



Ownership in the new economy

This booklet asks how we understand ownership of the earth's natural resources in a sustainable and equitable way.

What has happened to our land, oceans and atmosphere in the existing economy? How can we engage with the earth's resources fairly and with concern for our history and our future? How can we shift economic structures to support fairness and sustainability? And what steps do we need to take to get there?

Ownership in the new economy is the sixth booklet in QPSW's new economy series. It builds on the ideas put forward in our *Principles for a new economy* document (<https://tinyurl.com/mf9aln9>) and aims to help Quakers and others explore alternatives to our current economic system.

This booklet is not for passive consumption! Full of questions to aid reflection and discussion, it asks you to imagine what a different type of economic system could look like. We hope you will consider and explore these questions, on your own, in groups or with your meeting. We'd love to hear what you think, and invite you to share your feedback, questions and reflections with us at neueconomy@quaker.org.uk or by posting on our Loomio group at www.loomio.org/g/bWLk4ONE/new-economy.



Members of the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil. Credit: Agência Brasil

Introduction

Humans have been determining use of the earth's resources for millennia. A historical view reveals how we have used power to claim rights over land, sea and air. Looking to the future, we must protect our planet's capacity to sustain the life of all beings, recognising that the health of this natural system has a global impact. Ownership must therefore be conceived as both rights over and responsibility for the earth's resources.

To explore ownership in a way that facilitates the principles of a new economy, we need to consider two things: who has benefitted historically from our use of natural resources and how we secure the rights of future generations in the decisions we make today. Sustainability and equity must play a central role in any future framework for ownership.

Today, climate change, overfishing and land grabbing are all evidence of



*A farming scene from the burial chamber of Sennedjem, c1200 BC.
Credit: The Yorck Project*

the failure of our economic system, one that is driven by markets and competition. The instruments of today's economy are influenced by a set of principles that are in conflict with a rights and responsibility approach to the earth's natural resources. To move towards an understanding of a different model of ownership, we must first agree on what sustainable resource use looks like and how it can be equitably distributed.

Sustainability

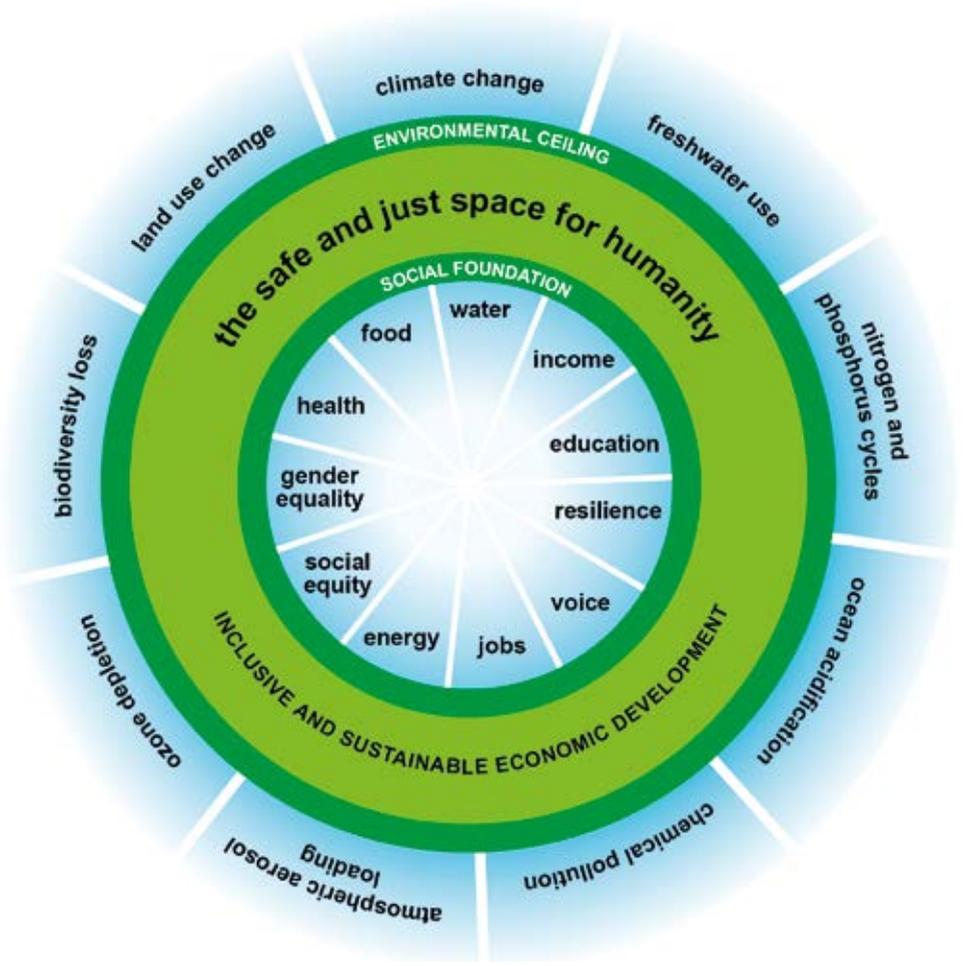
Principle 2 of our *Principles for a new economy* document states that “we do not over-consume the earth's resources”. This comes from minute 36 of Yearly Meeting Gathering 2011: “We have long been aware that our behaviour impoverishes the earth and that it is our responsibility both to conserve the earth's resources and to share them more equitably” (see <https://tinyurl.com/yajzs7yc> for the full minute).

Published in 1987, the Brundtland Report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development urged the international community to pursue sustainable development. It defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.¹ Becoming sustainable means understanding the limits of resource use and finding ways to operate within these limits.

So what level of human activity and consumption is sustainable? A group of scientists based in Stockholm has recently named a number of physical and biological limits to different aspects of our planetary system. They've called these limits "planetary boundaries" (see figure below). The boundaries are based on their understanding of environmental thresholds, or tipping points. Together they represent a

"safe operating space for humanity". Two particular concerns that are likely to have a negative impact now and in the future are climate change and ecosystem deterioration.

These boundaries imply material and physical limits to resource use. Take climate change, for example: current scientific research estimates that, globally, a third of oil reserves, half of gas reserves and over 80 per cent of current coal reserves should



remain untapped from 2010 to 2050 in order to limit global temperature rises to 2°C.²

Discussions about living within our means also raise questions about making a judgement on the value of material goods we use on a day-to-day basis, particularly in countries that have a rising middle-income population. One way to approach this is to combine the “planetary boundaries” idea with an understanding of our needs for food, shelter, human rights, and so on. This combination creates the ‘doughnut’, an area of possibility where the global economy is kept within the sustainability boundaries while at the same time providing for everyone’s basic needs.³

Sustainable resource use must not be mistakenly placed into opposition with prosperity. It’s worth noting that violating planetary boundaries risks our social foundation:

“Transgressing a boundary increases the risk that human activities could inadvertently drive the Earth System into a much less hospitable state, damaging efforts to reduce poverty and leading to a deterioration of human wellbeing in many parts of the world, including wealthy countries.”

Professor Will Steffen, in *Science* (January 2015).

When it comes to our economic system, there are different views

What drives our consumption choices? Think about your own and those of people around you.

Do you find the ‘doughnut’ a helpful way to think about resource use?

on the implications of planetary boundaries. These range from the view that growth can continue to be driven by resource extraction and solve problems as it goes along to the view that growth has to stop right away and that we need a new way of engaging with the earth’s resources. As discussed in booklet 1 of this series, economic growth is so closely linked to growth in ecological impact that it looks unlikely we will ‘de-couple’ the two fast enough to avoid crossing key planetary boundaries if our economy continues to grow.

“All (including future beings) have an equal right to access and make use of global commons such as land, soil, water, air, and the biosphere’s capacity to process greenhouse gases, within the limits of what is sustainable.”

Principle 3 of Principles for a new economy

Principles for a new economy outlines what a new economy, compatible with Quaker values, might look like. Principle 2 envisages a world where: “Our responsibility for the benefit of future generations and

for all life on earth takes precedence over economic growth. In particular, we live low-carbon lives individually and collectively, having agreed to leave fossil fuels in the ground.”

Fairness and equity

If the planetary boundaries concept implies a global ‘ceiling’ for extraction in order to reduce environmental impact, then what framework could ensure natural resources are shared fairly between the world’s countries or people?

Three dimensions play an important role in the development of such a framework.

Historical responsibility

It is often mistakenly understood that ‘developed’ countries gained from the earth’s resources through intelligence and moral superiority. However, power over people and the planet was a definitive strategy led by countries including west European colonisers and settler colonisers in the Americas, Canada and Australia.⁴ The 1600s marked the course for the European empire to expand and control the vast majority of the earth’s resources for their benefit. This dynamic presents itself today through accepting the terminology of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries. Without recognising the role colonising nations played in resource extraction, we are unable to fully acknowledge where historic responsibility is held. Any equitable

framework would recognise the loss of natural wealth from formally colonised countries and would move from a mindset of ‘development’ towards one of ‘reparation’.

Present-day responsibility

Traces of colonial activity have afforded ‘Western’ nations with the global political and economic power within today’s economic model. Power over natural resources has led to violent conflict over, for example, oil supplies in the Middle East or water in Syria.⁵ In addition, our trade systems and consumption patterns are designed to benefit nations that have historically gained from power over the earth’s natural resources, in particular those that thrived during the industrial revolution. A new framework would seek to dismantle existing trade rules that prevent nations from having control over their own resources. We must also consider the role of outsourced emissions. For this, we must be sure that a country’s CO² budget incorporates the emissions of products imported into the country. Intellectual property laws must also be revised so that formerly colonised nations can benefit from sustainable technology and practices.

Future generation responsibility

When President Theodore Roosevelt first encountered the Grand Canyon, he declared: “Keep it for your children and your children’s children and all who come after

you.” Although he did not anticipate planetary disaster, Roosevelt recognised that excessive use of resources that had contributed to the nation’s spectacular economic achievements posed problems for future generations. Partnership between generations is essential for equality to exist.⁶ A future generation’s framework has gained international popularity in designing legislation for natural resources. In 2015 the Welsh government passed an Act that recognises the environmental rights of future generations. It is shaping its national legislation to recognise the rights of all those who come after us.

“We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to conserve the environment so that we can bequeath our children a sustainable world that benefits all.”

Wangari Maathai

When it comes to our economic system, there are different views about how to embed historical, present-day and future responsibilities into our policies and structures. For some, there is a conversation to be had about reparations for countries that have suffered environmental degradation at the hands of European colonising nations.⁷ For others, there is a discussion about future-focused apparatus that benefit Global South and formerly colonised countries. These include technology

transfer and trade agreements that rebalance economic power in the geopolitical landscape.

Ownership models

‘Resource’ is a term that can be used to describe materials that are drawn on by individuals and groups to function effectively. The earth’s resources include the open oceans, the atmosphere and certain areas of land. Areas of the earth that enable living beings to function effectively are known as the ‘commons’.⁸

“A commons is an asset over which a community has shared and equal rights. This could, in principle, include land, water, minerals, knowledge, scientific research and software. But at the moment most of these assets have been enclosed: seized by either the state or private interests and treated as any other form of capital. Through this enclosure, we have been deprived of our common wealth.”

George Monbiot

The commons play an extremely important role in the global environment. The atmosphere is a commons because everyone benefits from the air we breathe. Tropical forests, though they exist within national territories and include land under private ownership, provide a service for the whole planet, calming the climate and regulating water supply, and so can also be seen as commons.

Over the centuries the commons have shrunk as a result of the changing motives of our economic and political system. At one time, a large proportion of land in Britain was available to people to graze animals, collect wood and forage for food. After more than two centuries of enclosures involving the privatisation of millions of acres, the amount of common land remaining in 1911 was 1.5 to 2 million acres, roughly five per cent of English territory. By the end of the 20th century, common land comprised three per cent of this territory.⁹

The majority concerns for the environment are rooted in the challenges of who has rights over and responsibility for the global commons. To help us think further about this challenge, we can explore the model of ownership available to manage these resources:

Private ownership

An individual or group of individuals has legal rights and responsibilities over something, such as land. Our current economic model favours privatisation on the assumption that looking after your own property motivates people far more than helping to look after property that is shared with many others. Each owner would then charge when anyone else uses their piece of land, sea, atmosphere or even outer space, based on the markets model. There are limits to how far this principle can be applied, but in some cases this approach appears to work.



Commons land by the Thames. Credit: The Ewan, Flickr

State ownership

A state or governing body has rights and responsibilities over something, such as an ocean territory. In this case, the body would be responsible for managing the sustainability and supply of fish stocks, ocean pollution and access to ocean waterways. In our current economic model, state ownership is seen as the most practical and democratic approach to ownership of the commons, using governance structures such as the United Nations or European Union to develop rules and regulations. In this situation, the domestic government's susceptibility to corporate lobbying and political persuasion determines the priorities for how the commons are maintained.

In large-scale cases, such as the right to emit carbon dioxide into the air, the most realistic approach is probably setting up some form of shared governance – a system for making decisions based on representation of the different groups of people affected. We will discuss these international

Which ownership model do you feel can best deliver equity and sustainability?

What is needed from us, as individuals, to protect the commons in the new economy?

agreements in more depth in relation to environmental commons.

Collective ownership

Many areas of commons have historically been managed successfully without being divided up or organised by government. Indeed, this was the case during the Middle Ages when large areas of forest and agricultural land were accessible to collectives of people. Care for the commons, particularly in 'traditional societies', has often been bound up with a shared view that a particular piece of land is sacred.¹⁰ Analysis carried out by Elinor Ostrom (right) has shown that a set of conditions needs to be in place for this to work – most importantly, trust between the different people using a commons. This implies that it can work where there are communities of people who know one another. Land, for example, could be owned by a local community, rather than by individuals, and leased to those wishing to use it.

In the new economy we must consider those economic arrangements that build community and social capital. We must develop a healthy mix of ownership models based on the context, concern and resource.

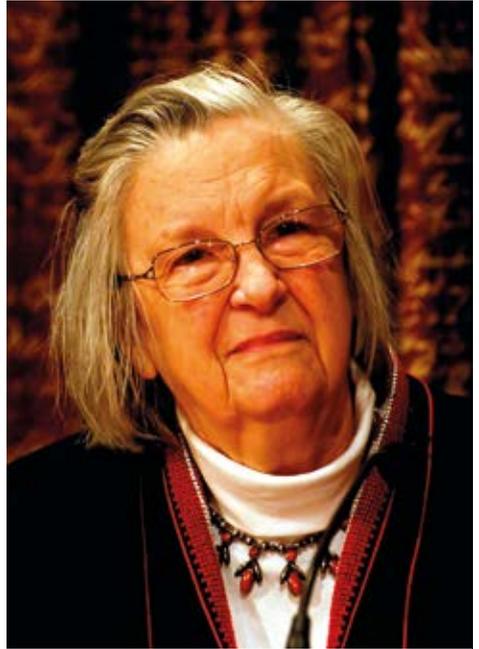


Photo: © Holger Motzkau 2010

This means reaching agreement, as communities, on values and rules, and working in a way that is more connected to the land.

Historical perspectives

In order to transition towards an economy that favours and encourages sustainability and equity, we need to better understand the principles of our existing economic model. In booklet 1 we identified the dominant economic ideology as neo-liberal capitalism. Neo-liberal theory, developed in the 1940s by Friedrich Hayek, established itself from the 1970s onwards as a significant influence on economic practice. As such, we will examine the British economy of today as defined by neo-liberal capitalism.¹¹

Exploitation and extraction have been central to Britain's economic activity throughout history. Understanding this history enables us to better reflect on the characteristics of neo-liberal capitalism as an economic model that dominates our economy today. We can identify the remains of some of these historical practices in the outcomes of our current geopolitical system. We have identified below three important stages in the development of our modern economy.

- We are encouraged to celebrate London as the financial hub of the world, without fully acknowledging its history. The transatlantic slave trade established a set of financial
- instruments on the docks of the river Thames.¹² Here, African people were bought as slaves to be trafficked to the Americas, where they were traded for goods arriving from across the British Empire. Financial instruments such as credit, shares and assets were terms relevant to the enslavement of Africans as part of the global trading system. The exploitation of black people was central to the capitalist economic model for over five centuries.¹³
- By the 16th century Britain had begun to establish its overseas colonies through coercion. This period was referred to as mercantilism, an economic

New problems

As we look to the future, we can see the same basic problem applying to areas of the commons that we didn't have to worry about before.

Climate change is shrinking the polar ice, leaving the Arctic increasingly open for shipping and oil exploration, which in turn will worsen climate change and further reduce ice cover.¹⁴

Developments in technology are making it easier to mine metals from under the ocean floor, with potentially devastating consequences for ocean life, all the way up the food chain. Traditionally, the 'high seas' have been a global commons, outside the scope of national territories. There is a growing need for an effective way to manage and protect the oceans and the ocean floor.¹⁵

Pressures on mineral resources are also leading to forms of exploration and plans for mining beyond this planet. Asteroid mining is being seriously considered, possibly leading to mining on other planets. Currently, the resources of outer space can be used by anyone, but we may question whether this should be allowed to continue.

theory that stressed maximising trade within the empire in order to gain economic control over its rival empires. Merchants and the state worked together to gain political power and economic wealth by dominating trade routes. Following the American Civil War and the development of the Industrial Revolution, Britain began to establish its second Empire, a period referred to as imperialism. Lands were seized and controlled by a governing multinational known as the East India Company; the entry point for the state and church to exercise political power. A colonial mindset has been central to the economic model for over four centuries as land is poached internationally for the benefit of the British state.

- At the turn of the 19th century the discovery of oil saw economic activity boom. The extraction of fossil fuels has since been inextricably linked to economic growth. The drive to extract ever more oil has shaped our politics on a national and international level. Conflict, trade and technological innovation have all been shaped by our dependence on oil and our inability to wean ourselves off it. Fossil fuel extraction and other forms of ecological destruction have been central to our economic model for over a century.

“The greatest danger we face, climate change, is no accident. It’s what happens when everything goes the way it’s supposed to go. It’s not a function of a bad technology; it’s a function of a bad business model: of the fact that Exxon Mobile and BP and Peabody Coal are allowed to use the atmosphere, free of charge, as an open sewer, for the inevitable waste from their products.”

Bill McKibben, *Eaarth*, 2010

Shifting the ownership model

Our current economy rewards private ownership through profit and growth. So how do we begin to build an economy that allows Quaker testimony to flourish through sustainability and fairness? It is important for us to utilise all existing policy mechanisms to redistribute power over the commons towards a relevant mixture of ownership



Shah Alam II, Mughal Emperor of India, reviewing the East India Company’s troops, 1781 (by John Richard, 1894).

models. By breaking down the dominance of private ownership, we can begin to address the loss of accountability that has come from years of privatisation and market-driven mechanisms. At the same time, we must remain aware of the historical power structures we are trying to break down in order to rebuild a system that excludes all forms of exploitation and extraction.

Compared to state and private ownership, collective ownership is the least well supported in today's economy. Historically, though, it has been shown to offer equality of access to natural resources as well as sustainable practices that respect the needs and rights of future generations. We will therefore explore the options currently available to us to regain collective ownership of the commons without neglecting the role of public and private ownership.

Land reform movement in Scotland

Land ownership in Scotland has been central to the politics of the country from the days of feudalism, and events like the (Highland) Clearances in the 18th and 19th centuries still inform the politics of many. Presently, half the country's land is privately owned by just 423 people. A Quaker, Alastair McIntosh, has been an important leader in the land reform movement and has documented the land struggle in his book *Soil and soul: people versus*

corporate power. Campaigners have focused on the administrative, fiscal and legal framework that governs land in Scotland, including how it is taxed, inherited, owned, occupied, and used.

A report published by the Land Reform Review Group (set up by the Scottish government) set out 62 recommendations that would move the country towards a fairer and more accessible land ownership model. These policy recommendations used a mixture of tax reforms and punitive measures to distribute access to land across the country more fairly. The recommendations were based on the principle that common

Discussion points

Is a focus on taxation policies a good approach for shifting ownership models?

How can land reforms ensure we move towards collective rather than public ownership?

Resource

A new initiative to investigate land ownership in England began earlier this year. See map. whoownsengland.org.

You can read the inspiring story behind the Isle of Eigg in Eigg: the story of an island. See www.birlinn.co.uk/Eigg-The-Story-of-an-Island.html.

ownership of land in Scotland should be honoured but is limited by the existing legal and administrative framework on offer.¹⁶

In 2016 the Scottish parliament voted through a series of these recommendations after more than 100 amendments were made to the bill. There is hope that those that were passed will open up arrangements for land ownership. These include:

- the creation of a 'community right to buy for sustainable development'
- the identification of land ownership in order to create a Land Register of Scotland.

However, a series of recommendations widely seen as essential were not included:

- banning offshore, tax-haven ownership of land
- setting an absolute limit on the amount of land anyone can own
- removing business rate exemptions for sporting estates
- allowing councils to force the sale of land-banked urban sites
- replacing council tax with a land value tax (LVT).

There remains a lot of energy behind the Scottish land reform movement, largely because of political leadership offering a space



The harbour at Ancón, Peru. Pelicans gather hopefully as the fish catch is gutted
Credit: Haroldarmitage, Flickr

for engagement in big ideas. This shift in mindset is often referred to as the 'Overton window', the window of discourse that suggests what is politically feasible. The land reform movement has shaped the political discourse and seized the opportunity that has opened up. While the land reform movement in Scotland may not have achieved everything it had wished for this time around, it is that much closer to making big changes in the near future.

Cooperative oceans in Latin America

Over the past few decades, Latin American nations have been grappling with how to support the economic development of fishers, one of the most vulnerable communities. Over time, ever more responsibility has been assigned to governments to manage fisheries. This task has proven a challenge as it is difficult to establish secure, exclusive and transferable property rights of the surrounding oceans. Demand for seafood grew in the early 1990s, which meant more commercial trawlers. This made small-scale multi-species fishing practices less economically viable.

After decades of decline, the fishing community in Ancón, Peru, took control by organising alongside the Nature Conservancy.¹⁷ They developed a set of rules that limits any form of fishing that would

Discussion points

What role did the government and NGOs play in this scenario to support the fishers?

Other than livelihoods, what dynamics must we be aware of when proposing sustainable practices?

prevent the ocean from no longer being a commons. The number of fish began to recover and harvest levels have gradually increased, as has the size of the catch. Through local knowledge and a commitment to the needs of fishers and fish stocks, the Conservancy began to create measures to support sustainability and equity in local fishing practices.

The demand for locally sourced, good quality fish meant that fishers were in a stronger position to negotiate with high-end restaurants. To manage this demand, they developed a conservation strategy to ensure their sustainable practices served future generations. For example, to be part of the collective, fishers would take shifts to monitor prohibited areas, imposing monetary sanctions on anyone caught fishing there.

These solutions cannot come from government alone, but need to be developed alongside those whose livelihoods are most at risk from

decline. In the new economy we need to design governance models that consider equity alongside sustainability. To do this, we must trust communities engaged in traditional economies to build sustainability into their practice.

Contraction and convergence for the climate

A more challenging dynamic to explore is protecting the climate. Due to the complexities of historical responsibility in emissions and the shared impact of pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, it has taken 20 years for international governments to agree on an action plan.¹⁸

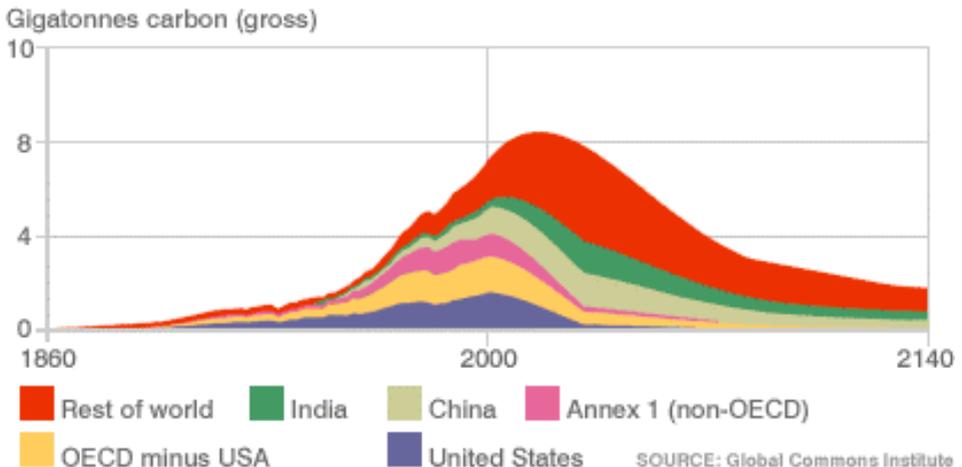
It is very hard to imagine that a neat allocation for carbon could have been agreed internationally, or can even be achieved in the near

Discussion points

How do you think inequality within countries should be factored into this framework?

What other international mechanisms are needed to ensure the Global South is able to meet its poverty reduction goals?

future. The idea of ‘contraction and convergence’ has been devised to address this problem. It refers to carbon emissions, but it could apply to other forms of ecological impact too. The impact of consumption in European and settler colonial nations is way above the levels in formerly colonised and Global South countries. This historical responsibility means we need to do our fair share to avoid dangerous climate change.



The idea is that total emissions must fall (contraction), with the greatest reductions made by countries currently benefitting from the highest emissions and no reduction by countries with the lowest emissions. ‘Convergence’ refers to the gradual evening out of all countries to the same level of emissions per person over a certain timescale.¹⁹

The concept of contraction and convergence is of course controversial, suggesting that each individual has the right to emit the same percentage of carbon within sustainability limits. Whether it is viable or not, it offers a framework to consider how we might grapple with the issues of past, present and future responsibility when designing national carbon reduction plans. The UK’s Special Representative for Climate Change reflected on the contraction aspect of this framework during a debriefing at the International Energy Agency in 2016. The graph below demonstrates the contraction of carbon emissions over time of the various country groupings under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Institutional development

The UN was born out of the devastation of World War II, when two concerns dominated the international stage. One was rebuilding the world economy, a task given to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and GATT (now the World Trade

Organization) – the so-called ‘Bretton Woods Institutions’. The second concern – that of maintaining peace – fell to the United Nations.

The UN is the nearest the world has ever come to a global-scale form of government. It has various weaknesses: it is slow-moving and bureaucratic because of pressure to take every government’s concerns on board; powerful nations dominate the agenda and can stifle issues, even when there is majority support; the Bretton Woods Institutions each limit the scope of the UN when it comes to the world economy; it was established at a time when global environmental issues were nowhere near as important as they are now, and it has never really adapted to these growing concerns. Nevertheless, the most important

Discussion points

Can you think of any non-Quaker communities that exist/existed with a strong relationship to the earth? What were their practices for sustainability and equity? What can we learn from them today?

Do you see any political opportunities to help build an economy based on Quaker principles?

How might we capitalise on these opportunities?

global environmental agreements have been agreed under the UN's auspices.

Opportunities within the UN to support global cooperation on the commons:

- The UN set up 'trusteeship' arrangements after World War II to enable it to administer territories that were not self-governing (such as New Guinea) or had been German colonies. The last such territory became independent in 1994. However, it might be possible to use the same arrangements to govern the oceans and atmosphere – to run them as 'UN global commons'.²⁰
- The UN could be reformed, perhaps to give the Security Council the responsibility to respond to the global threat to security being created by climate change. One of the current anomalies is that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization all operate outside the UN. They could be brought inside, which would mean a shift in the direction of equalising power over the world economy. This would also distance them from the dominance of the USA, which holds far more power in the Bretton Woods Institutions than it does in the UN.

Taking action

The world today is clearly a long way from practising fairness and sustainability in the commons. Unless we believe that an incredible amount of change can be achieved in one single leap, we need to think about policies that would move us in the right direction. This might mean using the functions of neo-liberal capitalism to get us there. Our challenge is to identify which practices put us on the path towards a new economy and which practices enable the principles of a new economy at its fullest. By developing alternative models of ownership, we may begin to envisage new ways of sharing the earth's resources in the long term. We can also begin shifting power away from institutions that embody the current economic ideology and towards one that is designed and practised by our community.

The most exciting ideas in this area are rooted in faith practices or have other strong spiritual connections to the environment. We can learn a lot from indigenous populations and historical communities when it comes to reshaping our relationship with the commons.

Next steps

The good news is that there are many ways in which we can take action to support communities most affected by our existing economy. By building alternatives, we begin to



Protesters campaigning against the Kinder Morgan oil pipeline on Burnaby Mountain, British Columbia. Credit: Mark Klotz, Flickr

shift power towards an ownership model we would want to see in the future. Below are a few ideas for you to explore as a group.

Community land trusts

A form of community land ownership that offers access to agricultural land for present and future generations. The purpose of holding land in a trust is to ensure that it is removed from the speculative market and dedicated for sustainable communal endeavours (see www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk).

Food co-operatives

Not-for-profit food outlets that offers good food at affordable prices to people within a community (see www.sustainweb.org/foodcoops).

Community energy schemes

Owned by the state or by collectives, these energy companies deliver clean, affordable energy to their members. Examples include www.switchedonlondon.org.uk

and www.bristolenergy.coop.

Co-housing

A co-operative living arrangement in which residents own property together and share in decision-making and many aspects of daily life. Unlike a commune, residents have private space, usually including their own kitchen.

Trespass action

In the spirit of the mass trespass of Kinder Scout in the Peak District in 1932, one way of exposing land enclosures is to organise an action on privatised land.

Boycotts

Active and public boycotts serve to interrupt the financing of extractive industries. They can take many forms, from divestment to more direct and riskier campaigns such as sit-ins at a bank that invests in fossil fuels. We can take a lot of inspiration from Earth Quaker Action Team in the US (see www.eqat.org).

Conclusion

Responding to the task of sharing the earth requires us to think in new ways. We hope that the concept of the planetary boundaries, responsibility and ownership models will help us to think through possibilities. Our imaginations must stretch beyond national borders and what we understand of our existing model. At the same time, we must interrogate our history in order to scan the present place with a clear eye, alert to the possibilities for change. We may pray for the planet, but with prayers that act as “a promise that I will do my best, even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile” (*Quaker faith & practice* 2.27). Similarly, we must practise hope – hope that sustains our action, rather than excusing it.

“Anything could happen, and whether we act or not has everything to do with it. Though there is no lottery ticket for the lazy and the detached, for the engaged there is a tremendous gamble for the highest stakes right now. I say this to you not because I haven’t noticed [...] that our civilization is close to destroying the very nature on which we depend – the oceans, the atmosphere, the uncounted species of plant and insect and bird. I say it because I have noticed: wars will break out, the planet will heat up, species will die out, but how many, how hot, and what survives depends on whether we act. The future is dark, with a darkness as much of the womb as of the grave.”

Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the dark*



A still from *Isabelle's Garden*, the true story of a girl who combats a community's poverty and food insecurity through the age old practice of gardening.

Useful organisations and further information

Oxfam.org

Global Justice Now
www.globaljustice.org.uk

People & Planet
www.peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free

350.org

Share Action
www.shareaction.org

Planetary Boundaries Initiative
(www.planetaryboundariesinitiative.org)

Greenpeace

Trade Justice Movement
www.tjm.org.uk

United Nations Association
www.una.org.uk

Bretton Woods Project
www.brettonwoodsproject.org

Quaker United Nations Office
www.quono.org

Green House think tank
www.greenhousethinktank.org

[www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/
land-reform](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/land-reform)

[www.alastairmcintosh.com/
soilandsoul.htm](http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/soilandsoul.htm)

www.commonsnetwork.eu

[www.elinorstromaward.org/
commons-in-action](http://www.elinorstromaward.org/commons-in-action)

www.cooperationjackson.org

Case study

One of the most successful examples of new economy practices is being done by a community organisation known as Cooperation Jackson, based in Mississippi. It is a project that has been decades in the making, rooted in the struggle for democratic rights, economic justice, self-determination – particularly for African Americans in the Deep South – and dignity for all workers. It stems from the Jackson-Kush Plan, which put forward a bold agenda to create jobs with rights, dignity and justice that generated wealth for the community through sustainable practices, cooperation and sharing.

As a result of intensive community engagement, as well as several adaptations, experiments and trials among black community leaders, Cooperation Jackson was able to identify needs and establish a series of cooperative projects to support the community's goals of sustainability and equity. Below is a series of commitments made by the leadership of Cooperation Jackson to serve its community. Descriptions of these projects are taken from the project's website.²¹

Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

Purchase of vacant lots, abandoned homes and commercial facilities and organising them into a Community Land Trust.

Community Development Programmes

Help develop new low-income housing to sustain working-class communities and affordable commercial facilities to support the development of cooperative enterprises.

Waste and recycling processes

A comprehensive Waste Management and Recycling Cooperative, based on 'zero waste' principles and practices will serve Jackson and the state of Mississippi.

Urban farms

Build a comprehensive urban farming operation that will provide and sustain dozens of living wage jobs over time. Freedom Farms will start on lots acquired by Cooperation Jackson that will be held in the CLT. The objective is to supply Jackson with high quality foods (vegetables, fruits, fish, and poultry) at affordable prices and to create sustainable, living wage jobs.

Construction cooperatives

A construction cooperative that will have the skill and capacity to build homes, commercial buildings, landscaping, infrastructure repair and development work.

Cultural cooperatives

An Arts and Culture Cooperative will promote the cultural gifts of the people of Jackson and expand the arts, entertainment, and hospitality industries in the city. It will be a centre for black history and culture, particularly in the south.

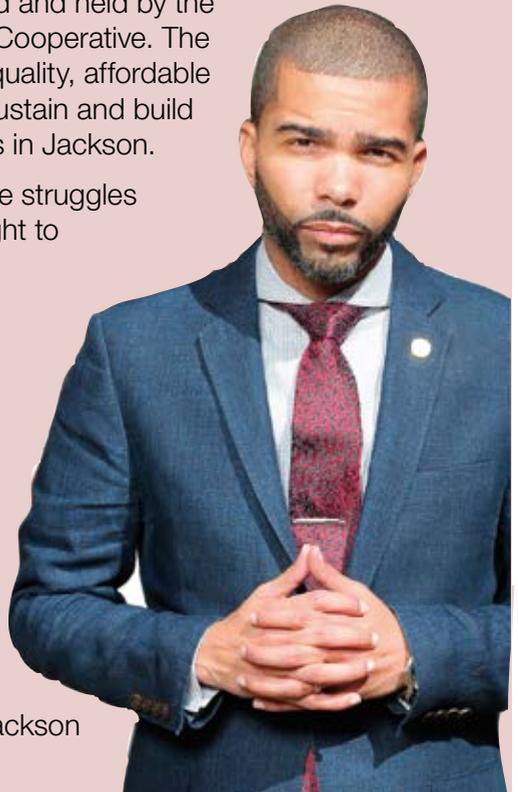
Childcare cooperatives

The objective of the Childcare Cooperative is to provide affordable, quality childcare and pre-school education to Jacksonians. Our multicultural curriculum will involve international languages and intensive nature scout and urban farming training.

Housing cooperatives

Cooperation Jackson will turn a significant portion of the land and properties acquired and held by the CLT into an 'Eco-Village' Housing Cooperative. The Housing Cooperative will provide quality, affordable housing and stable rents to help sustain and build vibrant working-class communities in Jackson.

More importantly, by respecting the struggles of the past, and forefronting the right to self-determination and dignity of members of their community, Cooperation Jackson built trust with some of the most deprived communities of Mississippi. As a result, its most recent strategy to gain political representation in office succeeded with the election of Chokwe Antar Lumumba (right) as mayor. Without question, its decades of struggle laid the path for political representation, bringing them one step closer to making Jackson the most radical city on the planet.



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Principles for a new economy, a summary

1

The purpose of the economy is the enhancement of all life, human and non-human.

2

We do not over-consume the earth's resources.

3

All (including future beings) have an equal right to access and make use of global commons such as land, soil, water, air, and the biosphere's capacity to process greenhouse gases, within the limits of what is sustainable.

4

Everyone needs time and resources to participate in community life.

5

The well-being of people and planet are not sacrificed to preserve profits or reduce national deficits.

6

Since money plays such a key role in the economy, it is created under democratic control, for positive social benefit rather than private profit.

7

A fundamental equality is recognised, not limited by race, gender or social origin.

8

The tax system redistributes from richer to poorer, with richer people paying a greater proportion of their income.

9

Businesses are structured and owned in a variety of ways. Cooperatives and community-owned enterprises form a large part of the economy as well as private and national ownership.

10

A revitalised, participative and more truly representative democracy is key to our peaceful and prosperous coexistence.

The Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) new economy project responds to minutes made by Britain Yearly Meeting between 2011 and 2015. These present a strong critique of our current economic system and commit Friends to working towards building a different type of economic system – “an economic system in which Quaker testimony can flourish”. Throughout these booklets we refer to this as the ‘new economy’.

QPSW believes that while Friends are, for the most part, in unity about what’s wrong with the current system, we are still corporately discerning both what a better economic system might look like and how we might get there. The new economy project exists to support that discernment.

The new economy series is intended to stimulate debate and reflection. The ideas here do not necessarily reflect the policy or positions of Quaker Peace & Social Witness or Britain Yearly Meeting. Find out more at www.quaker.org.uk/neweconomy.

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