Revitalising Local Communities

Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper

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UK Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper

By Maeve Cohen for the Women's Budget Group
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Executive Summary

This paper proposes placing the meeting of needs at the centre of all economic, social and political activity in order to revitalise communities in a way that enables a low-carbon, gender equal future. It explores how the fundamental needs of nutrition, shelter, social participation, health, physical and income security, can be met in a way that is consistent with green and feminist aims. It gives the following recommendations:

Process

1. Develop metrics against which to measure needs, ensuring they meet feminist equality goals. Use these to create enforceable standards for provisioning.
2. Devolve power to local regions along the principle of subsidiarity.

Nutrition

3. The principles of community wealth building should be applied to the provision of food.
4. The potential for urban growing in the UK should be explored and invested in.

Shelter

5. Government should ensure access to decent, energy efficient housing.

Social Participation

6. A model of proximity should be adopted for essential services where possible and practicable.
7. Local authorities should work with residents and employers to identify and deliver on the educational needs of their communities.
8. Digital access should be thought of as an essential utility and provided universally.

Health

9. Green public spaces must be invested in and expanded.
10. Large care providers that extract profits out of the local area should be replaced by a thriving ecosystem of small businesses, care-cooperatives, local authority providers and community enterprises.
11. Privatisation of the NHS must be reversed along with efforts to make NHS operations greener.

Physical Security

12. Safe neighbourhoods must be co-created with the people who live in them through gender transformative planning models.

Income Security

13. The government should implement an income floor.
14. Local governments should work with anchor institutions to identify gaps in local supply chains.

Role of National Government

15. The state should ensure equal access to central resources for local government, take an active role in creating and enforcing ethical and environmental standards, collect and redistribute funding in line with principles of inclusion and fairness, and communicate and coordinate activities across different regions.

Introduction

Revitalising communities in a way that enables a low-carbon, gender equal future requires reimagining how our physical, political and economic systems operate. The localities in which human life takes place have a huge impact on our relationships with both the natural world and each other. Social movements, community groups and local politicians in places such as Preston, Barcelona and Jackson, Mississippi are experimenting with innovative new methods of inclusive and sustainable local planning in reaction to the exclusive and extractive status quo. This paper will take inspiration from this growing body of knowledge to examine how we can transform our local communities in ways that support the flourishing of women and marginalised groups and enable everyone to live fulfilling lives sustainably.

To do this it will explore what it means to live a fulfilling life within ecological limits by drawing on the needs based analysis developed by Ian Gough and others. Once these needs are established it will briefly examine the current, dominant model of local economic development from a feminist and ecological perspective, identifying where this model fails to meet people's needs. It will draw on the growing body of research and practice exploring progressive localism to put forward recommendations for revitalising communities.

This paper defines communities as people living in specific places and offers recommendations for how their fundamental needs can be met within the localities in which they live, whether urban or rural. It focusses on 'communities of place' rather than 'communities of identify' because, though there are large inequalities between different groups of people within specific places, it aims to focus on people's immediate material conditions to create a foundation upon which all can build meaningful lives. Improving people's material conditions will not automatically resolve inequalities between people within a locality. However, ensuring there is a material baseline that no-one can fall beneath irrespective of gender, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, sexuality and more, will go a good way towards resolving some of these issues. The focus is on the collective provision of public services, either free at the point of use, or at affordable prices. As the main users of public services, the people who will benefit most from these improvements will be women and other marginalised communities including those on low incomes (a disproportionate amount of which are ethnically minoritized people) and those physically disabled or with mental health conditions.

What are our built environments for?

Reimagining society in a way that empowers marginalised people and restores nature must begin with an exploration of what it means to be able to live a fulfilling life on a thriving planet. Drawing on needs theory[1], Ian Gough identifies concrete needs that must be met in order for people to be able to actively participate in society. These needs are objective, universal and independent of culture or context, though the ways in which they are met vary largely over histories and geographies. These universal basic needs are: nutrition, shelter, social participation (education, information, communication), health (prevention, cure, care), physical security and income security[2]. These basic needs can only be met within a secure and flourishing natural environment.

1   Nussbaum, M.C. (2000). Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
2   Gough, I., (2020). The Case for Universal Basic Services. LSE Public Policy Review, 1(2)

Different societies across history and geographies have organised the provision of needs in distinctive ways. The following section will provide a brief examination of existing systems of provision in the UK from intersectional feminist and ecological perspectives.

Ecological and feminist critiques of local economic development

The discipline of urban planning and the theory behind local economic 'development' is underpinned by the mainstream economic concept of rational agents maximising outcomes. Within this framework the governance of towns and cities becomes a technical exercise which is universally implemented across geographies and times[3]. The role of these towns and cities is to increase gross value added (GVA) justified by a belief in 'trickledown' economics[4].

In the UK, over the decades that this model has been dominant, we have seen wide ranging inequalities appear or increase including wealth, income, age, gender, race, and geography[5]. The system has been open to exploitation by large national and international firms in which absentee shareholders extract wealth and power from local people, supressing wages and eroding social cohesion and solidarity[6]. With the increase of narrowly defined 'value' as its central purpose, this model of economic development has created systems in which fundamental needs are not being met for large sections of society.

We have not got the ecological space to continue producing and consuming in the ways that we currently are.[7] This applies to nearly every aspect of our built environments, the way our houses are built, how transport systems are designed, where our energy comes from, how we dispose of waste. All of these physical aspects affect our social systems as well, how we care for our children, how we socialise with our loved ones. A system that pursues ever increasing wealth whilst ignoring its impact on the environment is simply not compatible with a stable planet.

There is a long and rich tradition of Feminist Urban Planning recognising that the supposed 'gender neutrality' of the built environment has enabled the continuation of inequalities along the lines of gender, race, disability, income and more. This paper draws out two main themes.

Firstly, the ways in which women experience their environments. The physical structure and designs of our neighbourhoods, streets and homes impacts on the lived experiences of women and usually reinforce male-centric cultural norms[8]. For example, the separation of urban (productive) and suburban (reproductive) areas of the city based on a post-war male-breadwinner model has created a lasting infrastructure for the division of labour[9]. This physical division of 'work' space and 'family' space makes it difficult for women to navigate the dual responsibilities of work and care, leading to their reliance on casual work, close to home - a foundational element of the spiral of inequality[10] that results in an unequal gender order[11].

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3   Thompson, M, (2020) What's so new about new municipalism? Progress in Human Geography

4   Schafran et al (2020). The Spatial Contract. Manchester University Press. Manchester

5   Lawrence, M., and Laybourn-Langton, L. (2021). Planet on Fire. Verso Books.

6   Kelly, M and McKinley, S. (2015) Cities Building Community Wealth. The Democracy Collaborative

7   Demaria et al. (2013) What is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement. Environmental Values

8   MacGregor, S. (1996) Deconstructing the Man Made city. From the book Change in Plans. Toronto University Press

9   Ibid

10   Neitzert, E. (2020) Spirals of Inequalities Women's Budget Group

11   This has been disrupted by the pandemic bringing about mass homeworking which has created highly gendered outcomes. This has created an opportunity to dramatically rethink how we design our work-lives in a 'new normal'.

Secondly, there is a lack of representation within city design including within the technical discipline of urban planning, the make-up of politicians and local officials, and in the processes for citizen consultation. This results in 'neutral' designs for a homogenised 'public' which are generally best suited to male life patterns and nuclear family structures[12]. Discussions of 'gender mainstreaming' and creating 'diverse' and 'inclusive' spaces are vague and abstract and can be seen as separate to more meaningful conversations about inhabitants' right to a safe and secure environment[13]. The lack of sufficient involvement of women and other marginalised groups means that the lived experiences of these groups are not considered in the designs of the neighbourhoods in which they live.

Progressive localism

In a growing number of places across the world, citizens are organising and creating alternative models of economic planning and local government. This movement is experimenting with innovative ways to organise our local communities. Though hyper-local, it is not a move to champion local government over the state, but to focus on the municipality as a strategic site for developing a transformative and participatory politics[14].

This form of localism stands in stark contrast to the brand put forward by the Coalition Government of 2010 and subsequent governments. This model, enshrined in the 2011 Localism Act, devolves service provision to regions without the necessary funds (or powers to raise funds) to deliver services effectively. This shifting of responsibility without the means to deliver cements the centralisation of power in the UK whilst undermining local government. Public service provision has suffered dramatic cuts and an erosion of quality which has been disproportionately borne by the most vulnerable in society.

After years of being failed by orthodox approaches to local economic development before and during austerity in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, local areas have begun to turn inward and "rather than waiting for outside help, decided to use [their] own resources to help [them]selves"[15]. There is a rich diversity of different ideas being employed across this movement, each unique to their own locality.

Whilst there are differences and inequalities among people living in the same area, the aim of this movement is to produce a more unified and horizontal politics. Through doing this, communities are working to create new systems of provision in the places in which they live, designed to address historic inequalities.

Revitalising our built environments

The first step in revitalising communities lies in improving people's material conditions. This means designing provisioning systems around the principle of meeting needs, not increasing GVA. To do this, progress must be measured using metrics that show how effectively the needs of nutrition, shelter, social participation, health, physical security, income security and a thriving environment are being met. These must then be used to create enforceable standards underpinned by national government. Where local areas are failing to meet needs, national government must step in to support local government to improve their provisioning systems.

12   Beebeejaun, Y. (2016) Gender urban space and the right to everyday life. Journal of Urban Affairs
13   Ibid
14   Russel, B. (2019) Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities. Antipode
15   Brown, M. and Jones, R., (2021) Paint Your Town Red: How Preston Took Back Control and Your Town Can Too. Watkins Media. p48

Feminist substantive equality goals must be embedded at all stages and in all policy strands of a Green New[16].

Each intervention will be unique and therefore must include the end users during development, implementation and reproduction. To enable this, service provision should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Some services, such as home-care, are best delivered at the hyper-local/neighbourhood level where individual carers and service users can collaborate. Others, such as the national rail system, may be more suited to national planning systems, though all should include meaningful consultation with end users. Because of this, many of the recommendations in this paper require large interventions by local authorities and regional bodies. Devolving power to local authorities will not automatically lead to meaningful involvement from local people, and effective community engagement will be required. Though most of these recommendations should be carried out by well-resourced local governments, the central state also has a fundamental role, including the collection and redistribution of funds.

The recent reforms to the planning system[17] remove the minimal processes which were in place to enable local people to feed into development plans, handing more power to private developers extracting wealth. These reforms must be scrapped and replaced by new systems which empower communities to input into redesigns of their built environments. This requires the creation and implementation of processes such as citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, community land trusts, gender responsive budgeting and more[18]. Rather than focussing on ideals of competition, hierarchy, and urgency, political processes should instead prioritise deliberative democracy, horizontal forms of decision making and focuses attention on the relational, the small and the everyday[19]. Doing politics in this way should focusing on including people who have traditionally been excluded from planning processes that reproduce environments favouring white, able-bodied, working males. To avoid consultations being dominated by those who already hold a lot of the power within communities, steps should be taken to ensure that sessions include the necessary support to enable marginalised communities to attend (e.g. childcare, accessible spaces, inclusive promotion). This will a enable a more diverse cohort of people to reshape their environments.

Recommendations

1. **Develop metrics against which the meeting of needs can be measured ensuring they meet feminist substantive equality goals. Use these to create enforceable standards for provisioning.** This will entail training and development throughout all national and local government departments.

2. **Devolve power to local regions along the principle of subsidiarity.** This will include significant funding increases and new abilities to raise funds. Inclusive consultation processes should be developed that consider the participation requirements of marginalised groups alongside public education programmes that support residents to participate effectively.

16   Cohen, M. and MacGregor, S. (2020) Towards a Feminist Green New Deal
17   House of Commons (2021) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-planning-for-the-future-consultation-to-reform-the-planning-system
18   These ideas will be more fully drawn out in a forthcoming paper for this project focussing on explicitly on process.
19   Roth, L. and Shea Baird, K. (2017) Municipalism and the Feminisation of Politics

Meeting people's needs

The rest of this paper will use the needs based analysis laid out at the start to reimagine local communities.

Nutrition

Our food provisioning systems are failing on multiple levels. Food production, transport and retail make up 26% of all climate emissions globally[20]. In the UK, 48% of all food is imported including 84% of fresh fruit and 46% of vegetables[21]. This equates not only to significant carbon emissions in transportation but also fragile, just-in-time supply chains extremely vulnerable to external shocks, starkly evidenced by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The UK also has severe inequalities around food access which have increased significantly in the last two decades[22]. During the pandemic, these inequalities have worsened still with effects being spread unequally and women[23], ethnic minorities, disabled people and children[24] being hit the hardest.

Our food provisioning systems need to change. This change could provide significant opportunities to rethink how our built environments and social structures operate to facilitate access to food. Preston City Council is a pioneer of the model of community wealth building and has been using it to improve access to healthy, sustainable food among many other things.

Community Wealth Building is a form of local economic development designed to build and keep wealth within a locality. The model centres around the actions of 'anchor institutions' – large, place-based organisations who are both dependent on and have considerable impact on local economies. Community Wealth Building ensures such anchor institutions create local social value through progressive procurement, just employment practices and supporting inclusive ownership models within local supply chains. It provides mechanisms through which local needs can be met in an inclusive, regenerative way. When combined with the green and socially just ends of a Feminist Green New Deal, it could be a powerful means for transforming communities.

In Preston, local schools were spending £1.6 million on school meals with large national providers. This meant money was leaving the local area and schools had little knowledge or control over how that food was grown or transported. The council worked with the schools to divide this spending up into smaller scale contracts to enable local suppliers to bid for them. This redirected the money back into the local economy and created a stable customer base for small local farms.[25]

Considerably more could be done to promote urban growing and produce sustainably farmed food within our communities and there are inspiring examples of alternative food systems in the UK. In Manchester for example, the Kindling Trust, a local not-for-profit organisation set

20   Ritchie, H. (2019) 'Food production is responsible for one-quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions' https://ourworldindata.org/food-ghg-emissions.
21   Power, M. et al. (2020) How COVID-19 has exposed inequalities in the UK food system: The case of UK food and poverty.
22   ENUF (2019) Vulnerability to food insecurity
23   Loopstra, R. (2020). Vulnerability to food insecurity since the COVID-19 lockdown. The Food Foundation
24   Goudie, S. and McIntyre, Z. (2021) A CRISIS WITHIN A CRISIS: The Impact of Covid-19 on Household Food Security. The Food Foundation
25   Brown, M. and Jones, R., (2021) Paint Your Town Red: How Preston Took Back Control and Your Town Can Too. Watkins Media.

up to "challenge and subvert the industrial food system"[26] has been working since 2007 to practice sustainable land use, increase access to sustainable food, advocate for policy change and incubate start up food co-operatives. As well as supplying local shops and residents, they also run educational courses in organic urban growing, nutrition and wellbeing.

Initiatives like these are welcome but a move to locally grown organic food, though better for the environment, is a move away from more convenient, pre-packaged ready meals that reduce food preparation and cooking time. This is domestic labour that is mostly done by women. However, this too could be used as an opportunity. The Covid-19 crises has seen a huge rise in the use of delivery platforms such as Just East and Deliveroo. Whilst the employment practices of these firms are often unethical, they have paved the way for the creation of digital cooperatives such as CoopCycle able to offer the same service whilst delivering Living Wage jobs[27]. These cooperative platforms offer an exciting model for small, inclusively owned restaurants and cafes producing nutritious, locally sourced meals that can be delivered to local residents.

Recommendations

3. **The principles of community wealth building should be applied to the provision of food.** Anchor institutions can be supported to develop procurement policies that prioritise local firms with inclusive ownership models and environmentally sustainable business practices.

4. **The potential for urban growing in the UK should be explored and invested in.** Funds should be made available for people working to set up growing projects in their localities. Local authorities should work with residents and businesses to put idle public land to use.

Shelter

Without a safe and secure home, it is impossible to participate fully in society. The housing crisis in the UK is well documented and its consequences are highly gendered with women being less able to afford to both buy and rent housing leading to women making up 60% of housing benefit claimants and 67% of statutory homeless people[28].

In addition, both the construction of houses and energy use within existing housing stock is a huge contributor to carbon emissions. Our houses are often built and designed in a way that prioritises a nuclear family model, facilitating the marginalisation of other family structures, and privatising and making invisible domestic labour[29]. The current narrative of placing the responsibility of carbon reductions and sustainable practices on the individual belies the near impossibility of that as a realistic solution, given the way our housing and waste systems are set up[30]. Each home containing individual washing machines, dishwashers, fridges and cars is resource intensive and wasteful as cars stand idle, washing machines unused, fridges half full. The design of our houses and communities need to change to enable significant reductions in energy and domestic consumption. Cohousing is a model in which kitchen and laundry

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26   The Kindling Trust, https://kindling.org.uk/index.php/Us
27   Jones, P, et al. (2021) Delivering Rights: Alternatives in the online food economy. Autonomy
28   Reis, S. (2019). A home of her own. Women's Budget Group
29   Morrow, O., and Parker, B. (2020) Care, commoning and collectivity: from grand domestic revolution to urban transformation.
30   Cohen, M. and MacGregor, S. (2020) Towards a Feminist Green New Deal

facilities are shared whilst still maintaining private living spaces for individual families[31]. The ecological argument for this is clear but also, from a feminist perspective, communal child caring facilities and spaces in which children can play enable a more sustainable distribution of caring labour.

About 80% of the houses that we will inhabit in 2050 have already been built[32] so bringing these to acceptable energy efficiency standards is a priority. The current retrofit system places the onus on individual property owners to take advantage of schemes available. However, these schemes are patchy and unreliable. Over the past few years there have been countless short-lived government and private schemes, exemplified by the Green Homes Grant[33], leading to an industry decimated by start/stop policy[34].

The responsibility of retrofitting existing stock needs to be recognised as a fundamental need and be shifted from the individuals to the state. Housing associations and social homes are already demonstrating how this can be done by leveraging their bulk buying power and rolling this out across their housing stock[35]. This could be scaled up by putting the responsibility of retrofitting all houses into the hands of well-resourced local governments. Universal, enforceable standards of energy efficiency above and beyond the current EPC standards must be developed for existing housing, not just new builds. Retrofitting a flat in Glasgow will require different political interventions, cultural changes, supply chains and service delivery from that same retrofit in rural Surrey. Place-based consultations which enable the participation of women who carry out the majority of domestic labour in the home, will be required.

Mass retrofitting schemes must also take a 'whole-house' approach rather than focusing on individual components such as airtightness, heat source, insulation, glazing and so on[36]. This will require a huge investment in skills development which would contribute to boosting local, sustainable employment. These new, high skilled jobs must be made accessible to groups traditionally underrepresented in the construction industry[37].

Housing ownership models will also need to change with a large increase in social housing, regulation in the private rental sector to ensure standards and affordability, and an overhauling of the planning system to enable the building of affordable, energy efficient homes. The highly financialised model of homeownership has led to massive house price inflation and lack of access to shelter for vulnerable people and those on medium and low incomes[38]. A transformation of the housing market that breaks the dependency on ever increasing mortgage debt and price inflation could be the introduction of Common Ground Trust, a scheme in which land and housing are separated. The Common Ground Trust is a collectively owned body which is set up to buy land beneath housing and lease it back to its members at an affordable rate. As land counts for around 70% of the cost of a house, brick and mortar houses could also be sold at affordable prices. This would not only ensure the affordability of secure homes but ensure against a sudden collapse in the housing market and the economic destruction it would cause[39].

31   Tummers, L., & MacGregor, S. (2019). Beyond wishful thinking: a FPE perspective on commoning, care, and the promise of co-housing. International Journal of the Commons

32   Institution of Engineering and Technology (2020) Scaling Up Retrofit

33   Marshall, J. (2021) MPs slam 'disastrous' Green Homes Grant failure

34   UK Green Building Council, Retrofit Playbook

35   Palmer, J. et al (2018) What are the Barriers to Retrofit in Social Housing?

36   UK Green Building Council, Retrofit Playbook

37   Gibbons, A. (2021) Rethinking Housing Supply and Design

38   Ryan Collins, J. et al (2017). Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing. Bloomsbury Publishing

39   Land for the Many authors (2019) 4. Stabilising the System: the Common Ground Trust. Land for the Many

Recommendations

5. **Ensuring access to decent, energy efficient housing must be a priority for local and national government.** This will vary depending on the locality and will be a combination of increased social housing, regulation of the private rental sector, introducing Common Ground Trusts, developing new affordable housing and mass retrofit. Environmental and gender-sensitive procurement guidelines and training should be given to professionals and officials as well as public education and consultation.

Social Participation

Social participation is a multi-layered process incorporating the needs of education, information, and communication. Education from early years to retirement must be accessible. Access to information and communication entails internet access and digital inclusion as well as well functioning transport systems. Social participation also requires strong social bonds and community participation and cohesion. This paper will focus on the built environment and ways in which we can redesign neighbourhoods to facilitate the above. The 15-minute city model offers a timely example of how we could organise our cities differently[40].

15-minute cities: The fragmentation of urban space has led to not only the physical division of labour and people but also on environmentally damaging practices of urban sprawl, opaque geographically diverse supply chains and an overreliance on car use. 15-minute cities are urban spaces in which all services and amenities are accessible within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. They are designed around the objective that people should not have to travel long distances to be able to access the things that are essential to a good life or fulfil their economic and social roles.

The Covid-19 crisis has made the case for 15-minute cities even more acute. With no need to rely on cars to access life's essentials walking and cycling routes could be prioritised and transformed with significant health and social benefits (clean air, physical fitness, in-person interactions and so on). Covid-19 has facilitated an increase in home working and the hollowing out of Central Business Districts across the UK and 15-minute cities provide a viable example of how this space could be repurposed[41]. Paris is leading the way on the implementation of this model with cities like Melbourne, Ottawa and Madrid following suit. To redesign local spaces on a model of proximity, Paris has been investing public money in the regeneration and development of public spaces, banning high polluting vehicles, building cycle routes and pedestrianised streets[42]. In the UK, local authorities should be empowered to map areas to assess where there are gaps in service provision and local supply chains. Working with local business, education providers and anchor institutions, responsive and specific job creation schemes could be implemented to create local, green jobs relevant to the local area. These local schemes should concentrate on improving employment practices through pay and conditions, but also through specialised advice and support for marginalised communities

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40   Moreno, C. et al (2020) Introducing the "15-Minute City": Sustainability, Resilience and Place Identity in Future Post-Pandemic Cities
41   Balletto, G. et al (2021) A Methodological Approach on Disused Public Properties in the 15-Minute City Perspective
42   Yeung, P. (2021) How '15-minute cities' will change the way we socialise

such as single mothers, people for whom English is not a first language and the long-term unemployed. The creation of good quality jobs as well as caring facilities close to home could better enable those with caring responsibilities to access rewarding work.

Life-long education and training must play a large part in the transition to a green economy. Investment in education at every point on the journey is essential. Early years support in the form of accessible Sure Starts and community centres is vital, particularly for low-income families. High quality schooling within each locality and continued adult learning through in-work training as well as educational institutions will be needed to equip the working population with the skills they need to prevent, adapt to, and mitigate against, the ecological crisis we face. Access to high quality education must not be the postcode lottery it is today[43]. The state has an important role in the collection and redistribution of funds to overcome the geographical inequalities faced in education.

The Covid-19 crisis has accelerated the move online with digital access becoming increasingly necessary, not only for work but also for access to other services including GP practices, social security services, mental health services and more. There are clear benefits to the move online including reductions in carbon emissions and flexibility for those with caring responsibilities. However, increasingly, those who do not have access to adequate internet and digital devices are shut out from essential services. In the UK, the usual market-led approach to the provision of digital services has seen unequal access to digital infrastructure[44]. Digital access must be reconceptualised as an essential utility rather than a commodity for sale[45] and rolled out on a universal basis. There must be guaranteed access to wireless networks in which governments grant providers access to public airspace in exchange for universal coverage[46].

Current privatised public transport systems are not fit for the end users who are predominantly women and those on low incomes. Care givers who are required to make multiple short journeys a day to doctor's surgeries, food shops, schools and so on need to be able to do so in a convenient and affordable way. Whilst recognising the need for a proximity model for the provision of necessary services, high-quality, sustainably powered public transport, collectively-owned and co-designed with end users is also essential[47].

Recommendations

6. **A model of proximity should be adopted for essential services where possible and practicable.** Any redesign of local services in the UK will always be a retrofit of the existing system. Planners should work with residents to ensure essential services are within close proximity wherever possible.

7. **Local authorities should work with residents and employers to identify and deliver on the educational needs of their communities.**

8. **Digital access should be thought of as an essential utility and provided universally.** WiFi should be made accessible to all and free at the point of use.

43   Thompson, I. and Ivinson, G. (2020) Child poverty, education and the postcode lottery
44   Hanna, T. M. et al (2020) Democratic Digital Infrastructure
45   Coote, A. and Percy, A. (2020) The Case for Universal Basic Services. Wiley.
46   Ibid
47   Lam, T. (2021) Towards Gender Inclusive and Sustainable Transport Systems

Health

Our physical and social structures have a profound effect on our ability to achieve good physical and mental health. For the millions of people living in towns and cities, these environments can cause a host of poor health outcomes, particularly for people on low-incomes and other marginalised groups. Having access to urban green spaces has many positive impacts on the health and wellbeing such as stress reduction, stronger immune and cardiovascular systems, reduced exposure to air pollution leading to healthier respiratory systems, improved fitness levels and improved pregnancy outcomes[48]. Urban green spaces are also important on environmental grounds. They help regulate temperatures preventing urban heatwaves, encourage biodiversity, are stores of carbon thus supporting the mitigation of climate change, and their porous earth is a store of rainwater, essential for the prevention of flooding[49]. Barcelona provides us with a blueprint for how we can transform our cities around the idea of increasing green space. Due to the success of their Superilles (superblock) initiative[50], at the end of 2020 the city began a project to create "a new type of public space that truly prioritises people and integrates natural processes, green areas and biodiversity, optimising resources, with rational and simple solutions"[51]. These 'green axes' are in process of being designed and put through public consultation. Their implementation will ensure that no resident is more than 200m away from a green space[52].

Air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK leading to tens of thousands of deaths a year and many more health issues including respiratory problems and cancer[53]. It has a particularly damaging impact on low-income and ethnically minoritised people[54]. Transitioning to clean energy provision and agricultural practices as well as the introduction of 15-minute cities and increasing green spaces in urban environments will all contribute to addressing air pollution.

The provision of adequate care at every point within the lifecycle is integral to good physical and mental health. It is important to draw attention to the UK model of care provision which is principally delivered by large private firms working to maximise profit[55]. The problems of running care services on a for-profit model have been extensively documented by feminist economists and others for decades. The scale of problem of reimagining care and a dedication to market driven models has led to repeated governments failing to act[56] as the industry comes under increasing pressure from an aging population and the ongoing impacts of Covid-19. This has led to poor care outcomes for many service users[57] and dire working conditions for care workers who are disproportionately female and from minority ethnic backgrounds[58]. The poor pay and quality of work has led to huge staff shortages in both public and private care providers[59].

48   WHO (2016) Urban green spaces and health
49   LEAF (2015) A Brief Guide to the Benefits of Green Space
50   An innovative scheme to reduce traffic by only permitting it around the perimeter of nine block areas and prioritising cyclists and pedestrians within the block.
51   Giovannini, S. (2021). Reimagining public space with people at the centre
52   BBC (2020) Barcelona plans major increase in 'green' zones
53   Public Health England (2018) Health Matters: air pollution
54   Wong, S. (2015) Ethnic minorities and deprived communities hardest hit by air pollution
55   Lloyd Goodwin, T. et al (2020) A progressive approach to adult social care
56   Including the indefinite postponement of the long awaited Green Paper on Social Care. See https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8002/
57   Hyde, P. (2016). Why we need social innovation in home care for older people
58   Stanley, I. et al (2021). Caring for the Earth, Caring for Each Other
59   Gibson, H. (2021) Care staff shortages expected to reach 100,000 in 2021

Care must form a central part of any Feminist Green New Deal. These relatively low-carbon, labour intensive industries could provide stable, rewarding and environmentally sustainable jobs whilst at the same time increasing the physical and mental wellbeing of all citizens. Care (meeting people's needs) should replace the profit motive as the central focus and driving force of our economies. Local communities should be empowered and supported to provide care in a way that is most useful for their particular geographies and demographics. The ownership models of care providers can be shifted away from profit maximising firms and towards a more person-centred approach[60]. Pay and conditions in the caring industries must be improved dramatically both to increase the quality of life for carers, recipients of care, and to attract more people (particularly men) into the profession.

Finally, collectively provided healthcare free at the point of use is cheaper, greener, more efficient and fairer than private provision. It is a model in line with what is necessary in a low-carbon equal future. This is currently under significant threat in the UK and ongoing privatisation of the NHS must be halted and reversed. Action to green the NHS must also be adequately resourced and scaled up.

Recommendations

9. **Green public spaces must be invested in and expanded.**

10. **Large extractivist care providers should be replaced by a thriving ecosystem of small businesses, care-cooperatives, local authority providers and community enterprises.**

11. **Privatisation of the NHS must be reversed along with efforts to make NHS operations greener.**

Physical Security

Guaranteeing physical security requires interventions at many different points. Organising built environments to ensure the safety of all people is as much a political and social endeavour as it is a physical one. Spaces have multiple uses for different people, at different points in the day, at different moments in time. Designing spaces to ensure physical security requires a focus upon the everyday, how people use a space at different times and interact with others within that space[61].

Col·lectiu Punt 6 (Collective Point 6) provide an inspiring example of how we can achieve gender-transformative urban planning ensuring usable and safe built environments for women[62]. Using an intersectional understanding of the way in which gender interacts with other characteristics such as race, class, sexuality, age and so on, they have created a variety of participatory methods for working with women to embed their experiences and make women active agents of the planning processes[63]. They empower marginalised and excluded groups to exercise their own power through educational workshops introducing women to feminist methods of planning. They then work with these women to diagnose their existing

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60   Stanley, I. et al (2021). Caring for the Earth, Caring for Each Other

61   Beebeejaun, Y. (2016) Gender urban space and the right to everyday life. Journal of Urban Affairs

62   Gutiérrez Valdivia, B. and Ortiz Escalante, S. (2015) Planning from below: using feminist participatory methods to increase women's participation in urban planning

63   Ibid

environment and how it shapes their everyday experiences through community mapping and exploratory walks in which women identify the physical and social problems present in their neighbourhoods. The consultations are expanded to include local businesses and neighbours to broaden their understanding of how spaces are used. Working with the women, they then propose transformations for the local area that can meet the safety and other social requirements of its inhabitants.

This model should be adapted by local planning authorities and could be expanded to include other marginalised communities to ensure a people-centred approach to neighbourhood design.

Recommendations

12. **Safe neighbourhoods must be co-created with the people who live in them through gender-transformative planning models.**

Income Security

Low incomes are fundamental way in which systems of oppression such as sexism and racism manifest in people's material conditions. A Feminist Green New Deal will ensure access to an adequate and reliable income for all to prevent financial abuse, future-proof the economy, and enable everyone to make meaningful choices about how to live their lives. Income security can come in the form of decent, well-paid work in sustainable industries, or in the form of cash payments for those unable to work to ensure that nobody falls below the level of income necessary to meet everyday needs[64]. Adequate, collectively provided services outlined in the sections above also serve as a social wage and further assurance that each person in society has their fundamental needs met.

Local communities, towns, villages and cities must ensure access to meaningful employment and training opportunities through proximity or reliable public transport links. Taking a Community Wealth Building approach, local authorities can also work with anchor institutions to map supply chains, recognising where there are opportunities to develop local suppliers and boost employment. As Preston has done[65], they can support local people to set up cooperatives as well as support existing businesses to transition to more inclusive forms of ownership that feed wealth back into the local area. An ecosystem of local green grocers, butchers, hardware stores, etc employs more people than a large superstore run on a model of reduced employment costs through wage repression and a skeleton staff[66]. Inclusive ownership models also give employees and end users a stake in their local economy enabling them to contribute to the shape of their local communities through routes other than direct democratic engagement.

The Camden Job Hub[67] is a local programme that provides employment information, support and specialist advice for people with mental health conditions and physical disabilities to help all local residents looking for work to find it. Programmes like this combined with local skills programmes could ensure access to rewarding work to all members of society.

64   NEF (2021) We Can Win a Decent Standard of Living for Everyone
65   Brown, M. and Jones, R., (2021) Paint Your Town Red: How Preston Took Back Control and Your Town Can Too. Watkins Media.
66   Monbiot, G. (2000) Captive state: The corporate takeover of Britain. Macmillan.
67   https://www.camden.gov.uk/employment-support

Recommendations

13. **The government should implement an income floor.** As advocated by NEF[68], an income floor at a sufficient level would ensure that everyone can access life's essentials. This could come in the form of secure employment for most, and as cash benefits for those who cannot access secure, well-paid work.

14. **Local governments should work with large anchor institutions to identify gaps in local supply chains.** They should then support the development of local cooperatives and inclusive businesses to fill these gaps through funding, training and ongoing advice. Creation of jobs and employment opportunities must be done in line with feminist substantive equality goals.

Role of National Government

This paper has focussed predominantly on what can be done at a local scale[69]. However, the role of national government cannot be ignored. The local is fertile ground for experimenting with alternatives but the end goal must be the transformation of the status quo into the more inclusive and sustainable practices developed and honed locally. This requires national and international transformation.

Anna Coote and Andrew Percy[70] outline four ways in which a supportive state can facilitate its people and regions to ensure the universal provision of essential services. Firstly, the state must guarantee equitable access to central resources, including funds, for all nations, regions and localities. It must also set and enforce standards to ensure ethical and sustainable practices are enforced across regions to prevent potentially damaging projects that may have public support. For a Feminist Green New Deal this means embedding feminist substantive equality goals throughout. The state's job in collecting and redistributing funds is also crucial for balancing geographical inequalities and must be done in line with principles of inclusion and fairness. And finally, the state can serve to communicate and coordinate activities and initiatives across different regions to enable localities to collaborate and scale up successful innovations. Beyond these functions, control of local areas should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level.

Recommendations

15. **The state should ensure equal access to central resources for local government, take an active role in creating and enforcing ethical and environmental standards, collecting and redistribute funding in line with principles of inclusion and fairness, and communicate and coordinate activities across different regions**.

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68   NEF (2021) We Can Win a Decent Standard of Living for Everyone
69   Roth, L. and Shea Baird, K. (2017) Municipalism and the Feminisation of Politics
70   Coote, A. and Percy, A. (2020) The Case for Universal Basic Services. Wiley.

Conclusion

This paper has laid out evidence and recommendations for how a Feminist Green New Deal can transform our physical, political and economic systems to revitalise communities. Crucial to our recommendations is the importance of locally led decarbonisation plans that support the flourishing of women and marginalised groups, enabling everyone within a community to live fulfilling lives sustainably.

The Feminist Green New Deal is bringing a gendered and intersectional approach/ perspective to the Green economy/Green Recovery - ensuring that the voices of women, people of colour and other marginalised groups are heard during environmental and political debates.

Through a programme of nationwide grassroots workshops and policy roundtables a Feminist Green New Deal Manifesto will be created and launched in 2022.

This Project is a collaboration between Wen (Women's Environmental Network) and the Women's Budget Group (WBG).

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FEMINIST GREEN NEW DEAL

POWERED BY

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