements at the company level. In best-case scenarios, these are composed of trusted union members and become a tool of union power within the company. A not insignificant portion of union activity is thus committed to ensuring that these works councils are able to effectively carry out their tasks on behalf of the employees, and that union candidates are elected to them every four years. Despite the effectiveness of sectoral bargaining and the unions’ efforts to maintain it, this model is now under attack from a number of directions. **As union membership declines, an increasing number of firms are either boycotting negotiations or leaving the employers’ associations altogether, abandoning the bargaining rounds and reducing overall coverage.** Other firms are adopting an “observer status” which exempts them from actually implementing the agreements, while longstanding German manufacturers such as Volkswagen and Audi have begun relocating production to countries like the United States and Hungary, where they can avoid the codetermination system and the agreements resulting from it. Resisting this process of offshoring was the basis for IG Metall’s 2015 “transnational partnership initiative” with the United Autoworkers (UAW), which resulted most notably in the botched organizing efforts at the VW plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee — seeing workers vote twice against union representation. An obvious takeaway from this is that while German employers expound the virtues of social dialogue at home, **they engage in shameless union busting abroad and seek to undermine organized labor** at every opportunity. **This process of workplace relocations, which was previously slow paced, has been accelerated by COVID-19,** with companies like Mahle announcing the closure of two thousand of its German workplaces in 2020 alone.

#### Right to strike law in Germany fuels corporate control over means of production – employers use workers’ rights to control the collective worker struggle

**Westfall et al 99**, (Strikes and Lockouts in Germany and Under Federal Legislation in the United States: A Comparative Analysis, 22 B.C. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 29 (1999), <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/iclr/vol22/iss1/3>) KD

The Federal Labor Court has held that partial strikes of all kinds, like go-slow and work-to-rule strikes, in which employees report for work but perform less efficiently, are illegal because the employees attempt to exercise their right to strike but nevertheless maintain their claim to be paid during the strike. This is considered to be "contrary to good morals" and, therefore, illegal under section 138 of the German Civil Code (Burgerliches Gesetzbuch).1!2 However, some commentators believe that if **an employee has the right to refuse to work at all, then he or she should also have the right to refuse to work in part**, and that the union should be able to choose which kind of strike it prefers. 1l3 It is difficult to reconcile this view with a requirement that the partial strikers be paid their full wages, as many employees might find attractive an option to work at only a tenth of their usual speed while being paid at their regular rate. Moreover, it would seem to be incompatible with the employer's right to govern the work place, although admittedly the powers of works councils make that right more qualified in Germany than in the United States.l14 Both German courts and most commentators consider sit-down strikes, in which employees **occupy the employer's premises but perform no work,** to be illegal.ll5 This conclusion rests mainly on the fact that the employer as owner of the establishment need not allow someone to enter it if he does not intend to fulfill his duties under the employment contract, but, as is usually the case, seeks instead to prevent other employees from working and using the work place. Intermittent strikes, in which employees strike for a few hours or days and then return to work, are more problematic than sit-down strikes. 1I6 Though there has been some uncertainty in the past, today, intermittent strikes generally are regarded as legal and have become quite common. Indeed, an intermittent strike can be viewed as merely an expanded version of a "warning" strike, differing only in that the warning is repeated. However, the Federal Labor Court recently held that if the employer cannot use the employees' services when they offer to return because it is afraid of further strikes or anticipates that another short strike will occur soon, the employer can refuse their offer to return to work and is under no duty to pay them during the time they are not working. 1l7 The employer can also hire a temporary replacement until the union calls a halt to the intermittent strike. A full understanding of the restrictions on the right to strike to avoid injury to the employer's property depends on an appreciation of the principle of commensurability, which is a **cornerstone of the law governing strikes in Germany**. The German Constitution, like the American Bill of Rights, protects from federal or state action the right to life, freedom of expression and press, and freedom of religion. liS A corollary to this protection is that every restraint that limits a constitutionally protected right must be in furtherance of a legitimate goal. Thus, a statute limiting a constitutionally protected right of citizens must be appropriate and necessary to achieve its purpose, and the restraint of the constitutional right must be proportional, or commensurate, to the benefits that the statute can achieve. 1l9 This principle of commensurability was applied to the law of industrial action by some early decisions of the Federal Labor Court. In a decision by the Grand Panel,120 the court stated: In our interwoven and mutually dependent society, strikes and lockouts often have a substantial impact not only on the persons directly involved in the industrial action, but also on non-strikers and other third parties as well as the public at large. Industrial actions must therefore be governed by the rule of commensurability. In this connection the economic facts are to be considered and the public welfare must not be obviously offended.121 The court said further that the principle of commensurability concerns: not only the moment when the strike starts and its goal, but also the manner in which it is carried out and the intensity of the industrial action. Thus, [it] is only lawful, if [the union] follows the rules of a fair fight. **The industrial action cannot have as its goal to destroy the other side, but must have as its goal to restore the disturbed peaceful labor relations**. . . . When the means of production are damaged because of the strike, ... then the work cannot resume after the strike at the point it stopped before the strike.122 Preventing such damage is the purpose of emergency work (Notdienstarbeiten), which is work required to maintain the means of production in the condition they were in before the industrial action. 123 An example the court gave of a case in which such work may be required is where a blast furnace or a distinct chemical process must be continued to avoid damages to the plant. Other examples include work that is necessary to protect the public from dangers arising from the firm (e.g. a chemical fabric that might pollute the environme.nt dangerously) and work that is absolutely essential to prevent the employer from incurring utterly disproportionate damage.124 It is the common view that **a strike is illegal if its aim is to ruin the employer and leads to the closing of the plant**.125 **The commentators disagree**, however, **over whether the mere fact that the strike might lead to this result is sufficient to make the strike illegal.** 126 The duty to insure that maintenance and other emergency work is carried on during a strike127 requires that the union and the employer agree on the details of such work. If the parties try to do so but are unable to reach an agreement in the matter, it is unclear whether the employer has the right to fix such details unilaterally or whether the employer must seek an interim injunction in the labor courts.12

#### Germany strike laws create labor disparities – the FLC privileges labor rights to productive workers seeking collective agreement with federal entities, weaponizing bargaining to exclude minority groups

**Welle 17** (Desutche, Www.Dw, 11-10-2017, "Workers' rights in Germany: Not everyone can go on strike," DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/workers-rights-in-germany-not-everyone-can-go-on-strike/a-40908443>) KD

* Lure them in with benefits but remove right to strike

Different bosses, different rights: **whether Germans are allowed to strike for better working conditions depends on if they work for a private employer, the church or the state**. And that's just one of the rules. Nurses at the local hospital in Ottweiler, a small town in the western German state of Saarland, are on strike. Twenty of them stopped working on Wednesday to draw attention to the fact that they are constantly overworked. **They are demanding that more nursing personnel be hired, so they can actually take breaks and not work an inhumane amount of overtime** — a demand common to nurses across Germany. The special thing about this strike: the hospital in Ottweiler is a Catholic institution, and the staff members at the Marienhaus Clinic do not have the same rights to strike as non-Church employees. The move is a risky endeavor for all involved, but it's necessary, according to union activists. "**If we really want to push through improvements for nursing staff in all hospitals, then we have to go on strike here, too, now**," said Michael Quetting, a representative of the regional chapter of German trade union Verdi. **Different employees, different rights** The Ottweiler case draws attention to the issue that **in Germany, different kinds of employees enjoy very different workers' rights**. According to article nine of the German constitution, people have the right to form groups **with the goal of** "upholding or improving working and economical conditions." This is the legal foundation of German trade unions. Read more: [Lufthansa strikes major labor deal with pilots](https://www.dw.com/en/lufthansa-strikes-major-labor-deal-with-pilots/a-40901286) In 1955, the Federal Labor Court passed down a verdict that declared strikes "undesirable," but not illegal. Employees would no longer have to quit before they could go on strike — a landmark decision. **During a strike, the employment contracts of participants are suspended.** That means they aren't guilty of neglecting their work duties, but it also means they **don't get paid by their employer for the days they are on strike.** Union members receive daily "strike money," the amount of which depends on their monthly membership fees. **Church employees** These are the basic rules for regular workers, trainees and interns with employment contracts at private and state institutions like factories, department stores, public transport agencies or hospitals. But for employees of the Catholic or Protestant Church in Germany, there are different rules. Quiet moments are few and far between for many nurses in Germany The roughly 1.3 million people in Germany who work for a church-run institution sign special employment contracts. These are often rather strict, especially when they are with the Catholic Church. Many Catholic institutions don't accept employees who aren't baptized Catholics or lead a lifestyle not in line with the church's teachings, like homosexual or divorced people. This practice is not illegal, since churches in Germany have the right to self-determination and can hire whomever and however they want. Whether church employees are allowed to strike isn't entirely clear. Those who argue against the right to strike say that employers and employees work together to spread charity and grace in the name of faith. That's why employees shouldn't feel the need to fight their employers, as they might in a capitalist context. Those in favor of strike rights for church employees counter that while churches have the right to self-determination, this does not cancel out the rights of unions to advocate for good working conditions as specified in the constitution. **Public servants** Another group that does not have the same strike rights as regular employees in Germany are "Beamte," or **public servants**. They **have special rights** in their places of employment, like public administrations or schools. Public servants can only be fired in exceptional circumstances, for example, and have extremely good pension plans. In 2014, the Federal Administrative Court confirmed that **no public servants, independent of their occupation, had the right to go on strike**. According to the constitution, they fulfill special tasks in the name of the state and are in a "loyal work relationship" with their employer, which is why they cannot protest by walking off the job. This has lead to some absurd situations, for example in schools, where teachers who are regular employees work side by side with public servants. **Teachers with public servant status have to remain at school and teach when their regularly employed colleagues go on strike to protest for better wages.** For students, it can be hard to understand why their first period math teacher is waiting in class, while their second period English teacher is handing out strike pamphlets at a rally in front of city hall. And for the teachers themselves, the two-tier system looks unfair from both sides. Read more: [Teachers strike in several German states](https://www.dw.com/en/teachers-strike-in-several-german-states/a-18290659) **Rules of the strike** Finally, there are very specific strike rules even for regular employees. **This is Germany, after all, and you can't just strike when you feel like it**. In order to be eligible to push through demands with a strike, an employee has to work under a collective labor agreement that defines wages. **A strike has to be called by a union and is only permissible if the employees' work contracts clearly mention the collective labor agreement.** If all those qualifications are fulfilled, and the employees with demands are neither public servants nor work for a church, they are free to go and join the picket line.

#### Germany’s wage bargaining between unions and employers allows industries to opt-out of protecting strikes and obstruct changes to wage-setting practices

**Oener 17**, (Harvard Business Review, 3-13-2017, "The Real Reason the German Labor Market Is Booming," <https://hbr.org/2017/03/the-real-reason-the-german-labor-market-is-booming>) KD

For a long time researchers have attributed the transformation to federal labor market and welfare reforms enacted, starting in 2003. But my coauthors, Christian Dustmann, Bernd Fitzenberger, Uta Schönberg, and I show the role of policy is not the main reason. In a research paper in the Journal of Economic Perspectives, we show that Germany’s competitive position relative to its main trading partners has persistently improved since 1995 because its **wages grew at a slower pace than productivity**. This is due largely to the fact that the **German economy went through an unprecedented process of decentralization of wage bargaining during the 1990s.** That is what **led to a dramatic decline in unit labor costs**, and ultimately increased competitiveness. Controversial Labor Reforms When Germany’s government under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder implemented the so-called Hartz reforms, in 2003, they were extremely controversial. They reduced and capped unemployment benefits, with the goal of spurring more people to look for jobs. They also introduced vouchers that allowed recipients to choose job training providers. By the same token, they turned federal and local employment agencies — bureaucratic public institutions — into service providers. New management approaches and measures added more efficiency and a results orientation. But the government reforms never made any institutional changes in the wage-setting process. That’s because they couldn’t. The industrial relation system in Germany is autonomous. Wage negotiations take place without the government directly exerting influence, a principle that is codified in the German constitution. That’s different from most other Western countries. In Germany, labor wages, hours, and other aspects of working conditions are decided by unions, work councils (organizations complementing unions by representing workers at the firm level in negotiations), and employers’ associations. Collective wage bargaining takes place not at the company level but at the industry and regional levels, between unions and employers’ associations. If a company recognizes the trade union, all of its workers are effectively covered by the union contract. The Private-Sector Response During the 1990s employers and workers started using the wage-setting system differently, and that led to an unprecedented decentralization. For example**, German companies that recognize union wage contracts can deviate from those contracts through so-called opening or hardship clauses**, provided the worker representatives agree. In addition, companies that recognize the union contract can later opt out. **After 1995 there was a dramatic decline in union coverage in Germany, and** opening or **hardship clauses started to be used more often**. You might be asking: Why would the institutions representing workers’ interests agree to flexibilities for their employers that would end up reducing their workers’ hours, making them work more-flexible hours and slowing their pay growth, or even lowering their pay? And why do it at that point in time? This has to do with the distinct historical situation in which the German economy found itself at the beginning of the 1990s. The fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, and the dramatic cost of reunification burdened the German economy in an unprecedented way, leading to a prolonged period of dismal macroeconomic performance. It also gave German employers access to neighboring East European countries that were formerly locked away behind the Iron Curtain — countries with low-cost labor and stable institutions and political structures. These factors fundamentally changed the power equilibrium between employer and employee associations. Germany’s once-powerful unions were forced to respond to these new realities in a far more flexible way than many would ever have expected.

#### Capitalism is unsustainable – absent change it ensures extinction

Robinson, PhD Sociology, 16

(William I, professor of sociology, global studies and Latin American studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35596-sadistic-capitalism-six-urgent-matters-for-humanity-in-global-crisis>)

In these mean streets of globalized capitalism in crisis, it has become profitable to turn poverty and inequality into a tourist attraction. The South African Emoya Luxury Hotel and Spa company has made a glamorized spectacle of it. The resort recently advertised an opportunity for tourists to stay "in our unique Shanty Town ... and experience traditional township living within a safe private game reserve environment." A cluster of simulated shanties outside of Bloemfontein that the company has constructed "is ideal for team building, braais, bachelors [parties], theme parties and an experience of a lifetime," read the ad. The luxury accommodations, made to appear from the outside as shacks, featured paraffin lamps, candles, a battery-operated radio, an outside toilet, a drum and fireplace for cooking, as well as under-floor heating, air conditioning and wireless internet access. A well-dressed, young white couple is pictured embracing in a field with the corrugated tin shanties in the background. The only thing missing in this fantasy world of sanitized space and glamorized poverty was the people themselves living in poverty. Escalating inequalities fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation. The "luxury shanty town" in South Africa is a fitting metaphor for global capitalism as a whole. Faced with a stagnant global economy, elites have managed to turn war, structural violence and inequality into opportunities for capital, pleasure and entertainment. It is hard not to conclude that unchecked capitalism has become what I term "sadistic capitalism," in which the suffering and deprivation generated by capitalism become a source of aesthetic pleasure, leisure and entertainment for others. I recently had the opportunity to travel through several countries in Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia and throughout North America. I was on sabbatical to research what the global crisis looks like on the ground around the world. Everywhere I went, social polarization and political tensions have reached explosive dimensions. Where is the crisis headed, what are the possible outcomes and what does it tell us about global capitalism and resistance? This crisis is not like earlier structural crises of world capitalism, such as in the 1930s or 1970s. This one is fast becoming systemic. The crisis of humanity shares aspects of earlier structural crises of world capitalism, but there are six novel, interrelated dimensions to the current moment that I highlight here, in broad strokes, as the "big picture" context in which countries and peoples around the world are experiencing a descent into chaos and uncertainty. 1) The level of global social polarization and inequality is unprecedented in the face of out-of-control, over-accumulated capital. In January 2016, the development agency Oxfam published a follow-up to its report on global inequality that had been released the previous year. According to the new report, now just 62 billionaires -- down from 80 identified by the agency in its January 2015 report -- control as much wealth as one half of the world's population, and the top 1% owns more wealth than the other 99% combined. Beyond the transnational capitalist class and the upper echelons of the global power bloc, the richest 20 percent of humanity owns some 95 percent of the world's wealth, while the bottom 80 percent has to make do with just 5 percent. This 20-80 divide of global society into haves and the have-nots is the new global social apartheid. It is evident not just between rich and poor countries, but within each country, North and South, with the rise of new affluent high-consumption sectors alongside the downward mobility, "precariatization," destabilization and expulsion of majorities. Escalating inequalities fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation: The transnational capitalist class cannot find productive outlets to unload the enormous amounts of surplus it has accumulated, leading to stagnation in the world economy. The signs of an impending depression are everywhere. The front page of the February 20 issue of The Economist read, "The World Economy: Out of Ammo?" Extreme levels of social polarization present a challenge to dominant groups. They strive to purchase the loyalty of that 20 percent, while at the same time dividing the 80 percent, co-opting some into a hegemonic bloc and repressing the rest. Alongside the spread of frightening new systems of social control and repression is heightened dissemination through the culture industries and corporate marketing strategies that depoliticize through consumerist fantasies and the manipulation of desire. As "Trumpism" in the United States so well illustrates, another strategy of co-optation is the manipulation of fear and insecurity among the downwardly mobile so that social anxiety is channeled toward scapegoated communities. This psychosocial mechanism of displacing mass anxieties is not new, but it appears to be increasing around the world in the face of the structural destabilization of capitalist globalization. Scapegoated communities are under siege, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, the Muslim minority in India, the Kurds in Turkey, southern African immigrants in South Africa, and Syrian and Iraqi refugees and other immigrants in Europe. As with its 20th century predecessor, 21st century fascism hinges on such manipulation of social anxiety at a time of acute capitalist crisis. Extreme inequality requires extreme violence and repression that lend to projects of 21st century fascism. 2) The system is fast reaching the ecological limits to its reproduction. We have reached several tipping points in what environmental scientists refer to as nine crucial "planetary boundaries." We have already exceeded these boundaries in three areas -- climate change, the nitrogen cycle and diversity loss. There have been five previous mass extinctions in earth's history. While all these were due to natural causes, for the first time ever, human conduct is intersecting with and fundamentally altering the earth system. We have entered what Paul Crutzen, the Dutch environmental scientist and Nobel Prize winner, termed the Anthropocene -- a new age in which humans have transformed up to half of the world's surface. We are altering the composition of the atmosphere and acidifying the oceans at a rate that undermines the conditions for life. The ecological dimensions of global crisis cannot be understated. "We are deciding, without quite meaning to, which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will forever be closed," observes Elizabeth Kolbert in her best seller, The Sixth Extinction. "No other creature has ever managed this ... The Sixth Extinction will continue to determine the course of life long after everything people have written and painted and built has been ground into dust." Capitalism cannot be held solely responsible. The human-nature contradiction has deep roots in civilization itself. The ancient Sumerian empires, for example, collapsed after the population over-salinated their crop soil. The Mayan city-state network collapsed about AD 900 due to deforestation. And the former Soviet Union wrecked havoc on the environment. However, given capital's implacable impulse to accumulate profit and its accelerated commodification of nature, it is difficult to imagine that the environmental catastrophe can be resolved within the capitalist system. "Green capitalism" appears as an oxymoron, as sadistic capitalism's attempt to turn the ecological crisis into a profit-making opportunity, along with the conversion of poverty into a tourist attraction. 3) The sheer magnitude of the means of violence is unprecedented, as is the concentrated control over the means of global communications and the production and circulation of knowledge, symbols and images. We have seen the spread of frightening new systems of social control and repression

that have brought us into the panoptical surveillance society and the age of thought control. This real-life Orwellian world is in a sense more perturbing than that described by George Orwell in his iconic novel 1984. In that fictional world, people were compelled to give their obedience to the state ("Big Brother") in exchange for a quiet existence with guarantees of employment, housing and other social necessities. Now, however, the corporate and political powers that be force obedience even as the means of survival are denied to the vast majority. Global apartheid involves the creation of "green zones" that are cordoned off in each locale around the world where elites are insulated through new systems of spatial reorganization, social control and policing. "Green zone" refers to the nearly impenetrable area in central Baghdad that US occupation forces established in the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The command center of the occupation and select Iraqi elite inside that green zone were protected from the violence and chaos that engulfed the country. Urban areas around the world are now green zoned through gentrification, gated communities, surveillance systems, and state and private violence. Inside the world's green zones, privileged strata avail themselves of privatized social services, consumption and entertainment. They can work and communicate through internet and satellite sealed off under the protection of armies of soldiers, police and private security forces. Green zoning takes on distinct forms in each locality. In Palestine, I witnessed such zoning in the form of Israeli military checkpoints, Jewish settler-only roads and the apartheid wall. In Mexico City, the most exclusive residential areas in the upscale Santa Fe District are accessible only by helicopter and private gated roads. In Johannesburg, a surreal drive through the exclusive Sandton City area reveals rows of mansions that appear as military compounds, with private armed towers and electrical and barbed-wire fences. In Cairo, I toured satellite cities ringing the impoverished center and inner suburbs where the country's elite could live out their aspirations and fantasies. They sport gated residential complexes with spotless green lawns, private leisure and shopping centers and English-language international schools under the protection of military checkpoints and private security police. In other cities, green zoning is subtler but no less effective. In Los Angeles, where I live, the freeway system now has an express lane reserved for those that can pay an exorbitant toll. On this lane, the privileged speed by, while the rest remain one lane over, stuck in the city's notorious bumper-to-bumper traffic -- or even worse, in notoriously underfunded and underdeveloped public transportation, where it may take half a day to get to and from work. There is no barrier separating this express lane from the others. However, a near-invisible closed surveillance system monitors every movement. If a vehicle without authorization shifts into the exclusive lane, it is instantly recorded by this surveillance system and a heavy fine is imposed on the driver, under threat of impoundment, while freeway police patrols are ubiquitous. Outside of the global green zones, warfare and police containment have become normalized and sanitized for those not directly at the receiving end of armed aggression. "Militainment" -- portraying and even glamorizing war and violence as entertaining spectacles through Hollywood films and television police shows, computer games and corporate "news" channels -- may be the epitome of sadistic capitalism. It desensitizes, bringing about complacency and indifference. In between the green zones and outright warfare are prison industrial complexes, immigrant and refugee repression and control systems, the criminalization of outcast communities and capitalist schooling. The omnipresent media and cultural apparatuses of the corporate economy, in particular, aim to colonize the mind -- to undermine the ability to think critically and outside the dominant worldview. A neofascist culture emerges through militarism, extreme masculinization, racism and racist mobilizations against scapegoats. 4) We are reaching limits to the extensive expansion of capitalism. Capitalism is like riding a bicycle: When you stop pedaling the bicycle, you fall over. If the capitalist system stops expanding outward, it enters crisis and faces collapse. In each earlier structural crisis, the system went through a new round of extensive expansion -- from waves of colonial conquest in earlier centuries, to the integration in the late 20th and early 21st centuries of the former socialist countries, China, India and other areas that had been marginally outside the system. There are no longer any new territories to integrate into world capitalism. Meanwhile, the privatization of education, health care, utilities, basic services and public land are turning those spaces in global society that were outside of capital's control into "spaces of capital." Even poverty has been turned into a commodity. What is there left to commodify? Where can the system now expand? With the limits to expansion comes a turn toward militarized accumulation -- making wars of endless destruction and reconstruction and expanding the militarization of social and political institutions so as to continue to generate new opportunities for accumulation in the face of stagnation. 5) There is the rise of a vast surplus population inhabiting a "planet of slums," alienated from the productive economy, thrown into the margins and subject to these sophisticated systems of social control and destruction. Global capitalism has no direct use for surplus humanity. But indirectly, it holds wages down everywhere and makes new systems of 21st century slavery possible. These systems include prison labor, the forced recruitment of miners at gunpoint by warlords contracted by global corporations to dig up valuable minerals in the Congo, sweatshops and exploited immigrant communities (including the rising tide of immigrant female caregivers for affluent populations). Furthermore, the global working class is experiencing accelerated "precariatization." The "new precariat" refers to the proletariat that faces capital under today's unstable and precarious labor relations -- informalization, casualization, part-time, temp, immigrant and contract labor. As communities are uprooted everywhere, there is a rising reserve army of immigrant labor. The global working class is becoming divided into citizen and immigrant workers. The latter are particularly attractive to transnational capital, as the lack of citizenship rights makes them particularly vulnerable, and therefore, exploitable. The challenge for dominant groups is how to contain the real and potential rebellion of surplus humanity, the immigrant workforce and the precariat. How can they contain the explosive contradictions of this system? The 21st century megacities become the battlegrounds between mass resistance movements and the new systems of mass repression. Some populations in these cities (and also in abandoned countryside) are at risk of genocide, such as those in Gaza, zones in Somalia and Congo, and swaths of Iraq and Syria. 6) There is a disjuncture between a globalizing economy and a nation-state-based system of political authority. Transnational state apparatuses are incipient and do not wield enough power and authority to organize and stabilize the system, much less to impose regulations on runaway transnational capital. In the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, for instance, the governments of the G-8 and G-20 were unable to impose transnational regulation on the global financial system, despite a series of emergency summits to discuss such regulation. Elites historically have attempted to resolve the problems of over-accumulation by state policies that can regulate the anarchy of the market. However, in recent decades, transnational capital has broken free from the constraints imposed by the nation-state. The more "enlightened" elite representatives of the transnational capitalist class are now clamoring for transnational mechanisms of regulation that would allow the global ruling class to reign in the anarchy of the system in the interests of saving global capitalism from itself and from radical challenges from below. At the same time, the division of the world into some 200 competing nation-states is not the most propitious of circumstances for the global working class. Victories in popular struggles from below in any one country or region can (and often do) become diverted and even undone by the structural power of transnational capital and the direct political and military domination that this structural power affords the dominant groups. In Greece, for instance, the leftist Syriza party came to power in 2015 on the heels of militant worker struggles and a mass uprising. But the party abandoned its radical program as a result of the enormous pressure exerted on it from the European Central Bank and private international creditors. The Systemic Critique of Global Capitalism A growing number of transnational elites themselves now recognize that any resolution to the global crisis must involve redistribution downward of income. However, in the viewpoint of those from below, a neo-Keynesian redistribution within the prevailing corporate power structure is not enough. What is required is a redistribution of power downward and transformation toward a system in which social need trumps private profit. A global rebellion against the transnational capitalist class has spread since the financial collapse of 2008. Wherever one looks, there is popular, grassroots and leftist struggle, and the rise of new cultures of resistance: the Arab Spring; the resurgence of leftist politics in Greece, Spain and elsewhere in Europe; the tenacious resistance of Mexican social movements following the Ayotzinapa massacre of 2014; the favela uprising in Brazil against the government's World Cup and Olympic expulsion policies; the student strikes in Chile; the remarkable surge in the Chinese workers' movement; the shack dwellers and other poor people's campaigns in South Africa; Occupy Wall Street, the immigrant rights movement, Black Lives Matter, fast food workers' struggle and the mobilization around the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign in the United States. This global revolt is spread unevenly and faces many challenges. A number of these struggles, moreover, have suffered setbacks, such as the Greek working-class movement and, tragically, the Arab Spring. What type of a transformation is viable, and how do we achieve it? How we interpret the global crisis is itself a matter of vital importance as politics polarize worldwide between a neofascist and a popular response. The systemic critique of global capitalism must strive to influence, from this vantage point, the discourse and practice of movements for a more just distribution of wealth and power. Our survival may depend on it.

#### Strikes are the lynchpin of class consciousness – analysis must begin with worker mobilization

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In turn, the workplace class consciousness described by Lenin has two main aspects. First, the **strike teaches workers that their employer's interests are inimical to their own interests.** Second, workers adopt an ingroup rather than a personal point of reference when analyzing the problems in the work relationship: the worker "does not think of himself and his wages alone, he thinks of all his workmates who have downed tools together with him and who stand up for the workers' cause." In Lenin's view, participation in a strike also generates some general insights about the class character of capitalist societies and the options available to workers in fighting for their rights. First, **workers develop a class-struggle perspective on society:** "It becomes quite clear to the workers that the capitalist class as a whole is the enemy of the whole working class." Second, **since different branches of the state side with the employer in a strike, the workers' eyes are opened "to the nature, not only of the capitalists**, but of the government and the laws as well." Third, **strikes show workers "that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united" and that struggle is necessary for working-class advancement**. Finally, "every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital."11 The need to distinguish these dimensions of consciousness change can be illustrated by the experience of Joanne, a middle-aged worker who took respon sibility for picketing one of the main pedestrian entrances to the Main Post Office in Hamilton on 1 October 1987. Most patrons attempted to walk around the pickets. Joanne's response was to move in step with the patron in a picket line dance until the patron stopped and talked to her about the strike. This sort of assertive strike activism greatly enhanced her sense of self-worth. However, Joanne's empower ment had an ironic twist. A few months after the strike's conclusion she decided to enter a Canada Post competition for a front-line supervisory job. Joanne credited her active role in the strike with providing her with the self-confidence she believed was necessary to take on the supervisory role. One further aspect of this model deserves special mention. The conception of workplace class consciousness derived from Lenin's On Strikes, like the concep tion of generalized class consciousness, involves separate beliefs about conflict with outgroups and ingroup identification. The distinction between beliefs con cerning outgroup and ingroup is also an important feature of many contemporary models of class consciousness.

#### Limitations on the right to strike constrain worker power too much and a coordinated approach for all workers is key – means PICs don’t solve the aff

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However, a closer look shows that there are some problems. The long consensus regarding the position of the right to strike in ILO standards, which allowed the supervisory bodies to protect and promote trade union rights in very different realities, has been replaced with a delicate equilibrium after the 2015 tripartite meeting on the subject. This equilibrium has left behind the paralysis that the 2012 standoff caused in the procedures of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, but as the employer's representatives pointed out, it has left the differences on the approach to the right to strike untouched, despite the joint declaration's phrasing. The situation in the ECHR context is much more complicated. The bold steps taken in Demir and Enerji were received with optimism, as they gave more substance to the guarantee of trade union rights under article 11 of the Convention, and eventually included the right to strike as a part of the elements protected. The situation changed dramatically after the RMT decision. The ECtHR not only questioned the position of the right to strike as an element of Freedom of Association. Its decision narrowed the ambit where the right could be exercised and departed with the position sustained by the ILO. Since Demir the Court had methodically taken into account the principles set by other international systems in the field of labour law, and particularly those developed by the ILO supervisory bodies. After RMT it has taken positions that differ from the ILO's approach, despite continued reference to the work of the Committee of Experts and the Committee on Freedom of Association. The European Social Charter appears to be only safe haven for the right to strike among these systems, with a textual recognition and a Committee that is generating a consistent set of principles. **The challenges are greater, however, for a system that allows for many forms of “opt-outs”** and is still looked as a softer companion of the ECHR. On the other hand, the right to strike is, as Ewing has pointed out, a very particular form of human right, subject to many limitations. Despite Wisskirchen's claims, **reality shows that it is far from being an unlimited right**. Even at the ILO level, where we can find the most detailed and protective treatment of the right to strike, there are several forms of limitations in place. The ILO has accepted as compatible with Freedom of Association regulations on the forms of strike action, the objectives it aims to, the procedures and formalities that must be followed before striking, among many others which can be found on the legal literature. A similar situation can be seen in the case-law of the ECSR and the ECtHR. **This last body, as we have seen, has extended the constraints of the right to strike in forms that contradict the principle that it cites as guidance.** In an increasingly interconnected labour market**, a coordinated approach will soon become a necessity**. If the existence of a human right to strike is to have any meaning in future times, legal and political efforts must be focused in protecting the principles developed by the ILO, which have helped to advance the cause of worker's rights in different countries and continents. A similar endeavour will be required to bring the ECtHR back to the path it opened in Demir, and the arguments provided by Judge Pinto de Albuquerque should be taken into account in future decisions about Freedom of Association. It may be said that the complexities of this issue are not exclusive of the right to strike. After all, most of the rights that have been categorized as social rights have been subject to similar difficulties and inconsistencies. They have all been questioned and subject to several limitations and caveats by courts and legislators. The right to strike has, however, a unique role. The status of the right to strike as a legally enforceable right and the impact that it may have over labour relations is not only a matter of concern for lawyers and scholars, but also for workers and trade unions. The right to engage in collective action has been one of the main values behind the appearance and evolution of labour law during the twentieth century. It is, as judge Pinto de Albuquerque pointed out, “the core of the core” of Freedom of Association, and it is impossible to understand the development of trade union rights without it. Labour law has, as its centre, the concern for the welfare of workers and a concern for the inequality of bargaining between them and the employers, and industrial action has been one of the most effective ways to counterbalance such disparities. The tensions and complexities that have been highlighted in these pages are important factors that must be considered if the existence of a fundamental right to strike is going to have any relevance in the future.

### Contention 3 – Green Work

#### Germany’s workers are key to the green revolution

**Tolbaru 12**, (FréDéRic Simon, 6-6-2012, "German workers lead EU 'green jobs' revolution," euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/german-workers-lead-eu-green-jobs-revolution/>) KD

**Germany's building renovation programme has already mobilised €100 billion in investments**, yielding around 300,000 direct jobs per year, according to a new report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, much remains to be done to fulfil the promise of green jobs, experts warn. According to the latest report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the drive for revamping Europe's building stock has already had a profound impact on employment. The building renovation programme for energy efficiency in Germany has mobilised €100 billion in investments, reducing energy bills, avoiding carbon dioxide emissions and creating around 300,000 direct jobs per year along the way, the ILO said. The OECD too has lauded Germany as a leader in environmental policy, saying it has become "**a laboratory for green growth**". "The European economy is already generating a significant number of jobs in energy efficient constructions and will continue to do so in the coming decades," said the OECD's Deputy Secretary-General, Yves Leterme. For industry sectors involved in the building insulation business, the drive for energy efficiency holds huge promises for employment. "The renovation of public and commercial buildings could create up to two million jobs, kick start the economy and give Europe a competitive advantage in the world economy," says Thomas Bauwens of PlasticsEurope, an industry group. Need to adapt skills, training However, the skills gap remains a major obstacle to green growth. There is a "huge" need for education and training for the next generation of green jobs, Leterme warned as he presented the latest OECD report on 4 June – "The jobs potential of a shift towards a low carbon economy" . Speaking at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Leterme said the shift to green jobs will not happen without a related effort to adapt workers' skills and training. "Green skills appear to be hugely needed," he said. "But there is no need to reinvent the wheel," Leterme added. "Most of the green skills that new market entrants will require can be met through incremental enrichment of educational and training programmes." Paul L. Swain, an OECD economist who drafted the report, also sounded a cautious note, saying the potential of "green-collar" jobs has yet to be fulfilled. "There is already a growth in jobs in the energy efficiency sector, but at this point it is well, well below the potential," he told EURACTIV. Experts in the property management sector confirmed that the jobs market for green skills was still largely underdeveloped. “There is a lack of professionalism in Europe,” said Laura Lindberg, Public Relations Manager of RICS, a worldwide professional body for qualifications and standards in land, property and construction. “It is extremely important to have the right professionals with skills, experience and regularly trained. Today there is still a lack of skills and professional training in Europe that needs to be tackled,” Lindberg added. **Demand dampened by consumer ignorance** In fact, much remains to be done to fire up the jobs market for energy efficiency. On the demand side, consumers are not yet fully aware about the benefits of building renovations. Lindberg, who represents professional property and land managers at RICS, believes this is partly due to incomplete scientific research. While energy efficiency revamps are generally regarded as beneficial from an economic point of view, other aspects are often ignored. Energy efficiency "is about saving money", Lindber said "but also about the feeling it gives you, that you are doing something more for your wellbeing, such as that the quality of air is better for your health.” “It is about feeling better in an environment. If you work in a place that is extremely warm and not well insulated and noisy, the quality of life and work is reduced,” Lindberg argues. And then of course, there is always the financial cost of renovations, which weigh particularly heavily on investors in times of economic hardship. In a global downturn, building owners might choose to compromise on the quality if they do not cancel renovation plans altogether. “People decide to invest in something cheaper, because it is not the best moment,” Lindberg said. According to the OECD's Paul L. Swain, countries like Australia also tried to move "too quickly" in promoting green jobs, putting in place large subsidies to retrofit houses and office buildings. When the recession hit in 2009, Australian authorities found that the work had not been properly checked and that much of the money had been wasted. "The problem they ran into was that they tried to spend that money rapidly but then it's hard to control quality," Swain said. Rush for green jobs leave thousands on the side of the road On the supply side, the promise of a green jobs revolution has encouraged thousands in the construction and building sector to apply for government accreditation to register their energy efficiency skills. But they have run into a number of obstacles. In England, the economic crisis has derailed the government's plans, leaving around 8,000 professionals with accreditation but a lack of demand, said Martin Russel of RICS London. This came on top of the high prices demanded to earn recognition as a "green expert". In the UK, for example, professionals pay government body UKAS around €7,000 to obtain accreditation for implementing specific energy efficiency measures in buildings, whilst it cost around €15,000 to earn recognition as an energy efficiency adviser. The oversupply of energy efficiency professionals and the discontent at the initial lack of business was also a problem in Ireland, according to the International Energy Agency **(IEA).** The intensive promotion of courses by commercial training providers has encouraged thousands to enroll in training programmes, more than the market required. In Ireland, demand did eventually pick up, the IEA notes, leading it to **conclude that a certain degree of oversupply of assessors was needed to ensure healthy competition in the market**. But problems arising from oversupply have persisted and generated a lack of trust between professional organisations and government authorities when it comes to applying for professional accreditations, Russel argued. “There is interest out there, but I don't think people are rushing for it, they are being cautious at this time. There is a trust issue,” Russel said. He added, however, that on balance, the market in Europe for energy efficiency accreditation has been picking up and as long as there is enough demand there will also be an economic rationale for professionals to regain their appetite.

#### Now is key for German energy transition – the nation’s new government embraces rigorous climate action

**Elbaum 21,** London-based editor, producer and writer(Rachel Elbaum, 10-24-2021, "In Germany, global warming is changing more than just the climate. It’s changing politics, too.," NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/germany-global-warming-changing-just-climate-s-changing-politics-rcna3571>) KD

Unlike in the United States where the issue is still subject to debate, **global warming is a key concern in Germany that voters increasingly expect politicians to address.** Its prominence in the election was no surprise to architect Florian Trummer, 65, whose hometown of Antweiler was hit by the floods. He officially joined the Green Party two months ago after a lifetime of swing voting. “I have to admit that in the past, I did not always vote for the Greens,” he said. “With the elections looming this year, I felt compelled to do something. The conventional parties play hide and seek, they say one thing, but mean another. They did not take the implementation of the climate goals seriously.” Unlike foreign policy, which hardly got a mention in pre-election debates, climate change was a top focus before the vote. The issue also spurred tens of thousands of Germans to gather days before the election at a climate action protest outside parliament in Berlin featuring the famed young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. Also, a handful of young people declared a hunger strike in August to push politicians to acknowledge that there’s a climate emergency. This attitude isn’t unique to Germany — a recent Pew survey found that intense concern about climate change has increased sharply among people in several advanced economies. Remarkably, the share of people in Germany who are very concerned that climate change will harm them personally at some point during their lives has increased 19 percent since 2015, according to the survey published in September. In contrast, in the U.S., that number has decreased 3 percent. The difference in the urgency to fight climate change felt by the American and the German electorates comes as a result of **decades of environmental messaging in Europe**, according to Andreas Goldthau, a research leader at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, Germany. “The whole idea of the environment being important is something that has been with most of the European electorate for the last 40 years,” he said. “So, voters understand climate change, they can make sense of it, and it is a topic they can engage with.” Winegrower Christoph Baecker has taken those environmental lessons to heart over the years. His winery, one of the first in the region to go organic in 1990, stands in the middle of the picturesque Ahr Valley, where vineyards line the sides of steep hills.His home, around 10 miles from the river, was severely damaged in July’s floods. The waters also washed away around a third of his vineyards, destroyed nearly all of his equipment and contaminated many barrels of grapes from the harvest. He described how the morning after the flood, his property looked like a parking lot, filled with cars carried from elsewhere in the region by the floodwaters. “It is clear that the catastrophes are not only hitting closer to home, but they are also occurring more frequently,” Baecker, 60, said. “We have had flooding in the past, but this type of weather constellation, with so much rain in such a short time, we have not seen before.” Not far from his home, piles of debris, wood and waste still line the banks of the shallow Ahr river, and heavy machinery is on hand to reconstruct streets, houses and riverbanks. The flood’s damage to the region’s wine industry alone is estimated at $175 million, according to the Ahr Wine umbrella organization for winemakers. Baecker believes that it could take five to 10 years for the area to rebuild. As it does, he wants the government to take the lessons learned from the floods more seriously.“It is important that the next government ensures that there is less burden on the environment,” he said. “We need an energy transition.” Baecker is not alone. A study published last month by the market research company Kantar showed that the number of shoppers polled in Germany who made changes to be more sustainable in the last year was up nearly 9 percent, compared to just over 1 percent of those polled in the U.S. Voters in Germany are paying ever-closer attention to how the main political parties address the issue. In the recent election, **the Green Party** nearly doubled its 2017 results, and is now likely to be not only part of a new coalition government, but also **influential in choosing a successor to** outgoing **Chancellor Angela Merkel**. Last week, the Greens, the center-left Social Democrats and the pro-business Free Democrats announced that they plan to open formal coalition talks. It won’t be the Green Party’s first time as a member of a coalition government. Started as a grassroots movement in the 1980s, it became the junior partner in a coalition with the Social Democrats in 1998 and stayed in government until 2005. **Germany’s abandonment of nuclear power is largely attributed to the Greens’ influence**. Despite the prominence of climate change and environmental issues in Germany, implementing solutions quickly may be more of a challenge, according to Richard Youngs, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe think tank. “Even a country as well organized and prosperous as Germany can struggle to be prepared for the environmental crisis that we are likely to suffer,” he said. “Protests and other ways of having citizens involved in climate action do now seem to be a way of pushing governments toward more ambitious climate action in a way that wasn’t the case 10 or 15 years ago.” For Trummer and his fellow Green Party members, i**t’s more important than ever to continue bringing the dangers of climate change to light so mainstream solutions can be found.** “**The Greens today are politically relevant, they deal with reality, they want to move things forward**,” he said.

#### German trade unions are key to coordinate Germany’s green transition – but current labor law prevent political strikes

Bergfeld 19 (Mark Bergfeld is the Director of Property Services & UNICARE at UNI Global Union - Europa. He is a PhD student at Queen Mary University of London. He researches immigration, trade unions and new forms of worker organisation.), “German Unions Are Waking up to the Climate Disaster”, Jacobin Magazine, 8-16-19, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/german-unions-climate-environment-fridays-for-future> NT

**Germany has an especially deep-seated history of ecological mobilization**, with even radical campaigns enjoying wide popular support. Its environmental movement has historically been characterized by a strong anti-authoritarian current — indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, the movement to halt nuclear-waste transports used forms of civil disobedience associated with the US civil rights struggle. Unlike in many other countries, these movements are not on the fringes of politics but are deeply rooted in neighborhoods and communities. **Yet whatever the strength of climate activism, labor unions have traditionally remained aloof from green struggles**. But now, riding the wave driven by the Fridays for Future movement, organized labor is beginning to adopt the call for the green transition as its own. Jobs First? There’s plenty of obstacles to such a conversion. In recent years, civil-disobedience climate activists have focused their attention on shutting down two open-cast lignite coal mines, one in the Rhineland and the other in Lausitz in the former East Germany. Lignite coal is one of the least efficient and dirtiest energy sources, but a key job creator in both regions. This has sparked repeated clashes between members of the chemical and miners’ union — the IG BCE — and the activists who came to the Rhineland to occupy the Hambach Forest and the open-cast mine. The IG BCE’s general secretary, Michael Vassiliades, insisted on the need to put jobs first and think about environmental issues second — guaranteeing conflict between labor and climate activists. This stance matched the IG BCE union’s record participating in the German government commission to phase out lignite — a slow process that actually sets the country in contradiction with the Paris climate agreement. For now, all stakeholders, including the unions, agree that coal production should stop by 2038, yet IG BCE’s focus on jobs alone has isolated it from any notion of “climate justice.” Certainly, there are reasons for concern — the renewable energy sector (both wind and solar) is notoriously anti-union, in contrast with the social dialogue and partnership engrained in older forms of production. Yet the risk is that precisely this blindness to green issues will allow employers alone to assume the mantle of directing the ecological transition. Not all of organized labor remains mired in such a purely defensive position. Following Fridays for Future’s demand to shut down coal production by 2030, the ver.di services union’s general secretary, Frank Bsirske, stated that the phaseout should be hastened as far as possible. This call has sparked a mobilization by the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which has opportunistically attacked Bsirske as anti-industry and wanting to harm the German worker. Nor have Bsirske’s comments endeared him to all unions. During activists’ “Ende Gelände” climate camp, the youth wing of the IG BCE camped out to demand job security and the continuation of the open-cast mine. Out of the Rut As we see, Germany’s green consciousness, the rising fortunes of the Green Party, and the prevalence of Bioläden stores selling ecologically friendly food do not necessarily translate into unions taking more progressive stances on climate issues. If anything, the radicalism of the climate activist milieu, as well as the corporatism of “jobs first” trade unionism, has created a deeper rift between labor and environmental groups than exists in other countries. However, the climate strike on September 20 promises to begin to overcome the diffidence between unions and environmental groups. While German labor law does not permit political strikes of any kind, Fridays for Future’s climate strikes have already struck a chord with trade unions in both manufacturing and services industries. And **they’re beginning to mobilize**. In June, Germany’s largest union, the IG Metall, organized a demonstration to demand a fair and ecological transition. The wider crisis of the German car industry, concentrated in the scandal over Volkswagen faking its emissions figures, has highlighted the particular ills of the auto sector. Given the close relations between industrial manufacturing unions, German companies listed on the DAX stock exchange, and the German state, this demonstration could represent a step forward for a convergence between unions and environmental groups. This labor-green alliance is particularly necessary given that climate change, as well as new technological developments, are going to force German auto factories to switch to producing e-cars or different vehicles altogether. Organizing this demonstration, IG Metall chartered ten trains and eight hundred buses to fill the streets of Berlin with tens of thousands of metalworkers. This represented a significant step for the union and its engagement with the green transition. While no representative from Fridays for Future addressed the demonstration, it is unthinkable that it could even have happened without the ongoing Fridays for Future mobilizations. At the time of writing, the IG Metall is still discussing whether to support the September 20 climate strike. More promising are developments in the transport sector, where railworkers’ union EVG has advertised its own members’ presence on the Fridays for Future demonstrations as well as its support for the movement’s goals. This should not come as a surprise given the movement’s demands for better and more accessible public transport. The next step is for this self-interested solidarity to also translate into conductors and other staff bringing trains to a halt for the Earth Strike. But the unions quickest and most vocal in aligning themselves with the burgeoning climate strike movement and the strike call are those in the services sector. Here, the relationship between employers, the state, and unions is not so defined by corporatism, and workers do not need to fear job loss to the same extent. Last week, Bsirske argued that ver.di members should follow Greta Thunberg’s call and join the September 20 strike. Ver.di’s Twitter account shows Bsirske saying, “Whoever can do so should clock out and go out on the streets. I will definitely go.” Luisa Neubauer, one of Germany’s most prominent young climate strikers, termed Bsirske’s call “an infinitely important step,” showing that the climate strikers are taking note of the power of organized labor. Ver.di is not directly calling its members out on strike. But the union is encouraging members to collectively take a day off to support the movement or organize an “active lunch break” — a lunchtime assembly outside of their workplaces. This could be a useful way to engage union members and other workers in the fight for the planet and at the same time raise the profile of the Earth Strike. Given that a recent rank-and-file-led petition on climate change gathered more than 46,000 signatures, it appears that service workers in both the public and private sectors could begin to move into action. Unlike in the United States, where teachers have been at the forefront of building social-movement unionism and striking across right-to-work states, German teachers are civil servants and thus do not have the right to strike. While they cannot walk out, the education union GEW has, however, backed the students in doing so. The union’s executive member for schools, Ilka Hoffmann, has publicly supported the strike but also criticized it for not doing enough to emphasize the issues of labor exploitation and social justice that relate to workers. The North Rhine–Westphalian section of the GEW has also decisively argued for a stop to reprisals against students who take strike action, though it remains unclear what forms of action educators will themselves be taking in the Earth Strike week. The strike also looks set to affect the construction sector. Germany’s largest construction and property services union, the IG BAU — which coincidentally has the word “umwelt” (environment) in its name — has called on its members on building sites to join the climate strike. It demands that Germany reduces its CO2 emissions by 40 percent by 2020. **German labor law forbids workers from taking political strike action.** The IG BAU is thus pressuring employers to give their employees the opportunity to participate in the Fridays for Future demonstrations. This intelligent move plays the ball back into the employers’ court, forcing them to show how far their proud identification with “corporate social responsibility” and “green workplace” initiatives really goes. Such a move to pressure employers to shut down could give the Earth Strike an entirely different dimension. Making Transition Reality If unions are going to marry the green transition to the defense of workers’ interests, they need to think hard about how they can use their institutional and organizational power at the workplace and sectoral **level. After all, 53 percent of workers and employees are still covered by collective agreements, giving many unions a great deal of leverage in shaping the labor market.** Those enjoying such a strategic position could use it to demand upskilling for workers in key industries that have no future in a carbon-neutral economy, enshrine new health and safety regulations that could **contribute to a decrease in carbon emissions, and force employers to change the way goods are produced and services are provided.** Among others, unions could use their collective agreements to move toward a four-day week, which would also reduce CO2 emissions.

#### Independently, our coordinated civic engagement is key to comprehensive climate action globally.

Fisher and Nasrin 20 [Dana R; Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Program for Society and the Environment at the University of Maryland. Her research focuses on questions related to democracy, activism, and environmentalism — most recently studying climate activism, protests, and the American Resistance. Her research employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates data collected through open-ended semi-structured interviews and participant observation with various forms of survey data; Sohana; University of Maryland, College Park, UMD, UMCP, University of Maryland College Park · Philip Merrill College of Journalism Master of Arts; “Climate activism and its effects,” Wiley Interdisciplinary Review; October 2020; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345455893\_Climate\_activism\_and\_its\_effects]

As coordinated school strikes have taken place around the world to draw attention to the climate crisis, they have mobi-lized an increasing number of participants in a growing number of locations. This type of activism involves particularforms of civic engagement that specifically aim to pressure governments to take action that addresses the issue of cli-mate change. Civic engagement is the term used to describe the manifold ways that citizens participate in their societieswith the intention of influencing communities, politics, and the economy. Forms of engagement range from tactics thatinvolve citizens working directly to change their individual behaviors, along with those that involve indirect efforts tobring about change through the political and economic systems (like school strikes). Tactics run the gamut and rangefrom those that work within these systems to those that work outside of them (Meyer & Tarrow, 1997). Collectiveefforts are mediated by various organizational forms (Anheier & Themudo, 2002), which can either create or remove obstacles to participation (Fisher & Green, 2004; for more general discussion, see Gamson, 1975; McAdam, 1983). Ashas been noted by numerous studies, civic engagement is much higher in democratic countries where citizens areafforded rights to participate and to voice their opinions (DeBardeleben & Pammett, 2009; see also Putnam, Leonardi, &Nanetti, 1994; Schofer & Longhofer, 2011; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999; de Tocqueville, 2002; see particularly Verba,Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). At the same time, digital technologies have been found to facilitate the spread of variousforms of activism while they connect countries and cultures (Bennett, 2013; Theocharis, Vitoratou, & Sajuria, 2017)

This paper reviews the specific ways that citizens have engaged civically around the issue of climate change, paying particular attention to the documented effects of these efforts on climate change itself. Our discussion provides a review of the range of direct and indirect forms of climate activism (for a general overview of the direct and indirect effects of social movements, see Snow & Soule, 2010). After this review, we present the case of school strikes as a specific tactic that has gained attention in recent years. In this section, we review the limited research that presents data collected from participants of climate strikes in 2019 to understand trends in the expansion of this popular tactic. As the world responds to the COVID-19 outbreak and activism (including climate strikes) move increasingly online, we discuss the potential implications of the pandemic on climate activism and engagement. The conclusion of this paper emphasizes that future research must pay more attention to the relationship between climate-related civic engagement and measurable environmental outcomes. It highlights the methodological challenges facing scholars who take on the difficult analytical task of assessing the outcomes of climate activism in a way that is scalable for a global movement aiming to stop a global crisis. 2 | ACTIVISM WITH DIRECT EFFECTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE There are limited forms of civic engagement that involve efforts to have a direct effect on individual greenhouse gas emissions. For example, some environmental movements and environmental groups encourage their members to make lifestyle changes that reduce their individual carbon footprints. These efforts focus on changing consumer behaviors, such as reducing car-use, flying, shifting to nonfossil fuel-based sources of electricity, and eating less dairy or meat (Büchs, Saunders, Wallbridge, Smith, & Bardsley, 2015; Cherry, 2006; Cronin, McCarthy, & Collins, 2014; Ergas, 2010; Haenfler, Johnson, & Jones, 2012; Middlemiss, 2011; Salt & Layzell, 1985; Saunders, Büchs, Papafragkou, Wallbridge, & Smith, 2014; Stuart, Thomas, Donaghue, & Russell, 2013; Wynes, Nicholas, Zhao, & Donner, 2018; for an overview on these measures, see Wynes & Nicholas, 2017). So far, there are only a limited number of case studies that measure the direct effect of participation in these types of movements as it relates to climate outcomes. In their study of the electricity use of 72 households in southern England, for example, Saunders and colleagues find an association between low levels of electricity use and contact with environmental organizations (Saunders et al., 2014). Similarly, in a longitudinal ethnographic study of a small number of participants in an environmental campaign in Sweden, Vestergren and colleagues conclude that participants in an environmental campaign sustained reductions in plastic use and meat consumption over the period of their study (Vestergren, Drury, & Chiriac, 2018, 2019). There is a clear need for research on the material outcomes of these movements that aim to have direct effects on consumption patterns that goes beyond single case studies. At the same time, measuring direct effects of these efforts in a way that scales up is extremely challenging, especially when crossing cultural and institutional contexts. 3 | ACTIVISM WITH INDIRECT EFFECTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE Most types of activism, however, do not aim to have direct effects on greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, they work to pressure economic and political actors to change policies and behaviors in a way that will lead to reductions in emissions. In other words, their goals are indirect: these forms of engagement target nodes of power—policymakers, regulators, and businesses—to change their behaviors and/or accelerate their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These forms of civic engagement involve providing the labor and political will needed to pressure political and economic actors to enact the kinds of emission-reducing policies recommended by scientists working with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change & Edenhofer, 2014, pt. IV). Much of the research in this area looks at the role of internationally focused environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which tend to target international environmental negotiation processes (Betsill & Corell, 2008; Boli & Thomas, 1999; Fox & Brown, 1998). Within this research area, there are numerous studies that analyze 2 of 11 FISHER AND NASRIN quantitative data sets to understand the relationship between NGOs and a country's environmental impact comparatively (see also Frank, Hironaka, & Schofer, 2000; Grant, Jorgenson, & Longhofer, 2018; Jorgenson, Dick, & Shandra, 2011; Longhofer & Jorgenson, 2017; Schofer & Hironaka, 2005). Other studies focus specifically on the relationship between NGOs and environmental impact within nations (Dietz, Frank, Whitley, Kelly, & Kelly, 2015; Grant & Vasi, 2017; Shwom, 2011). In their quantitative analysis of the effects of world society on environmental protection outcomes in countries around the world, Schofer and Hironaka find clear evidence that the rise of an “international environmental regime,” which includes environmental NGOs, is associated with lower levels of environmental degradation, including reduced carbon dioxide emissions (Schofer & Hironaka, 2005). More recently, scholars have worked to understand this relationship within the context of development. For example, Longhofer and Jorgenson conclude that nations with the highest levels of membership in international environmental NGOs experience a moderate “decoupling” in the assocaition between economic development and carbon emissions (Grant et al., 2018; see also Jorgenson et al., 2011; Longhofer & Jorgenson, 2017) Although these studies provide a good first step in understanding this connection, more research is needed about how exactly the existence of NGOs bring about lower emissions. Beyond these studies that explicitly analyze the relationship between NGOs and carbon emissions, there is a small but growing literature that assesses the broader consequences of activism, which aims to pressure policymakers to take action across a range of issues (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010; Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly, 1999; Soule & Olzak, 2004). This research focuses specifically on the outcome of specific forms of engagement, or tactics (for an overview, see Caren, Ghoshal, & Ribas, 2011). Some of the most common tactics that activists are employing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions indirectly are summarized in the sections that follow. 3.1 | Activism through litigation Litigation is one of the tactics that citizens, local governments, NGOs, and even corporations are using to pressure governments. This tactic aims to work through the judicial system to take action or enforce existing legislation (McCormick et al., 2017; Peel & Lin, 2019; Peel & Osofsky, 2015; Setzer & Vanhala, 2019; see also Pfrommer et al., 2019). In May 2017, UN Environment reported that climate change-related cases had been filed in 24 countries plus the European Union (UN Environment, 2017). In some cases, this tactic is being used to pressure businesses and governments to meet their policy commitments (Setzer & Vanhala, 2019; UN Environment, 2017). So far, however, there remains insufficient evidence regarding what effect these judicial efforts are having on greenhouse gas emissions. 3.2 | Activism targeting business actors At the same time, some groups focus their attention on targeting the economic sector and specific businesses. These efforts employ shareholder activism and cooperative board stewardship, as well as protest (King & Soule, 2007; M.-D. P. Lee & Lounsbury, 2011; McDonnell, King, & Soule, 2015; Szulecki, 2018; Yildiz et al., 2015). Shareholder activism focuses on investors' response to corporate activities and performances (Gillan & Starks, 2007). It involves investors who are dissatisfied with the company's management or operation taking advantage of their role as shareholders to pressure the company to change (Bratton & Mccahery, 2015; Gillan & Starks, 2007). Cooperative board stewardship, in contrast, involves “jointly owned and democratically controlled businesses” that support renewable energy (Viardot, 2013, p. 757; see also Yildiz et al., 2015). Some of this business-focused activism involves working through transnational advocacy networks, which have been documented to target governments and corporations (Hadden & Jasny, 2017; Keck & Sikkink, 2014; McAteer & Pulver, 2009). In their comparative study of shareholder activism in the Amazon region, McAteer and Pulver come to mixed conclusions, finding that one of the shareholder advocacy networks in Ecuador was successful in limiting oil development, while the other was not (McAteer & Pulver, 2009). Other types of activism that target business practices involve environmental groups working as part of a campaign to pressure institutional investors and universities to divest from fossil fuels. Groups employ “a range of strategies to shame, pressure, facilitate, and encourage investors in general, and large institutional investors in particular, to relinquish their holdings of fossil fuel stocks in favour of climate-friendly alternatives” (Ayling & Gunningham, 2017, p. 131; Franta, 2017; Grady-Benson & Sarathy, 2016; Hestres & Hopke, 2019). Although research has yet to conclude FISHER AND NASRIN 3 of 11 that these efforts have a substantial effect on fossil fuel funding or greenhouse gas emissions (Tollefson, 2015; but see Bergman, 2018), a recent study of fossil fuel divestment and green bonds provides some evidence of success. In it, Glomsrød and Wei model green investment scenarios that include funding allocation constraints due to divestment around the world. The authors find that these efforts yield notable emissions reductions (Glomsrød & Wei, 2018, p. 7). 3.3 | Activism working within the political system Activism also frequently involves citizens working individually or in groups to take advantage of opportunities to pressure governmental actors from within the political system. These tactics involve lobbying elected officials or working to change political representation through democratic elections of candidates (for an overview, see Clemens, 1997; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012). Turning first to lobbying, there is some evidence that these efforts by civic groups have a positive effect on environmental outcomes. In their 2016 study, Olzak and colleagues find that the number of environmental lobbyist organizations has a positive effect on the enactment of environmental legislation (Olzak, Soule, Coddou, & Muñoz, 2016). Although the authors do not specifically document the effects of the legislation on material outcomes, more recent research has found climate laws to reduce carbon emissions (Eskander & Fankhauser, 2020). Even though groups representing both the general public and businesses engage in lobbying, research has found business groups have (and spend) more financial and human resources, which affords them “privileged access” to policymakers and policymaking (Freudenburg, 2005). In his study of the “climate lobby,” Brulle compares the amounts spent by different groups for lobbying around the climate issue in the U.S. Congress. He finds that the “major sectors involved in lobbying were fossil fuel and transportation corporations, utilities, and affiliated trade associations. Expenditures by these sectors dwarf those of environmental organizations and renewable energy corporations” (Brulle, 2018, p. 289; see also Farrell, 2016). In some cases, representatives from business interests that have been lobbying against environmental policies are given opportunities to join the government. This process leads to “Regulatory Capture” by the specific business interest and is found to be associated with substantial negative public and environmental health consequences (for a recent example, see Dillon et al., 2018). Activism within the political system also involves citizens working through the electoral process to affect all sorts of social change (for a discussion of engagement in electoral politics as activism, see Fisher, 2012, 2019a). In some cases, elections focus on the differences between candidates who are supportive of policies that include more aggressive climate change mitigation strategies. Although research has yet to analyze extensively the relationship between this type of election-related civic engagement and climate outcomes, there is already some evidence. For example, a 2019 study finds that individuals in the United States who installed solar panels participate more in elections (Mildenberger, Howe, & Miljanich, 2019). At the same time, other research has documented various forms of electoral backlash against climate policies, both individually (Stokes, 2016, 2020), as well as in combination with other progressive agenda items (Muradian & Pascual, 2020). In their study of the success of “far-right movements” around the world and the concurrent election of “far-right” candidates, Muradian and Pascual note that far-right-leaning elected officials tend to have low concern for environmental issues and to deny climate change and disregard scientific evidence (Muradian & Pascual, 2020). Although they do not specifically look at the environmental outcomes of these officials holding office, given their common values and the empirical evidence coming out of the early years of the Trump Administration (Bomberg, 2017; Fisher & Jorgenson, 2019), it is likely that these officials will contribute to the passage of policies that limit the effectiveness of climate-related plans, reduce enforcement of these plans, or block them outright. 3.4 | Activism outside the economic and political system At the same time, there is expansive research on the ways citizens with less access to resources and power participate by challenging the economic and political system from outside it (for an overview, see Meyer & Tarrow, 1997). These efforts include a range of more confrontational tactics, such as boycotting, striking, protesting, and direct action that target politics, policymakers, and businesses. Many studies have explained this type of activism using climate change as a case (Fisher, 2010; Hadden, 2015; Saunders, Grasso, Olcese, Rainsford, & Rootes, 2012; Swim, Geiger, & Lengieza, 2019; Wahlström, Wennerhag, & Rootes, 2013; see also Fisher, Stanley, Berman, & Neff, 2005; Walgrave, 4 of 11 FISHER AND NASRIN Wouters, Van Laer, Verhulst, & Ketelaars, 2012). So far, however, only a handful of studies have explored the effect of these tactics on climate-related outcomes (but see Muñoz, Olzak, & Soule, 2018; Olzak et al., 2016). In their research on the success of environmental legislation in the U.S. Congress, Olzak and colleagues find that some civic tactics have a more positive effect than others: while they conclude that the number of environmental lobbyist organizations is positively associated with the enactment of environmental legislation, which can lead to carbon emissions reductions, they also find that protest by constituents has no effect (Olzak et al., 2016; see also Olzak & Soule, 2009). In a 2018 piece, which uses more recent data to analyze the relationship between protest, policy, and greenhouse gas emissions across states in the United States, the authors come to different conclusions. They find that emissions in states decline when there is more pro-environmental protest (Muñoz et al., 2018).

A good deal of research has concluded that activism, including tactics such as protests or strikes played a large role in pressuring governments to create environmental laws and environmental agencies tasked with enforcing those laws around the world (Brulle, 2000; see also Longhofer, Schofer, Miric, & Frank, 2016; McCloskey, 1991; Rucht, 1999; Schreurs, 1997; Steinhardt & Wu, 2016; Wong, 2018). Moreover, research has documented how coalitions of activists achieved a degree of success when they protested environmentally damaging projects, including the Narmada Dam development in India (Khagram, 2004), and environmentally harmful nuclear power plants, dams, and airports in Japan (Aldrich, 2010). In her study of the campaign against coal mining and burning in South Africa, Cock finds that the campaign challenged inequality and generated solidarity (Cock, 2019).

4 | CLIMATE STRIKES AS A GROWING TACTIC

Climate strikes are a particular outsider tactic that aims to pressure both the political and economic system. On August 20, 2018, Greta Thunberg decided not to attend school and sit on the steps of the Swedish parliament to demand that the government take steps to address climate change (Gessen, 2018). Inspired by the national school walkout against gun violence in the United States that was organized after the Parkland School Shooting in Florida, the 15-year-old has spent her Fridays sitting with a hand-written sign protesting ever since. Fridays for Future—the name of the group coordinating this tactic of skipping school on Fridays to protest inaction on climate change—flourished due to its usage of digital technologies to engage young people and the tactic has spread.

In March 2019, the first global climate strike took place, turning out more than 1 million people around the world. Six months later in September 2019, young people and adults responded to a call by young activists to participate in climate strikes as part of the “Global Week for Future” surrounding the UN Climate Action Summit.1 The number of participants in this event globally jumped to an estimated 7.6 million people (Rosane, 2019). Figure 1 presents the growth in the tactic of climate strikes in terms of the numbers of nations where strikes have taken place and the total number of participants involved.

Even before this movement had mobilized millions to strike, a narrative synthesis of studies that focused on youth perceptions of climate change from 1993 to 2018 documented how youth voices on climate change had become much more prominent and more widely publicized (K. Lee, Gjersoe, O'Neill, & Barnett, 2020). Specific research on this movement and its consequences has yet to be published in peer-reviewed publications (but see Evensen, 2019; Fisher, 2019b; Wahlström et al., 2013). However, in a series of pieces published in the Washington Post, Fisher presents analyses of data collected from participants in climate strikes during 2019 to understand how this tactic and the movement have grown in the United States (Fisher, 2019c, 2019d).

As an outsider tactic by school-aged children that aims to pressure governments to implement more radical climate policies that will lead to emissions reductions, school strikes are a popular example of activism with the goal of having an indirect effect on climate change. Measuring the outcomes of these efforts, in terms of political outcomes and emissions reductions is extremely challenging given the indirect nature of this activism. Such calculations are made even more challenging given the scale and scope of the activism, which has mobilized millions of people to act locally to pressure governments at the local, national, and international levels. Although the overall numbers are large, most of these strikes involve relatively small proportions of overall populations.

#### Solving warming is not all-or-nothing – every additional fraction of a degree is irreversible and costs millions of lives—prefer IPCC assessments that are the gold standard for warming consensus

David Wallace-Wells 19 [National Fellow at New America. He is deputy editor of New York Magazine, where he also writes frequently about climate and the near future of science and technology, including his widely read and debated 2017 cover story on worst-case scenarios for global warming], *The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future* (Kindle Edition: Allen Lane, 2019), pg. 8-30, beckert

* Every degree key – each bit 🡪 hundreds of millions of lives
* IPCC🡪best ev b/c conservative estimate + still really big impact
* Now key – not reversible, feedback loops 🡪 speeds up later

There is almost no chance we will avoid that scenario. The Kyoto Protocol achieved, practically, nothing; in the twenty years since, despite all of our climate advocacy and legislation and progress on green energy, we have produced more emissions than in the twenty years before. In 2016, the Paris accords established two degrees as a global goal, and, to read our newspapers, that level of warming remains something like the scariest scenario it is responsible to consider; just a few years later, with no single industrial nation on track to meet its Paris commitments, two degrees looks more like a best-case outcome, at present hard to credit, with an entire bell curve of more horrific possibilities extending beyond it and yet shrouded, delicately, from public view.28 For those telling stories about climate, such horrific possibilities—and the fact that we had squandered our chance of landing anywhere on the better half of that curve—had become somehow unseemly to consider. The reasons are almost too many to count, and so half-formed they might better be called impulses. We chose not to discuss a world warmed beyond two degrees out of decency, perhaps; or simple fear; or fear of fearmongering; or technocratic faith, which is really market faith; or deference to partisan debates or even partisan priorities; or skepticism about the environmental Left of the kind I’d always had; or disinterest in the fates of distant ecosystems like I’d also always had. We felt confusion about the science and its many technical terms and hard-to-parse numbers, or at least an intuition that others would be easily confused about the science and its many technical terms and hard-to-parse numbers. We suffered from slowness apprehending the speed of change, or semi-conspiratorial confidence in the responsibility of global elites and their institutions, or obeisance toward those elites and their institutions, whatever we thought of them. Perhaps we felt unable to really trust scarier projections because we’d only just heard about warming, we thought, and things couldn’t possibly have gotten that much worse just since the first Inconvenient Truth; or because we liked driving our cars and eating our beef and living as we did in every other way and didn’t want to think too hard about that; or because we felt so “postindustrial” we couldn’t believe we were still drawing material breaths from fossil fuel furnaces. Perhaps it was because we were so sociopathically good at collating bad news into a sickening evolving sense of what constituted “normal,” or because we looked outside and things seemed still okay. Because we were bored with writing, or reading, the same story again and again, because climate was so global and therefore nontribal it suggested only the corniest politics, because we didn’t yet appreciate how fully it would ravage our lives, and because, selfishly, we didn’t mind destroying the planet for others living elsewhere on it or those not yet born who would inherit it from us, outraged. Because we had too much faith in the teleological shape of history and the arrow of human progress to countenance the idea that the arc of history would bend toward anything but environmental justice, too. Because when we were being really honest with ourselves we already thought of the world as a zero-sum resource competition and believed that whatever happened we were probably going to continue to be the victors, relatively speaking anyway, advantages of class being what they are and our own luck in the natalist lottery being what it was. Perhaps we were too panicked about our own jobs and industries to fret about the future of jobs and industry; or perhaps we were also really afraid of robots or were too busy looking at our new phones; or perhaps, however easy we found the apocalypse reflex in our culture and the path of panic in our politics, we truly had a good-news bias when it came to the big picture; or, really, who knows why—there are so many aspects to the climate kaleidoscope that transforms our intuitions about environmental devastation into an uncanny complacency that it can be hard to pull the whole picture of climate distortion into focus. But we simply wouldn’t, or couldn’t, or anyway didn’t look squarely in the face ﻿of the science. This is not a book about the science of warming; it is about what warming means to the way we live on this planet. But what does that science say? It is complicated research, because it is built on two layers of uncertainty: what humans will do, mostly in terms of emitting greenhouse gases, and how the climate will respond, both through straightforward heating and a variety of more complicated, and sometimes contradictory, feedback loops. But even shaded by those uncertainty bars it is also very clear research, in fact terrifyingly clear. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offers the gold-standard assessments of the state of the planet and the likely trajectory for climate change—gold-standard, in part, because it is conservative, integrating only new research that passes the threshold of inarguability. A new report is expected in 2022, but the most recent one says that if we take action on emissions soon, instituting immediately all of the commitments made in the Paris accords but nowhere yet actually implemented, we are likely to get about 3.2 degrees of warming, or about three times as much warming as the planet has seen since the beginning of industrialization—bringing the unthinkable collapse of the planet’s ice sheets not just into the realm of the real but into the present.29, 30 That would eventually flood not just Miami and Dhaka but Shanghai and Hong Kong and a hundred other cities around the world.31 The tipping point for that collapse is said to be around two degrees; according to several recent studies, even a rapid cessation of carbon emissions could bring us that amount of warming by the end of the century.32 The assaults of climate change do not end at 2100 just because most modeling, by convention, sunsets at that point. This is why some studying global warming call the hundred years to follow the “century of hell.”33 Climate change is fast, much faster than it seems we have the capacity to recognize and acknowledge; but it is also long, almost longer than we can truly imagine. In reading about warming, you will often come across analogies from the planetary record: the last time the planet was this much warmer, the logic runs, sea levels were here. These conditions are not coincidences. The sea level was there largely because the planet was that much warmer, and the geologic record is the best model we have for understanding the very complicated climate system and gauging just how much damage will come from turning up the temperature by two or four or six degrees. Which is why it is especially concerning that recent research into the deep history of the planet suggests that our current climate models may be underestimating the amount of warming we are due for in 2100 by as much as half.34 In other words, temperatures could rise, ultimately, by as much as double what the IPCC predicts. Hit our Paris emissions targets and we may still get four degrees of warming, meaning a green Sahara and the planet’s tropical forests transformed into fire-dominated savanna.35 The authors of one recent paper suggested the warming could be more dramatic still—slashing our emissions could still bring us to four or five degrees Celsius, a scenario they said would pose severe risks to the habitability of the entire planet. “Hothouse Earth,” they called it.36 Because these numbers are so small, we tend to trivialize the differences between them—one, two, four, five. Human experience and memory offer no good analogy for how we should think of those thresholds, but, as with world wars or recurrences of cancer, you don’t want to see even one. At two degrees, the ice sheets will begin their collapse, 400 million more people will suffer from water scarcity, major cities in the equatorial band of the planet will become unlivable, and even in the northern latitudes heat waves will kill thousands each summer.37, 38 There would be thirty-two times as many extreme heat waves in India, and each would last five times as long, exposing ninety-three times more people.39 This is our best-case scenario. At three degrees, southern Europe would be in permanent drought, and the average drought in Central America would last nineteen months longer and in the Caribbean twenty-one months longer. In northern Africa, the figure is sixty months longer—five years. The areas burned each year by wildfires would double in the Mediterranean and sextuple, or more, in the United States. At four degrees, there would be eight million more cases of dengue fever each year in Latin America alone and close to annual global food crises.41 There could be 9 percent more heat-related deaths.40 Damages from river flooding would grow thirtyfold in Bangladesh, twentyfold in India, and as much as sixtyfold in the United Kingdom. In certain places, six climate-driven natural disasters could strike simultaneously, and, globally, damages could pass $600 trillion—more than twice the wealth as exists in the world today. Conflict and warfare could double. Even if we pull the planet up short of two degrees by 2100, we will be left with an atmosphere that contains 500 parts per million of carbon—perhaps more. The last time that was the case, sixteen million years ago, the planet was not two degrees warmer; it was somewhere between five and eight, giving the planet about 130 feet of sea-level rise, enough to draw a new American coastline as far west as I-95.42 Some of these processes take thousands of years to unfold, but they are also irreversible, and therefore effectively permanent. You might hope to simply reverse climate change; you can’t. It will outrun all of us. This is part of what makes climate change what the theorist Timothy Morton calls a “hyperobject”—a conceptual fact so large and complex that, like the internet, it can never be properly comprehended.43 There are many features of climate change—its size, its scope, its brutality—that, alone, satisfy this definition; together they might elevate it into a higher and more incomprehensible conceptual ﻿category yet. But time is perhaps the most mind-bending feature, the worst outcomes arriving so long from now that we reflexively discount their reality. Yet those outcomes promise to mock us and our own sense of the real in return. The ecological dramas we have unleashed through our land use and by burning fossil fuels—slowly for about a century and very rapidly for only a few decades—will play out over many millennia, in fact over a longer span of time than humans have even been around, performed in part by creatures and in environments we do not yet even know, ushered onto the world stage by the force of warming. And so, in a convenient cognitive bargain, we have chosen to consider climate change only as it will present itself this century. By 2100, the United Nations says, we are due for about 4.5 degrees of warming, following the path we are on today.44 That is, farther from the Paris track than the Paris track is from the two-degree threshold of catastrophe, which it more than doubles. As Naomi Oreskes has noted, there are far too many uncertainties in our models to take their predictions as gospel.45 Just running those models many times, as Gernot Wagner and Martin Weitzman do in their book Climate Shock, yields an 11 percent chance we overshoot six degrees.46 Recent work by the Nobel laureate William Nordhaus suggests that better-than-anticipated economic growth means better than one-in-three odds that our emissions will exceed the U.47N.’s worst-case “business as usual” scenario. In other words, a temperature rise of five degrees or possibly more. The upper end of the probability curve put forward by the U.N. to estimate the end-of-the-century, business-as-usual scenario—the worst-case outcome of a worst-case emissions path—puts us at eight degrees. At that temperature, humans at the equator and in the tropics would not be able to move around outside without dying.48 In that world, eight degrees warmer, direct heat effects would be the least of it: the oceans would eventually swell two hundred feet higher, flooding what are now two-thirds of the world’s major cities; hardly any land on the planet would be capable of efficiently producing any of the food we now eat; forests would be roiled by rolling storms of fire, and coasts would be punished by more and more intense hurricanes; the suffocating hood of tropical disease would reach northward to enclose parts of what we now call the Arctic; probably about a third of the planet would be made unlivable by direct heat; and what are today literally unprecedented and intolerable droughts and heat waves would be the quotidian condition of whatever human life was able to endure.49, 50, 51, 52 We will, almost certainly, avoid eight degrees of warming; in fact, several recent papers have suggested the climate is actually less sensitive to emissions than we’d thought, and that even the upper bound of a business-as-usual path would bring us to about five degrees, with a likely destination around four.53 But five degrees is nearly as unthinkable as eight, and four degrees not much better: the world in a permanent food deficit, the Alps as arid as the Atlas Mountains.54 Between that scenario and the world we live in now lies only the open question of human response. Some amount of further warming is already baked in, thanks to the protracted processes by which the planet adapts to greenhouse gas. But all of those paths projected from the present—to two degrees, to three, to four, five, or even eight—will be carved overwhelmingly by what we choose to do now. There is nothing stopping us from four degrees other than our own will to change course, which we have yet to display. Because the planet is as big as it is, and as ecologically diverse; because humans have proven themselves an adaptable species, and will likely continue to adapt to outmaneuver a lethal threat; and because the devastating effects of warming will soon become too extreme to ignore, or deny, if they haven’t already; because of all that, it is unlikely that climate change will render the planet truly uninhabitable. But if we do nothing about carbon emissions, if the next thirty years of industrial activity trace the same arc upward as the last thirty years have, whole regions will become unlivable by any standard we have today as soon as the end of this century. ﻿A few years ago, E. O. Wilson proposed a term, “Half-Earth,” to help us think through how we might adapt to the pressures of a changing climate, letting nature run its rehabilitative course on half the planet and sequestering humanity in the remaining, habitable half of the world.55 The fraction may be smaller than that, possibly considerably, and not by choice; the subtitle of his book was Our Planet’s Fight for Life. On longer timescales, the even-bleaker outcome is possible, too—the livable planet darkening as it approaches a human dusk. It would take a spectacular coincidence of bad choices and bad luck to make that kind of zero earth possible within our lifetime. But the fact that we have brought that nightmare eventuality into play at all is perhaps the overwhelming cultural and historical fact of the modern era—what historians of the future will likely study about us, and what we’d have hoped the generations before ours would have had the foresight to focus on, too. Whatever we do to stop warming, and however aggressively we act to protect ourselves from its ravages, we will have pulled the devastation of human life on Earth into view—close enough that we can see clearly what it would look like and know, with some degree of precision, how it will punish our children and grandchildren. Close enough, in fact, that we are already beginning to feel its effects ourselves, when we do not turn away. ﻿It is almost hard to believe just how much has happened and how quickly. In the late summer of 2017, three major hurricanes arose in the Atlantic at once, proceeding at first along the same route as though they were battalions of an army on the march.56 Hurricane Harvey, when it struck Houston, delivered such epic rainfall it was described in some areas as a “500,000-year event”—meaning that we should expect that amount of rain to hit that area once every five hundred millennia.57 Sophisticated consumers of environmental news have already learned how meaningless climate change has rendered such terms, which were meant to describe storms that had a 1-in-500,000 chance of striking in any given year. But the figures do help in this way: to remind us just how far global warming has already taken us from any natural-disaster benchmark our grandparents would have recognized. To dwell on the more common 500-year figure just for a moment, it would mean a storm that struck once during the entire history of the Roman Empire. Five hundred years ago, there were no English settlements across the Atlantic, so we are talking about a storm that should hit just once as Europeans arrived and established colonies, as colonists fought a revolution and Americans a civil war and two world wars, as their descendants established an empire of cotton on the backs of slaves, freed them, and then brutalized their descendants, industrialized and postindustrialized, triumphed in the Cold War, ushered in the “end of history,” and witnessed, just a decade later, its dramatic return. One storm in all that time, is what the meteorological record has taught us to expect. Just one. Harvey was the third such flood to hit Houston since 2015.58 And the storm struck, in places, with an intensity that was supposed to be a thousand times rarer still. That same season, an Atlantic hurricane hit Ireland, 45 million were flooded from their homes in South Asia, and unprecedented wildfires tilled much of California into ash.59, 60 And then there was the new category of quotidian nightmare, climate change inventing the once-unimaginable category of obscure natural disasters—crises so large they would once have been inscribed in folklore for centuries today passing across our horizons ignored, overlooked, or forgotten. In 2016, a “thousand-year flood” drowned small-town Ellicott City, Maryland, to take but one example almost at random; it was followed, two years later, in the same small town, by another.61 One week that summer of 2018, dozens of places all over the world were hit with record heat waves, from Denver to Burlington to Ottawa; from Glasgow to Shannon to Belfast; from Tbilisi, in Georgia, and Yerevan, in Armenia, to whole swaths of southern Russia.62 The previous month, the daytime temperature of one city in Oman reached above 121 degrees Fahrenheit, and did not drop below 108 all night, and in Quebec, Canada, fifty-four died from the heat.63 That same week, one hundred major wildfires burned in the American West, including one in California that grew 4,000 acres in one day, and another, in Colorado, that produced a volcano-like 300-foot eruption of flames, swallowing an entire subdivision and inventing a new term, “fire tsunami,” along the way.64, 65, 66 On the other side of the planet, biblical rains flooded Japan, where 1.2 million were evacuated from their homes.67 Later that summer, Typhoon Mangkhut forced the evacuation of 2.45 million from mainland China, the same week that Hurricane Florence struck the Carolinas, turning the port city of Wilmington briefly into an island and flooding large parts of the state with hog manure and coal ash.68, 69, 70 Along the way, the winds of Florence produced dozens of tornadoes across the region.71 The previous month, in India, the state of Kerala was hit with its worst floods in almost a hundred years.72 That October, a hurricane in the Pacific wiped Hawaii’s East Island entirely off the map.73 And in November, which has traditionally marked the beginning of the rainy season in California, the state was hit instead with the deadliest fire in its history—the Camp Fire, which scorched several hundred square miles outside of Chico, killing dozens and leaving many more missing in a place called, proverbially, Paradise.74 The devastation was so complete, you could almost forget the Woolsey Fire, closer to Los Angeles, which burned at the same time and forced the sudden evacuation of 170,000. It is tempting to look at these strings of disasters and think, Climate change is here. And one response to seeing things long predicted actually come to pass is to feel that we have settled into a new era, with everything transformed. In fact, that is how California governor Jerry Brown described the state of things in the midst of the state’s wildfire disaster: “a new normal.”75 The truth is actually much scarier. That is, the end of normal; never normal again. We have already exited the state of environmental conditions that allowed the human animal to evolve in the first place, in an unsure and unplanned bet on just what that animal can endure. The climate system that raised us, and raised everything we now know as human culture and civilization, is now, like a parent, dead. And the climate system we have been observing for the last several years, the one that has battered the planet again and again, is not our bleak future in preview. It would be more precise to say that it is a product of our recent climate past, already passing behind us into a dustbin of environmental nostalgia. There is no longer any such thing as a “natural disaster,” but not only will things get worse; technically speaking, they have already gotten worse. Even if, miraculously, humans immediately ceased emitting carbon, we’d still be due for some additional warming from just the stuff we’ve put into the air already. And of course, with global emissions still increasing, we’re very far from zeroing out on carbon, and therefore very far from stalling climate change. The devastation we are now seeing all around us is a beyond-best-case scenario for the future of warming and all the climate disasters it will bring. ﻿What that means is that we have not, at all, arrived at a new equilibrium. It is more like we’ve taken one step out on the plank off a pirate ship. Perhaps because of the exhausting false debate about whether climate change is “real,” too many of us have developed a misleading impression that its effects are binary. But global warming is not “yes” or “no,” nor is it “today’s weather forever” or “doomsday tomorrow.” It is a function that gets worse over time as long as we continue to produce greenhouse gas. And so the experience of life in a climate transformed by human activity is not just a matter of stepping from one stable ecosystem into another, somewhat worse one, no matter how degraded or destructive the transformed climate is. The effects will grow and build as the planet continues to warm: from 1 degree to 1.5 to almost certainly 2 degrees and beyond. The last few years of climate disasters may look like about as much as the planet can take. In fact, we are only just entering our brave new world, one that collapses below us as soon as we set foot on it. Many of these new disasters arrived accompanied by debate about their cause—about how much of what they have done to us comes from what we have done to the planet. For those hoping to better understand precisely how a monstrous hurricane arises out of a placid ocean, these inquiries are worthwhile, but for all practical purposes the debate yields no real meaning or insight. A particular hurricane may owe 40 percent of its force to anthropogenic global warming, the evolving models might suggest, and a particular drought may be half again as bad as it might have been in the seventeenth century. But climate change is not a discrete clue we can find at the scene of a local crime—one hurricane, one heat wave, one famine, one war. Global warming isn’t a perpetrator; it’s a conspiracy. We all live within climate and within all the changes we have produced in it, which enclose us all and everything we do. If hurricanes of a certain force are now five times as likely as in the pre-Columbian Caribbean, it is parsimonious to the point of triviality to argue over whether this one or that one was “climate-caused.” All hurricanes now unfold in the weather systems we have wrecked on their behalf, which is why there are more of them, and why they are stronger. The same is true for wildfires: this one or that one may be “caused” by a cookout or a downed power line, but each is burning faster, bigger, and longer because of global warming, which gives no reprieve to fire season. Climate change isn’t something happening here or there but everywhere, and all at once. And unless we choose to halt it, it will never stop. Over the past few decades, the term “Anthropocene” has climbed out of academic discourse and into the popular imagination—a name given to the geologic era we live in now, and a way to signal that it is a new era, defined on the wall chart of deep history by human intervention. One problem with the term is that it implies a conquest of nature, even echoing the biblical “dominion.” But however sanguine you might be about the proposition that we have already ravaged the natural world, which we surely have, it is another thing entirely to consider the possibility that we have only provoked it, engineering first in ignorance and then in denial a climate system that will now go to war with us for many centuries, perhaps until it destroys us. That is what Wally Broecker, the avuncular oceanographer, means when he calls the planet an “angry beast.”76 You could also go with “war machine.” Each day we arm it more. The assaults will not be discrete—this is another climate delusion. Instead, they will produce a new kind of cascading violence, waterfalls and avalanches of devastation, the planet pummeled again and again, with increasing intensity and in ways that build on each other and undermine our ability to respond, uprooting much of the landscape we have taken for granted, for centuries, as the stable foundation on which we walk, build homes and highways, shepherd our children through schools and into adulthood under the promise of safety—and subverting the promise that the world we have engineered and built for ourselves, out of nature, will also protect us against it, rather than conspiring with disaster against its makers. Consider those California wildfires. In March 2018, Santa Barbara County issued mandatory evacuation orders for those living in Montecito, Goleta, Santa Barbara, Summerland, and Carpinteria—where the previous December’s fires had hit hardest. It was the fourth evacuation order precipitated by a climate event in the county in just three months, but only the first had been for fire.77 The others were for mudslides ushered into possibility by that fire, one of the toniest communities in the most glamorous state of the world’s preeminently powerful country upended by fear that their toy vineyards and hobby stables, their world-class beaches and lavishly funded public schools, would be inundated by rivers of mud, the community as thoroughly ravaged as the sprawling camps of temporary shacks housing Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in the monsoon region of Bangladesh.78 It was. More than a dozen died, including a toddler swept away by mud and carried miles down the mountainslope to the sea; schools closed and highways flooded, foreclosing the routes of emergency vehicles and making the community an inland island, as if behind a blockade, choked off by a mud noose.79 Some climate cascades will unfold at the global level—cascades so large their effects will seem, by the curious legerdemain of environmental change, imperceptible. A warming planet leads to melting Arctic ice, which means less sunlight reflected back to the sun and more absorbed by a planet warming faster still, which means an ocean less able to absorb atmospheric carbon and so a planet warming faster still. A warming planet will also melt Arctic permafrost, which contains 1.8 trillion tons of carbon, more than twice as much as is currently suspended in the earth’s atmosphere, and some of which, when it thaws and is released, may evaporate as methane, which is thirty-four times as powerful a greenhouse-gas warming blanket as carbon dioxide when judged on the timescale of a century; when﻿ judged on the timescale of two decades, it is eighty-six times as powerful.80, 81 A hotter planet is, on net, bad for plant life, which means what is called “forest dieback”—the decline and retreat of jungle basins as big as countries and woods that sprawl for so many miles they used to contain whole folklores—which means a dramatic stripping-back of the planet’s natural ability to absorb carbon and turn it into oxygen, which means still hotter temperatures, which means more dieback, and so on. Higher temperatures means more forest fires means fewer trees means less carbon absorption, means more carbon in the atmosphere, means a hotter planet still—and so on. A warmer planet means more water vapor in the atmosphere, and, water vapor being a greenhouse gas, this brings higher temperatures still—and so on. Warmer oceans can absorb less heat, which means more stays in the air, and contain less oxygen, which is doom for phytoplankton—which does for the ocean what plants do on land, eating carbon and producing oxygen—which leaves us with more carbon, which heats the planet further. And so on. These are the systems climate scientists call “feedbacks”; there are more.82 Some work in the other direction, moderating climate change. But many more point toward an acceleration of warming, should we trigger them. And just how these complicated, countervailing systems will interact—what effects will be exaggerated and what undermined by feedbacks—is unknown, which pulls a dark cloud of uncertainty over any effort to plan ahead for the climate future. We know what a best-case outcome for climate change looks like, however unrealistic, because it quite closely resembles the world as we live on it today. But we have not yet begun to contemplate those cascades that may bring us to the infernal range of the bell curve. Other cascades are regional, collapsing on human communities and buckling them where they fall. These can be literal cascades—human-triggered avalanches are on the rise, with 50,000 people killed by avalanches globally between 2004 and 2016.83 In Switzerland, climate change has unleashed a whole new kind, thanks to what are called “rain-on-snow” events, which also caused the overflow of the Oroville Dam in Northern California and the 2013 flood of Alberta, Canada, with damages approaching $5 billion.84 But there are other kinds of cascade, too. Climate-driven water shortages or crop failures push climate refugees into nearby regions already struggling with resource scarcity. Sea-level rise inundates cropland with more and more saltwater flooding, transforming agricultural areas into brackish sponges no longer able to adequately feed those living off them; flooding power plants, knocking regions offline just as electricity may be needed most; and crippling chemical and nuclear plants, which, malfunctioning, breathe out their toxic plumes. The rains that followed the Camp Fire flooded the tent cities hastily assembled for the first disaster’s refugees. In the case of the Santa Barbara mudslides, drought produced a state full of dry brush ripe for a spark; then a year of anomalously monsoonish rain produced only more growth, and wildfires tore through the landscape, leaving a mountainside without much plant life to hold in place the millions of tons of loose earth that make up the towering coastal range where the clouds tend to gather and the rain first falls. Some of those watching from afar wondered, incredulously, how a mudslide could kill so many. The answer is, the same way as hurricanes or tornadoes—by weaponizing the environment, whether “man-made” or “natural.” Wind disasters do not kill by wind, however brutal it gets, but by tugging trees out of earth and transforming them into clubs, making power lines into loose whips and electrified nooses, collapsing homes on cowering residents, and turning cars into tumbling boulders. And they kill slowly, too, by cutting off food delivery and medical supplies, making roads impassable even to first responders, knocking out phone lines and cell towers so that the ill and elderly must suffer, and hope to endure, in silence and without aid. Most of the world is not Santa Barbara, with its Mission-style impasto of infinite-seeming wealth, and in the coming decades many of the most punishing climate horrors will indeed hit those least able to respond and recover. This is what is often called the problem of environmental justice; a sharper, less gauzy phrase would be “climate caste system.” The problem is acute within countries, even wealthy ones, where the poorest are those who live in the marshes, the swamps, the floodplains, the inadequately irrigated places with the most vulnerable infrastructure—altogether an unwitting environmental apartheid. Just in Texas, 500,000 poor Latinos live in shantytowns called “colonias” with no drainage systems to deal with increased flooding.85 The cleavage is even sharper globally, where the poorest countries will suffer more in our hot new world. In fact, with one exception—Australia—countries with lower GDPs will warm the most.86 That is notwithstanding the fact that much of the global south has not, to this point, defiled the atmosphere of the planet all that much. This is one of the many historical ironies of climate change that would better be called cruelties, so merciless is the suffering they will inflict. But disproportionately as it will fall on the world’s least, the devastation of global warming cannot be easily quarantined in the developing world, as much as those in the Northern Hemisphere would probably, and not to our credit, prefer it. Climate disaster is too indiscriminate for that. In fact, the belief that climate could be plausibly governed, or managed, by any institution or human instrument presently at hand is another wide-eyed climate delusion. The planet survived many millennia without anything approaching a world government, in fact endured nearly the entire span of human civilization that way, organized into competitive tribes and fiefdoms and kingdoms and nation-states, and only began to build something resembling a cooperative blueprint, very piecemeal, after brutal world wars—in the ﻿form of the League of Nations and United Nations and European Union and even the market fabric of globalization, whatever its flaws still a vision of cross-national participation, imbued with the neoliberal ethos that life on Earth was a positive-sum game. If you had to invent a threat grand enough, and global enough, to plausibly conjure into being a system of true international cooperation, climate change would be it—the threat everywhere, and overwhelming, and total. And yet now, just as the need for that kind of cooperation is paramount, indeed necessary for anything like the world we know to survive, we are only unbuilding those alliances—recoiling into nationalistic corners and retreating from collective responsibility and from each other. That collapse of trust is a cascade, too. ﻿Just how completely the world below our feet will become unknown to us is not yet clear, and how we register its transformation remains an open question. One legacy of the environmentalist creed that long prized the natural world as an otherworldly retreat is that we see its degradation as a sequestered story, unfolding separately from our own modern lives—so separately that the degradation acquires the comfortable contours of parable, like pages from Aesop, aestheticized even when we know the losses as tragedy. Climate change could soon mean that, in the fall, trees may simply turn brown, and so we will look differently at entire schools of painting, which stretched for generations, devoted to best capturing the oranges and reds we can no longer see ourselves out the windows of our cars as we drive along our highways.87 The coffee plants of Latin America will no longer produce fruit; beach homes will be built on higher and higher stilts and still be drowned.88 In many cases, it is better to use the present tense. In just the last forty years, according to the World Wildlife Fund, more than half of the world’s vertebrate animals have died; in just the last twenty-five, one study of German nature preserves found, the flying insect population declined by three-quarters.89, 90 The delicate dance of flowers and their pollinators has been disrupted, as have the migration patterns of cod, which have fled up the Eastern Seaboard toward the Arctic, evading the communities of fishermen that fed on them for centuries; as have the hibernation patterns of black bears, many of which now stay awake all winter.91, 92, 93 Species individuated over millions of years of evolution but forced together by climate change have begun to mate with one another for the first time, producing a whole new class of hybrid species: the pizzly bear, the coy-wolf.94 The zoos are already natural history museums, the children’s books already out of date. Older fables, too, will be remade: the story of Atlantis, having endured and enchanted for several millennia, will compete with the real-time sagas of the Marshall Islands and Miami Beach, each sinking over time into snorkelers’ paradises; the strange fantasy of Santa and his polar workshop will grow eerier still in an Arctic of ice-free summers; and there is a terrible poignancy in contemplating how desertification of the entire Mediterranean Basin will change our reading of the Odyssey, or how it will discolor the shine of Greek islands for dust from the Sahara to permanently blanket their skies, or how it will recast the meaning of the Pyramids for the Nile to be dramatically drained.95, 96, 97 We will think of the border with Mexico differently, presumably, when the Rio Grande is a line traced through a dry riverbed—the Rio Sand, it’s already been called.98 The imperious West has spent five centuries looking down its nose at the plight of those living within the pale of tropical disease, and one wonders how that will change when mosquitoes carrying malaria and dengue are flying through the streets of Copenhagen and Chicago, too. But we have for so long understood stories about nature as allegories that we seem unable to recognize that the meaning of climate change is not sequestered in parable. It encompasses us; in a very real way it governs us—our crop yields, our pandemics, our migration patterns and civil wars, crime waves and domestic assaults, hurricanes and heat waves and rain bombs and megadroughts, the shape of our economic growth and everything that flows downstream from it, which today means nearly everything. Eight hundred million in South Asia alone, the World Bank says, would see their living conditions sharply diminish by 2050 on the current emissions track, and perhaps a climate slowdown will even reveal the bounty of what Andreas Malm calls fossil capitalism to be an illusion, sustained over just a few centuries by the arithmetic of adding the energy value of burned fossil fuels to what had been, before wood and coal and oil, an eternal Malthusian trap.99, 100 In which case, we would have to retire the intuition that history will inevitably extract material progress from the planet, at least in any reliable or global pattern, and come to terms, somehow, with just how pervasively that intuition ruled even our inner lives, often tyrannically. Adaptation to climate change is often viewed in terms of market trade-offs, but in the coming decades the trade will work in the opposite direction, with relative prosperity a benefit of more aggressive action. Every degree of warming, it’s been estimated, costs a temperate country like the United States about one percentage point of GDP, and according to one recent paper, at 1.5 degrees the world would be $20 trillion richer than at 2 degrees.101, 102 Turn the dial up another degree or two, and the costs balloon—the compound interest of environmental catastrophe. 3.7 degrees of warming would produce $551 trillion in damages, research suggests; total worldwide wealth is today about $280 trillion.103, 104 Our current emissions trajectory takes us over 4 degrees by 2100; multiply that by that 1 percent of GDP and you have almost entirely wiped out the very possibility of economic growth, which has not topped 5 percent globally in over forty years.105 A fringe group of alarmed academics call this prospect “steady-state economics,” but it ultimately suggests a more ﻿complete retreat from economics as an orienting beacon, and from growth as the lingua franca through which modern life launders all of its aspirations.106 “Steady-state” also gives a name to the creeping panic that history may be less progressive, as we’ve come to believe really only over the last several centuries, than cyclical, as we were sure it was for the many millennia before. More than that: in the vision steady-state economics projects of a state-of-nature competitive scramble, everything from politics to trade and war seems brutally zero-sum. For centuries we have looked to nature as a mirror onto which to first project, then observe, ourselves. But what is the moral? There is nothing to learn from global warming, because we do not have the time, or the distance, to contemplate its lessons; we are after all not merely telling the story but living it. That is, trying to; the threat is immense. How immense? One 2018 paper sketches the math in horrifying detail. In the journal Nature Climate Change, a team led by Drew Shindell tried to quantify the suffering that would be avoided if warming was kept to 1.5 degrees, rather than 2 degrees—in other words, how much additional suffering would result from just that additional half-degree of warming. Their answer: 150 million more people would die from air pollution alone in a 2-degree warmer world than in a 1.1075-degree warmer one. Later that year, the IPCC raised the stakes further: in the gap between 1.1085 degrees and 2, it said, hundreds of millions of lives were at stake. Numbers that large can be hard to grasp, but 150 million is the equivalent of twenty-five Holocausts. It is three times the size of the death toll of the Great Leap Forward—the largest nonmilitary death toll humanity has ever produced. It is more than twice the greatest death toll of any kind, World War II. The numbers don’t begin to climb only when we hit 1.5 degrees, of course. As should not surprise you, they are already accumulating, at a rate of at least seven million deaths, from air pollution alone, each year—an annual Holocaust, pursued and prosecuted by what brand of nihilism? This is what is meant when climate change is called an “existential crisis”—a drama we are now haphazardly improvising between two hellish poles, in which our best-case outcome is death and suffering at the scale of twenty-five Holocausts, and the worst-case outcome puts us on the brink of extinction.109 Rhetoric often fails us on climate because the only factually appropriate language is of a kind we’ve been trained, by a buoyant culture of sunny-side-up optimism, to dismiss, categorically, as hyperbole. Here, the facts are hysterical, and the dimensions of the drama that will play out between those poles incomprehensibly large—large enough to enclose not just all of present-day humanity but all of our possible futures, as well. Global warming has improbably compressed into two generations the entire story of human civilization. First, the project of remaking the planet so that it is undeniably ours, a project whose exhaust, the poison of emissions, now casually works its way through millennia of ice so quickly you can see the melt with a naked eye, destroying the environmental conditions that have held stable and steadily governed for literally all of human history. That has been the work of a single generation. The second generation faces a very different task: the project of preserving our collective future, forestalling that devastation and engineering an alternate path. There is simply no analogy to draw on, outside of mythology and theology—and perhaps the Cold War prospect of mutually assured destruction. Few feel like gods in the face of warming, but that the totality of climate change should make us feel so passive—that is another of its delusions. In folklore and comic books and church pews and movie theaters, stories about the fate of the earth often perversely counsel passivity in their audiences, and perhaps it should not surprise us that the threat of climate change is no different. By the end of the Cold War, the prospect of nuclear winter had clouded every corner of our pop culture and psychology, a pervasive nightmare that the human experiment might be brought to an end by two jousting sets of proud, rivalrous tacticians, just a few sets of twitchy hands hovering over the planet’s self-destruct buttons. The threat of climate change is more dramatic still, and ultimately more democratic, with responsibility shared by each of us even as we shiver in fear of it; and yet we have processed that threat only in parts, typically not concretely or explicitly, displacing certain anxieties and inventing others, choosing to ignore the bleakest features of our possible future and letting our political fatalism and technological faith blur, as though we’d gone cross-eyed, into a remarkably familiar consumer fantasy: that someone else will fix the problem for us, at no cost. Those more panicked are often hardly less complacent, living instead through climate fatalism as though it were climate optimism. Over the last few years, as the planet’s own environmental rhythms have seemed to grow more fatalistic, skeptics have found themselves arguing not that climate change isn’t happening, since extreme weather has made that undeniable, but that its causes are unclear—suggesting that the changes we are seeing are the result of natural cycles rather than human activities and interventions. It is a very strange argument; if the planet is warming at a terrifying pace and on a horrifying scale, it should transparently concern us more, rather than less, that the warming is beyond our control, possibly even our comprehension. That we know global warming is our doing should be a comfort, not a cause for despair, however incomprehensively large and complicated we find the processes that have brought it into being; that we know we are, ourselves, responsible for all of its punishing effects ﻿should be empowering, and not just perversely. Global warming is, after all, a human invention. And the flip side of our real-time guilt is that we remain in command. No matter how out-of-control the climate system seems—with its roiling typhoons, unprecedented famines and heat waves, refugee crises and climate conflicts—we are all its authors. And still writing.

#### Err on the side of caution – models underestimate warming, and significant climatic changes make fast runaway warming likely – the tipping point could sneak up on us

Wuebbles et al. 17, D.J., D.W. Fahey, K.A. Hibbard, B. DeAngelo, S. Doherty, K. Hayhoe, R. Horton, J.P. Kossin, P.C. Taylor, A.M. Waple, and C.P. Weaver, 2017: Executive summary. In: *Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume I* [Wuebbles, D.J., D.W. Fahey, K.A. Hibbard, D.J. Dokken, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, pp. 12-34, doi: 10.7930/J0DJ5CTG. Pg. 32-33, beckert

There is a Significant Possibility for Unanticipated Changes Humanity’s effect on the Earth system, through the large-scale combustion of fossil fuels and widespread deforestation and the resulting release of carbon dioxide (CO2) into the atmosphere, as well as through emissions of other greenhouse gases and radiatively active substances from human activities, is unprecedented. There is significant potential for humanity’s effect on the planet to result in unanticipated surprises and a broad consensus that the further and faster the Earth system is pushed towards warming, the greater the risk of such surprises. There are at least two types of potential surprises: compound events, where multiple extreme climate events occur simultaneously or sequentially (creating greater overall impact), and critical threshold or tipping point events, where some threshold is crossed in the climate system (that leads to large impacts). The probability of such surprises—some of which may be abrupt and/or irreversible—as well as other more predictable but difficult-to-manage impacts, increases as the influence of human activities on the climate system increases. (Ch. 15) Unanticipated and difficult or impossible-to-manage changes in the climate system are possible throughout the next century as critical thresholds are crossed and/or multiple climate-related extreme events occur simultaneously. (Ch. 15) • Positive feedbacks (self-reinforcing cycles) within the climate system have the potential to accelerate human-induced climate change and even shift the Earth’s climate system, in part or in whole, into new states that are very different from those experienced in the recent past (for example, ones with greatly diminished ice sheets or different large-scale patterns of at- mosphere or ocean circulation). Some feedbacks and potential state shifts can be modeled and quantified; others can be modeled or identified but not quantified; and some are probably still unknown. (Very high confidence in the potential for state shifts and in the incompleteness of knowledge about feedbacks and potential state shifts). (Ch. 15) • The physical and socioeconomic impacts of compound extreme events (such as simultaneous heat and drought, wildfires associated with hot and dry conditions, or flooding associated with high precipitation on top of snow or waterlogged ground) can be greater than the sum of the parts (very high confidence). Few analyses consider the spatial or temporal correlation between extreme events. (Ch. 15) • While climate models incorporate important climate processes that can be well quantified, they do not include all of the processes that can contribute to feedbacks (Ch. 2), compound ex- treme events, and abrupt and/or irreversible changes. For this reason, future changes outside the range projected by climate models cannot be ruled out (very high confidence). Moreover, the systematic tendency of climate models to underestimate temperature change during warm paleoclimates suggests that climate models are more likely to underestimate than to overestimate the amount of long-term future change (medium confidence). (Ch. 15)