

*La communauté*, are hopeful. Mbembe ultimately shows us that it is possible to defend a conception of the Earth as a space held in common between all peoples. Its soil must remain fundamentally ‘inappropriate’ and unable to be captured by relations of power and enmity (BC, p. 165).

Both *Brutalism* and *Community* reorient Mbembe’s thought to contemporary concerns about the environment and digital technology. In all of this, Mbembe reminds us, the African continent stands at the centre of world thought. Africa and African philosophies have much to teach the world about how to navigate climate change, social media, digital technologies, and the boundary between humans and objects.

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doi: [10.1017/S0001972024000962](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972024000962)

Hamza Hamouchene and Katie Sandwell (eds), *Dismantling Green Colonialism: Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region*. London: Pluto Press (pb £22.99 – 978 0 7453 4921 3). 2023, 299 pp.

*Dismantling Green Colonialism: energy and climate justice in the Arab region* is a thought-provoking and timely book. Combining scholarship and activism, the book brings to light unique perspectives on climate change rooted in specific places and a wider global context. The first of its kind to apply ‘just transition’ to the Arabic-speaking world, this book provides a series of empirically informed analyses of ‘just transition’ in the North Africa and West Asia region (MENA). It provides a microscopic image of a multilayered crisis where climate justice is class struggle, while laying out hope for an ecologically and socially just future.

Throughout the book, the term ‘Arab region’ is used neither to denote state-centric or ethnic conceptions of Arabness, nor to extricate the region from its wider socio-economic (capitalist) context. Instead, the term is meticulously used to historicize the region as a ‘zone of capitalist accumulation’ and a space of resistance. More so, the book relies on an expansive definition of ‘working people’ that challenges rigid conceptions of class and takes into consideration different relationships to (non-)work. Further, the authors deploy innovative terms as analytical tools. Manal Shqair coins the term ‘eco-sumud’ (eco-steadfastness) to denote a distinctive relationship between Palestinian people, land and environment – a relationship rooted in collective ecological and anti-colonial survival. Saker El Nour adopts the concept of ‘unequal ecological exchange’ to demonstrate the (historical) tyranny of capitalist expansion and the environmental unevenness structuring the relationship between global North and South.

The introduction to the book explains the importance of just transition as a conceptual framework and argues that just transition has become so popular that states, corporations and international organizations appropriate the term for their own

profit-driven ends. To the authors, the usage of the term in such a manner ‘lacked class analysis and denied the need for radical transformation’. This is a missed opportunity to theorize the co-optation of just transition into a refurbished form of ‘intensified green extractivism’ and to clearly distinguish between just transition as a *liberationist* project inscribed in both a global movement for social justice and various forms of class struggle, and between just transition as a geopolitical category embedded within *institutionalized* settings (whether corporate, state or international institutions) whose basis is not solidarity between peoples against climate change but strategies that uphold the violence of capitalism.

Throughout much of the book, the relationship between state and capitalism is conceptualized in an abstract manner. The conceptualization of the ruling elite (in collusion with foreign transnational capital) as a class that plunders the state to generate profit not only renders them an abstract social force with no agency of their own (and almost separate from the state as such), but also portrays capitalism in the region as an aberration of capitalism in the North rather than as a historically specific relation within which the ruling classes have their own position and role. The book advances innovative visions of what just transition would look like in different spatial contexts. It critically analyses different forms of green extractivism and greenwashing, and the role of global capital in everyday life. The book also highlights the challenges and failures of transitioning to renewable energy, often attributed to technical errors or exclusion of local communities. As such, both the ways in which various forms of capital interact with the state and the historically contingent emergence of different capitals under different political structures in the Arab region need further attention. Additionally, the book would have greatly benefited from highlighting Arab and/or African solidarities around climate justice as a way of thinking through strategies for strengthening those cross-border bonds. This is a critical political task in the North African space, where there is a growing quest towards militarization and geopolitical rivalries seeking to construct imagined communities of people separate from one another, but also in the wider MENA context of ‘eco-normalizing’ states aligning with imperialism and against the liberation of Palestine.

The strength of the book is that it situates the current moment in its historical context and offers a critical analysis of the energy sector in the Arab region, one where race and gender are not incidental but ‘modalit[ies] in which class is lived’, as Stuart Hall famously argued. However, these conversations also prompt further questions: is a just transition possible at all under capitalism? If so, what would it look like? How do we strategize around contradictions of labour in the energy sector? To what extent would it be just for the people bearing the brunt of the cost of climate change, oppressed both via capitalism’s constant quest to expand itself and, in the process, extracting, dispossessing and destroying the environment, and via climate policies that put profit before people? Or could just transition be one element of a broader struggle against capitalism and colonial relations?

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doi: [10.1017/S0001972024000901](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972024000901)