

2019 South African General Elections

Manifesto Analysis

We need a real conversation about addressing the climate crisis and fostering climate justice to be at the centre of this election.

The 2019 South African General Elections Manifesto Analysis proposes a climate change and environmental analysis of the following 2019 election manifestos:
ANC, DA, EFF, UDM, COPE, FF+, IFP, GOOD, Green Party, ACDP, SRWP.

It looks at the extent to which the political parties have serious plans to ensure a comprehensive, rapid and just transition to a low-carbon and sustainable future for South Africa.

This is a non-partisan analysis. The authors do not endorse any of the parties included in this work.

This analysis is based on the scorecard assessment made by the Action 24 project.



Initial considerations

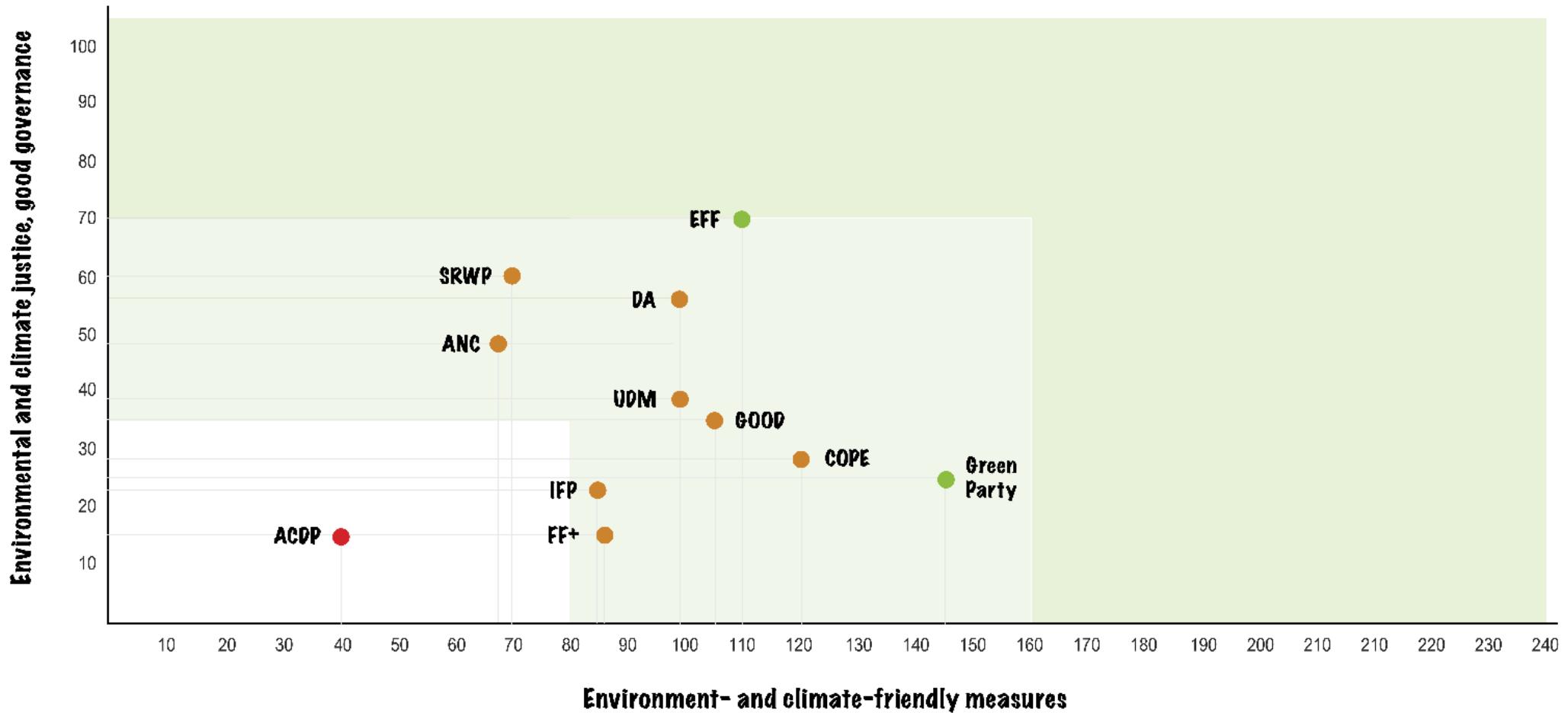
- Climate change is the main existential crisis of the day together with species extinction, and a certain threat to South Africa's developmental objectives, should we continue along the current lines of socio-economic development.
- The state of our climate and environment is intrinsically linked to key concerns such as economic and social inequality, health, energy access, housing, as well as governance and corruption. The drivers of climate change are often the source of other social, economic and environmental ills. Conversely, the impacts of climate change worsen socio-economic inequalities.
- Voters should be critical of measures that propose to address climate change in isolation from other economic and developmental issues. We need a climate-sensitive sustainable development agenda that will connect all the dots. Having climate and environmental considerations as a thread running through the manifestos reveals an understanding of what it will take to ensure a just transition to a low-carbon and just society - that is, a plan to leave nobody behind as we change the way we produce and consume things and relate to our natural environment.
- Pitting economic growth and jobs against sustainable environmental practices is very artificial and misleading, unless one hopes to continue doing business as usual and preserving the status quo. We need to rapidly mainstream climate change response in all strategic planning, policies and programmes, to allow future generations of South Africans to live a decent life. We must ensure that this transition is a just one, by supporting the ones whose jobs will be affected.
- The parties' outlook on governance models and principles is indicative of the extent to which they are prepared to allow citizens a voice in decision-making over the next five years. A responsive and accountable government will be critical to drive the changes needed to achieve a sustainable and just society.

Key take-aways from the manifestos' analysis:

- The political agenda for this election reflects the fact that climate change is not (yet) a priority concern for most people in South Africa. One would hope the main political parties would show leadership by putting emphasis on the issue commensurate with the stakes, and by mainstreaming climate change response into all relevant policy sectors. It is not the case: while climate change and environmental protection are mentioned in varying degrees in the manifestos reviewed for the scorecard, they lack a comprehensive, ambitious and innovative vision of what a low-carbon, just and inclusive society should look like - and of the deep systemic transformation that must take place to achieve it. The exception would be the Green Party, which best articulates climate and environmental action into their political vision, and calls for a radical new approach to socio-economic development and governance.
- The DA, EFF, UDM, COPE, IFP, GOOD Party, Green Party and SRWP do mention climate change and environmental sustainability as key issues that South Africa needs to address in their overall vision. This is a welcome inclusion. Even so, they fall short from adequately mainstreaming these issues throughout their programme for the next five years. This is best illustrated by the fact that each of them chose to dedicate a specific section of their political programme to climate change, rather than emphasising how it intersects with other items on our developmental agenda. The Green Party, ANC and EFF manifestos are the only ones making cross-sectional references, but limited for the latter two.
- In the same vein, the EFF and UDM both allude to the need to overcome the (perceived) conflicts between economic and environmental or climatic imperatives, and to better link the two. One would have expected this would translate into a coherent response throughout their policy proposals. Sadly, their manifestos like those of the several other parties suggest a "trade-offs" approach to climate change, rife with inconsistencies. Case in point, several parties suggest that job creation and economic growth justify unsustainable practices. A typical example is the contradiction between carbon emission reductions commitments and other economic proposals such as oil and gas exploration, the continued reliance on "clean" or "safe" coal to power development, or the desire to increase air traffic to and from South Africa as in the DA manifesto. The ANC is probably the most explicit in promoting mining and fossil fuels extraction as major economic drivers, regardless of the environmental and socio-economic price tag. On the contrary, SRWP calls for a slow-down on mining due to concerns for mining-affected communities. DA, EFF, UDM, COPE highlight the potential of the green economy, but one would have hoped this would have underpinned their general economic outlook.
- The FF+ and Green Party are clear about their intention to drive a shift away from fossil fuels towards cheaper and cleaner renewable energy, with more or less specific targets. The GOOD Party also suggests that renewable energy should become prominent. The other parties are either silent, or advocate an "all of the above" energy mix at odds with environmental, economic and social justice considerations.
- It seems as though most political parties are oblivious to the urgency and scale of the climate crisis and how it is going to undermine our ability to achieve socio-economic justice in the very near future. This doesn't apply to the Green Party, which aims to bring "immediate attention (...) to the urgency of our situation (...) and the steps required to address this". COPE also acknowledges the seriousness of climate change, but fails to explain how to operationalise its response. The EFF hints that we urgently need to bring down greenhouse gas emissions; it is in fact the only manifesto that sets a hard reduction target.
- The ANC, EFF and SRWP are the only ones to mention the need to ensure a just transition in the energy sector through reskilling. It is unclear how the other contesting parties propose to ensure that the shift to a low-carbon economy will be fair and provide for those dependent on high-emitting sectors for their livelihoods.
- In terms of adaptation and climate resilience, only the ANC and DA include suggestions for the agricultural sector and water infrastructures respectively. The IFP advocates "climate resilient development measures" without substantiating what they would consist of.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCORECARD

2019 SOUTH AFRICAN GENERAL ELECTIONS



- Each party's manifesto is assessed against a set of 69 criteria:
 - 48 criteria focusing on environment- climate-friendly measures (e.g. ambitious hard targets for greenhouse gas emissions reduction; sustainable agriculture vs intensive agriculture; development of public transports)
 - 21 criteria focusing on environmental and climate justice, and good governance (e.g. ensuring a just transition; clean water for all; commitment to participatory democracy)
- Each criteria attracts a score from 0 to 5 (0: position / measure against; 1-4: unclear and/or insufficient position / measure; 5: explicit and ambitious enough position / measure)
- The maximum score for environment- and climate-friendly measures is 240 (horizontal axis); 105 for environmental and climate justice, and good governance (vertical axis).

ENVIRONMENTAL SCORECARD

2019 SOUTH AFRICAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

Green
Party

LEADER

Hear hear! Environmental and climate are mainstreamed in the general policy agenda | No trade-off between environmental and economic interests - they are one | Environmental and climate education must be stepped up | Power to the people

Misses the (green) mark on: articulating environmental sustainability and a low carbon future for all in key sectors (water, agriculture, transport) | Species extinction | The just transition | Climate change adaptation | Sustainable human settlements | Low-carbon transport | Natural carbon sinks | Impact of the meat industry

COPE

CAN DO

MUCH

BETTER

Hear hear! Climate change is a developmental priority for South Africa, and we have a decade to act | The 'green economy' is *the* economy of the future | Organic farming can protect the consumer and the environment while ensuring food security | Enable citizen activism, whistleblowing an investigative journalism to increase accountability.

Misses the (green) mark on: an integrated approach | Setting hard & ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction | A just transition | Clean water for all

DA

CAN DO

MUCH

BETTER

Hear hear! Building climate change adaptation capacity | Distributed, greener electricity generation | Address landfills | Increased government accountability

Misses the (green) mark on: phasing out fossil fuels (incl. shale gas) | The just transition | Taxing carbon efficiently | Sustainable agriculture | Energy efficiency | Participatory democracy

GOOD

CAN DO

MUCH

BETTER

Hear hear! Accelerate greenhouse gas emission targets | Emphasis on climate change adaptation | Distributed electricity generation | Clean water for all | Increased energy efficiency | Sustainable waste management | Participatory democracy

Misses the (green) mark on: rural and peri-urban areas | The just transition | The green economy | Eco-system based adaptation | Species extinction | Accountability

UDM

CAN DO

MUCH

BETTER

Hear hear! A 'Marshall Plan' to rescue and conserve the environment | Link conservation and socio-economic development | Address landfill issues | Clean water for all | Boost rail transport | Protect & enhance natural carbon sinks

Misses the (green) mark on: stressing the scale and urgency of the climate crisis | Setting hard & ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction | The just transition | Energy efficiency

ACDP

LAGGARD

Hear hear! ...the deafening silence...

Misses the (green) mark on: you name it - comprehensive vision for a sustainable, low-carbon future, shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, electricity and clean water for all, public transport, eco-systems preservation, natural carbon sinks enhancement, climate change adaptation, energy efficiency, improved waste management, just transition, commitments to good governance..

**EFF
LEADER**

Hear hear! Sets a 10% hard target for greenhouse gas emission reduction (the only party to do so!), above our current (insufficient) national trajectory | Emphasis on a just transition and inclusive policies | Mining-affected communities' right to say 'no'

Misses the (green) mark on: mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate action throughout | Phasing out fossil fuels and nuclear in the energy mix | Supporting small farmers for climate resilience

SRWP

CAN DO

Hear hear! Environmental sustainability | Just transition | Supporting small farmers for climate resilience | Clean water for all | Sustainable and decent human settlements | Mining-affected communities' right to say 'no' | Transparent & open governance

BETTER

Misses the (green) mark on: mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate action throughout | Setting hard targets for carbon emission reduction | Green jobs | Climate change adaptation | Fair & ambitious carbon taxing

ANC

CAN DO

Hear hear! Just transition | More inclusive and sustainable urban development | Boost the recycling industry | Increased government accountability

BETTER

Misses the (green) mark on: mainstreaming environmental sustainability throughout | Phasing out fossil fuels and nuclear | Waste reduction | Sustainable agriculture | Environmentally sustainable land reform

IFP

CAN DO

Hear hear! Environmental sustainability is a developmental priority |

BETTER

Misses the (green) mark on: commitment to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy | Water pollution | Development of rail transport | Inclusive and sustainable urban development | Sustainable waste management | Transparent & open governance

FF+

CAN DO

Hear hear! Energy efficiency | Deployment of electric vehicles | Address water pollution | Boost rail transport

BETTER

Misses the (green) mark on: mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate action throughout | Setting hard & ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction | The just transition | Green jobs | Public transport | Sustainable human settlements | Transparent & open governance

Analysis of the political parties' manifestos – climate change and environmental sustainability

(by alphabetical order)

ACDP

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) 2019 election manifesto neither mentions nor considers climate change or environmental issues *once*. This suggests that the party is out of touch with today's reality and the pressing need to fundamentally rethink the way we operate economically, socially and within our natural environment.

A few examples: the ACDP proposes to boost tourism and mining as driving sectors for economic growth. Yet it fails to articulate how the environmental, climate, health and social impacts of mining should be mitigated. It misses another opportunity on qualifying what kind of tourism it wants to encourage: eco-tourism, or the kind that drives air traffic and corresponding levels of greenhouse gas emissions through the roof?

As for ACDP's "Giant Three", i.e. education and skills development, a low-hanging fruit would have been a reference to training in climate-friendly trades that have a high job-creation potential, such as manufacturing, installation and maintenance of renewable energy equipment and infrastructure; retrofitting buildings for increase energy efficiency; smart grid/ water management; agro-ecology, research and development; sustainable urban design and architecture; natural resource preservation and rehabilitation; or recycling.

The party explicitly commits to ensuring proper sanitation and clean water for all. It would have been useful to unpack how it plans to do it, especially in relation to other health sector and economic development plans. The manifesto doesn't spell out what type of agricultural model the ACDP wants to prioritise to deliver on food security while preserving natural resources and eco-system services.

In terms of governance, the manifesto commits to put forward reliable "servant leaders". This is indeed a critical feature of a functioning representative democracy. Negotiated land ownership between traditional authorities and the communities is another interesting proposal, provided that communities have a fair opportunity to decide for themselves. Lastly, the ACDP will pursue transparency on how taxes are used; it may want to expand this principle to all areas of governance.

ANC – 'Let's Grow South Africa Together'

The African National Congress (ANC) 2019 election manifesto falls short of articulating environmental and climate concerns into its overall vision and policy proposals. One would have hoped that the absence of a specific section on these matters meant that they are mainstreamed throughout the manifesto; but it is not the case, or at least not satisfactorily. Climate change and environmental sustainability are only mentioned four times, mostly as peripheral issues than as objectives that underpin the proposed strategies.

As the majority party that has led international negotiations on climate change for years, and played a pivotal role in the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, the ANC is fully aware of the urgency of the transition to a low-carbon economy. Yet the manifesto is shockingly silent on both the timeframe and the scale of action that the climate crisis demands from South Africa.

Most concerning is the fact that the ANC manifesto is rife with inconsistencies. In particular, the commitment to increase renewable energy to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the cost of energy, and create jobs is matched by an unrelenting and open love affair with fossil fuels. The fundamental contradiction between the low(er)-carbon objectives and the continued reliance on fossil fuels seems lost on the ANC, who misleads the public into believing that we can have it both ways. ANC's view that fossil fuels are an endowment we would be foolish not to take advantage of, is a clear case of cognitive dissonance. It also shows that the party lacks a long-term and integrated vision, and proposes to trade sustainable development and social gains for immediate economic growth. Here, the manifesto aligns with current government policies, particular with regards to the energy mix and the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and strategies – which are known to be wholly inadequate.

The same goes for the promotion of the “ocean economy: the manifesto suggests that offshore oil and gas exploration, as well as intensifying maritime traffic are compatible with environmental protection and curbing carbon emissions.

The ANC does place emphasis on the need for a just transition for workers in fossil fuel industry that will be affected by a phasing out of fossil fuels. But without the latter being ever suggested, this makes it look as if the policy proposals are more about pleasing all sides than offering a coherent vision.

The manifesto displays a rather traditional economic thinking reliant on extractivism (mining) and manufacturing as drivers of economic growth and jobs. Recycling is one of the few sectors the ANC proposes to prioritise that would contribute to a greener economy. It would have been useful to spell out how it forms part of a broader vision for a more circular economy, that would address packaging and waste management across the value chain. In terms of agriculture, one would have also expected the manifesto to expand more on the type of agriculture that will be promoted, particularly as part of the support to small-scale farmers and in the context of climate change adaptation.

As far as governance is concerned, the manifesto features a commitment to increasing the accountability of the state. It does not offer a perspective on participatory governance, which is critical to address the developmental and environmental challenges of today.

COPE – ‘South Africa Needs A Fresh Start’

The Congress of the People (COPE) 2019 election manifesto presents environmental sustainability as a developmental priority for South Africa and an intergenerational obligation. Two of the 16 goals focus on climate action and environmentally-friendly development.

The party acknowledges the seriousness of climate change, referring to it as a threat to our “survival” and a burden passed on to our children. On two occasions it mentions the “narrow twelve year window” for decisive climate action. Unfortunately, it fails to translate that into its general policy vision and in specific targets for carbon emission reductions, thus giving the impression that it has not figured out how to operationalise the response to the climate crisis. COPE advocates for more renewable energy, including through decentralised and embedded generation, for environmental and affordability reason. Yet the manifesto does not clearly indicate whether the party commits to phasing out fossil fuels from the energy mix.

The COPE manifesto highlights that the ‘green economy’ is the economy of the future. One would have expected this position to transpire in various sections of the manifesto dealing with economic development, agriculture, education and skills development, or land management, instead of a silo approach. In the same vein, except for appreciated proposals on organic farming and climate change education, COPE seems to consider climate action strictly as an energy sector problem – there again ignoring that all sectors, including transport, agriculture, the built sector, etc. are in fact concerned and need to be transformed. One exception is urban spatial development: here the manifesto includes commitments to rationalise developments, make living environments more environmentally-friendly and improve public transport. Conversely, it is disappointing that despite the goal of “environmentally-friendly rural development”, none of the proposed measure actually reflect how it will contribute to ecosystems and natural resources preservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The manifesto is silent on the need for a just transition to a low-carbon economy, and the building of a climate-resilient society and economy.

Lastly, the COPE manifesto emphasises a commitment to good governance, accountability and enabling an active citizenry to achieve its developmental objectives.

DA – ‘The Manifesto for Change. One South Africa for All’

The Democratic Alliance (DA) 2019 election manifesto mentions climate change and resilience 15 times, showing that the issue certainly is an important one to reckon with. However, the DA considers climate and environmental issues mainly through the lens of their economic cost and benefits for the country, rather than as matters of social and political importance in and of themselves – and matters that cut across all areas of our society and economy. For instance, with economic growth and job creation the central themes of its manifesto, the DA states that environment protection can and should go hand in hand with sustainable economic development, and that opportunities for new jobs in the ‘green economy’ are numerous.

The DA manifesto does not explicitly acknowledge the urgency and scale of the climate crisis and the need for a climate-friendly development pathway. While referring to carbon emission reductions, it omits to provide timeframes and targets, and remains silent on South Africa's commitment to the targets set in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – i.e. whether the country's ambitions are sufficient. The DA does support ramping up renewable energy, but does not position itself in favour of phasing out fossil fuels. On the contrary, the manifesto firmly states that the future energy mix should include gas, and the party is open to shale gas exploitation, thus ignoring well-documented environmental and climate implications.

The DA is against increases in or additional tax; one can therefore assume that it opposes the recently enacted Carbon Tax – and even more so a strengthening of this fiscal instrument, all the more needed that in its current form the tax will be wholly inefficient in curbing emissions rapidly.

The party's response to the ongoing drought in several provinces involves investing in water infrastructure and increased support to vulnerable communities and farmers so that they are equipped to adapt and sustain their livelihoods in a changing climate. The manifesto also commits to incorporating indigenous knowledge for adaptation purposes – alongside technical and engineering solutions that remain to be defined. As such, the DA offers the most comprehensive outlook when it comes to adaptation efforts.

However, the promotion of sustainable agriculture practices (smallholder farming, agro-ecology, etc) for climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and conservation and natural resources management is hardly mentioned in the manifesto; the dominant perspective on the sector is, there again, relating to job creation and competition in a global market.

While insisting on the need for enhanced accountability of the State and more transparent governance, the DA manifesto is rather shy on public participation or participatory democracy (only one mention). This omission comes as a surprise, considering that meaningful participation goes hand in hand with accountability and transparency.

EFF – ‘Our Land and Jobs Now!’

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) 2019 election manifesto recognises the necessity of environmental-friendly and climate-friendly measures across the board, particularly under the banner of a ‘Green Revolution’, which it proposes to drive as a continent-wide initiative and with the support of traditional leaders. This concept would need to be further unpacked: the manifesto mentions agriculture and environmental protection and “good production” – but not energy generation.

Climate change is mentioned in the EFF's diagnosis of South Africa's situation today, and in the sections on traditional leaders and the environment. manifesto, This places the issue rather high on the agenda, and suggests an intention to build environmental sustainability and climate action into its developmental vision.

A notable proposition is the EFF's plan to reduce carbon emissions by 10% by 2024. Whether this is enough for a “fair contribution” to curbing global warming and to set South Africa onto a low-carbon pathway at the pace required is debatable. Nonetheless, the EFF can be credited for setting a hard target and timeline for emissions reduction – in fact, it is the only party to do so – and one that is more ambitious than South Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution to climate change mitigation as outlined in the [Peak, Plateau and Decline \(PPD\)](#) greenhouse gas emissions trajectory devised back in 2008. This trajectory foresees an *increase* in emissions until 2025, followed by 10 years of stagnation before the volume of emissions decreasing. It has been [confirmed to be wholly inadequate](#), and it leads us to a 3°C to 6°C temperature increase in South Africa by mid-century.

Other climate-friendly commitments include endorsing and rolling out civil society's ‘One million climate jobs’ campaign as a governmental programme, and implementing a carbon tax. Interestingly, though, the party didn't come across as a fervent proponent of that measure when the Carbon Tax Act was passed in Parliament in March this year... it doesn't indicate whether the carbon tax legislation as it stands should be strengthened to be efficient. The manifesto also suggest introducing recycling plants in each municipality by 2023, banning all plastic bags by 2024, forcing companies to rehabilitate mining areas (it is not clear how) and strengthening the conservation of natural environmental resources.

Open governance, transparency and public consent feature quite prominently in the manifesto. These are valuable features, as they are prerequisite for climate justice and a just transition towards a low-carbon development pathway. The EFF commits to fostering greater participation, both economically

and in the democratic processes. The push for increased central economic planning and decision making (e.g. abolishing the provinces), while strengthening local sphere of government at the same time, would need to be scrutinised – particularly the implications in terms of responsiveness of the state.

In spite of various promising proposals, the urgency of the transition to a low-carbon economy does not fully transpire in the EFF manifesto. The party does not explain the extent to which the suggested interventions will contribute to the drastic and rapid shift needed within the next five years. Equally concerning is the fact that the EFF's well-meaning intentions towards greater environmental sustainability and justice are overshadowed by multiple inconsistencies which put to question the actual level of commitment of the party to environmental sustainability. For instance, the EFF suggests it wants to secure more renewable energy into the grid through the building of a "massive" renewable energy division in Eskom and "heavy" investment in renewable energy sources. At the same time though, the party foresees a continued hefty reliance on the strategic exploitation of coal to achieve electricity for all in the country, with "safe coal" and nuclear energy remaining as the "dependable energy base" going forward. The party also proposes to commission research into "sustainable" shale gas exploration as an alternative to coal dependency, seemingly buying into the misleading idea of gas as a "transition energy" with a lower carbon footprint. Doing so, it disregards the known environmental and climatic impacts of gas exploration and burning. It also ignores the staunch opposition to shale gas extraction by local communities, as witnessed in the Karoo.

Besides the obvious contradiction between the low(er)-carbon objectives and the continued reliance on fossil fuels, the EFF's determination to nationalise all electricity generation under a monopolistic Eskom, and explicitly discourage decentralised generation that could feed into the grid or localised electricity systems (including municipal or community-owned electricity generation), is likely to stunt the already-slow pace of transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Some other shortfalls of the EFF's manifesto include the neglect of climate resilience and adaptation, which is surprising considering that the less privileged in society are the most vulnerable to extreme weather conditions such as droughts, floods as well as changing rain and temperature patterns. It also fails to elaborate on specific measures for greenhouse gas emissions reductions in sectors such as the agriculture or transport. On the employment front, one would have expected the EFF to elaborate more on the job potential of a "green economy", and put forward substantial plans to achieve this, considering the party's emphasis on job creation. Yet the EFF's displays a rather traditional economic thinking reliant on extractivism (mining) and manufacturing as drivers of economic growth and jobs. More broadly, the EFF manifesto is silent on the need for a just transition and how it would be operationalised.

In summary, the EFF proposes a variety of interventions and solutions to environmental challenges that demonstrate some degree of prioritisation of sustainability throughout its manifesto. However, it offers a rather piecemeal approach to a sustainable, low-carbon and just future. While the inconsistencies do not necessarily reflect a low commitment towards environmental sustainability, they do suggest that the proposed measures are not backed by a comprehensive vision of what a sustainable, low-carbon a just society would look like – and what it would take to not only redress the social and economic injustices that persist today, but also address the systemic flaws in our economic and societal models that lead to profound environmental and climate injustice.

FF+ – 'Fight Back'

The Freedom Front Plus (FF+) 2019 election manifesto paints a rather sombre picture of the state of the country, which includes the destruction of "our natural resources and environment". It also dedicates a section to "sustainable development and the environment", which suggests that these are important issues in the party's political vision. Conversely, it also shows that FF+ does not consider the natural environment and the climate as integral part of the development model – rather as sectors that can be dealt with in isolation from social and economic matters.

FF+ states that climate change is a reality, although it does not mention the urgency or scale of the response it demands. Most importantly though, the manifesto calls for an "energy revolution" that entails moving away from fossil fuels, and focusing on renewable energy. It is also the only party that proposes the deployment of electric transport to lower emissions in that sector. Another component of the overhaul of the energy sector would be the fostering of small-scale embedded generation (e.g. rooftop solar panels) through tax rebates. What's missing in this otherwise forward-looking plan, is how FF+ proposes to ensure a just transition to this low-carbon energy system, and the measures to increase energy efficiency to reduce the national electricity demand.

The FF+ manifesto firmly commits to enforcing environmental standards and fighting pollution. Whilst focusing on government as the greatest polluter, it appears to leave the private sector off the hook, which remains silent on the implementation of carbon budgets for heavy greenhouse gas emitters – another form of air pollution.

On that note, the FF+ wants to limit tax and levy increases, which assumedly means an opposition to the recently adopted Carbon Tax. It is unlikely the party would pursue the much-needed strengthening of the tax within the next five years. This could seriously hamper the curbing of greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors.

The FF+ manifesto does not touch on climate change adaptation, eco-system preservation from environmentally-damaging economic activities, and waste reduction and management.

As far as governance is concerned, the party advocates a government closer to the people. It argues that greater subsidiarity between municipalities, provinces and national government will foster participation and more democratic decision-making processes.

GOOD Party – ‘The GOOD Plan To #FIXSA’

The GOOD Party 2019 election manifesto proposes to fix four types of “injustice”: spatial, economic, social and environmental. As such, it places environmental sustainability (and within it, climate change) as a top priority, and makes them integral to its developmental vision. The reality of climate change, and its multidimensional impacts, are acknowledged. The manifesto also clearly articulates the need for these issues to be approached from a justice and human rights perspective.

This however means that environmental and climate issues are treated separately, rather than built in the party’s overall vision for a “just” South Africa for everyone. By doing so, the GOOD Party’s manifesto falls short of connecting some of the dots, and presenting a holistic approach to creating to a low-carbon, environmentally sustainable society. For instance, it does not say whether its industrial growth strategy would be geared towards a green economy. It also wants to improve and expand the public transport system, but remains silent on the environmental, climate and health benefits.

The manifesto makes a clear commitment to accelerating carbon emissions reduction in line with South Africa’s commitment to reducing. Unfortunately, these commitments are [highly inefficient](#) to keep global warming well below 2°C. Thus, it would be useful for the party to clarify whether it intends to strengthen the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. This would also inform the voter as to the proposed future energy mix, as the manifesto does not suggest any commitment to phase out of fossil fuels. It only proposes to increase renewable energy into the grid as an energy that is “cheaper and better for us”, and to allow for a more decentralised energy generation system.

The environmental section of the manifesto provides a rather narrow take on environmental and climate issues. It fails to address a water, soil and air pollution; the destruction of our eco-systems and species extinction as a result of harmful practices and economic activities (e.g. mining, polluting industries, intensive agriculture, large-scale fishing, maritime traffic); and greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, transport, the petro-chemical industry, and land use.

Water security in the context of a changing climate receives a fair deal of attention, and GOOD proposes measures to relieve the increased pressure on our water systems. One would have expected that the manifesto would look at adaptation to climate change more comprehensively, and address the needs of those most vulnerable to it like farmers and township dwellers.

The GOOD Party places a strong focus on urban areas with the argument that a vast majority of South Africans will leave in towns and cities by 2050. This seems at odds with the sustainability agenda, but more importantly, it leaves rural areas out of the picture.

Green Party

The Green Party of South Africa (Green Party) 2019 election manifesto is clearly focused on building environmental and climate sustainability into South Africa’s developmental agenda.

From the onset, it states the urgency of addressing the dire environmental situation we find ourselves in, globally and in South Africa. The Green Party insists that only radical changes at a system level will allow us to set ourselves on a sustainable path and keep the planet habitable for all. It also stresses the interconnectedness between all elements of the eco-systems, humans and nature, as

well as present and future generations. As such, the party fosters the kind of holistic thinking that is needed to conceptualise a sustainable, low-carbon and just development pathway.

The manifesto puts forward key actions that include environmental education for all, an environmental impact tax, the shift from a consumer to a conserver society, producers' responsibility throughout the life-cycle of products, an end to harmful farming and fishing practices, phasing out fossil fuels and nuclear, environmentally-sustainable land use, and the shift to biodegradable and non-toxic materials.

These proposals cover a wide range of sectors and are consistent with the goals of a greener future. The Green Party also highlights that these proposals hold a great potential for decentralised job creation, which implicitly suggests that it would contribute to the development of rural areas.

One can only regret that this “shopping list”-like plan is at times very specific, at times rather vague and/or unpractical. In addition, a number of important sectors are missing: urban development and sustainable human settlements; transports; social welfare.

The just transition and climate justice are two other important omissions.

In terms of governance, the Green Party proposes an overhaul of the system of government by replacing representative democracy by a direct, participatory democracy. Although it denounces parliamentary representation as disempowering the people, the party explains that its participation in the elections aims to ensure that sustainability interests are voiced in this arena. The diagnosis of the governance “crisis” resonates with a number of observations and recommendations made by others, and do offer valuable food for thought. Of concern, however, is the lack clarity as to how they propose to effect this governance change within the confine of our democratic constitution.

IFP – ‘Trust Us’

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) 2019 election manifesto features environment as one of eight priority areas of its programme for the next five years – albeit the less important one, if the structure of the manifesto is anything to go by.

In this section, the IFP champions eight measures ranging from effective environmental governance to adaptation, sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystems, conservation, deployment of renewable energy, and waste. The IFP specifically commits to banning single-use plastic – it is the only party to do so in this election, despite growing public awareness of the problem.

Equally interesting is their consideration of the needs of subsistence communities in the context of conservation efforts, which suggests some level of understanding that nature and human activities should be addressed holistically, rather than separately – and that livelihoods that respect the ecosystem and natural resources must be supported.

Regrettably, the IFP fails to expand this thinking to its whole manifesto. In fact, environmental and climate issues are not mentioned in the party’s general vision, nor in any other sections of its plan. This reflects the lack of a comprehensive, integrated understanding of how these matters interlink with all aspects of our social and economic life. The manifesto does not speak to the deep, system-wide changes required in order to shift to a low-carbon development model, nor does it reflect on ways to drive a just transition towards this goal.

Another missing item is how the IFP proposes to foster green jobs and sustainable practices in various sectors. For instance, it does not qualify the kind of agriculture it wishes to encourage. In terms of energy, the manifesto is silent as to what kind of energy mix the IFP envisions – and whether it commits to phasing out fossil fuels.

SRWP – ‘Our Vision For A Socialist South Africa’

The Socialist Revolutionary Workers’ Party (SRWP) 2019 election manifesto offers a radical socialist outlook on the situation and challenges of the country, and proposes a shift from a capitalist to a workers’ democracy. Environmental considerations feature in the overall vision of the party, although ‘environmental sustainability’ and ‘climate change’ are never explicitly mentioned. The manifesto argues that the current socio-economic model is unsustainable and requires a deep overhaul.

The manifesto covers aspects pertaining to eco-system and natural resources preservation, species conservation, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

The SRWP commits to shifting to renewable energy with state-owned industries and the assurance of a just transition for workers from the fossil fuel sector. Regrettably, it does not offer a timeframe nor hard targets for the phasing out of fossil fuels. Furthermore, it seems to consider climate action strictly as an energy sector challenge, and overlooks the fact that all sectors, including transport, the built sector, large infrastructures, etc. are in fact concerned and need to be transformed.

The manifesto suggests a push for more sustainable agricultural and fishing practices, including the incorporation of traditional / indigenous knowledge and support to small farmers as a way to improve food security. In line with this, it proposes an immediate ban on genetically modified organisms (GMO).

On mining, the SRWP highlights the negative impacts of the industry, from an economic (dispossession, destruction of rural livelihoods), social and environmental perspective. The manifesto therefore calls on “mining to be slowed down”, emphasises the right of communities to say no to mining and to continuous free, prior and informed consent, and commits to enforcing environmental standards and mine rehabilitation. Thus the party offers the most comprehensive, socially and environmentally driven perspective on the sector.

On the down side, the SRWP could have mainstreamed mainstreaming climate and environmental sustainability more evidently throughout its manifesto, and stressed the urgency and scale of the crisis we are facing. It is also silent on the kind of jobs that can be created in a low-carbon economy, climate change adaptation, and effective carbon taxing.

UDM

The United Democratic Movement (UDM) 2019 election manifesto stands out by the deafening silence on climate change. This feels at odds with the fact that promoting a low-carbon economy and creating employment in a green economy is usually rather prominent in UDM’s position. It is equally surprising considering that the manifesto deplores that environmental issues are often “placed on the back burner”, and the misleading trade-offs between conservation and livelihood imperatives.

The manifesto’s section on “Protecting the environment” is rather well-detailed and offers a balanced view between the need to ‘save our natural heritage’ and the ‘life-supporting and income-earning potential’ of environmental and natural resources preservation. Assumedly, climate change is included in the UDM’s definition of the environmental; one would have however expected an explicit reference, and specific commitments in terms of carbon emissions reduction and adaptation.

The UDM proposes the rolling out of a “Marshall Plan” for environmental protection, but offers no specifics as to what it would entail. Emphasis is laid on public education and the promotion of responsible citizenry, starting in schools. Other commitments that speak to the UDM’s concern for environmental sustainability, in conjunction with socio-economic justice, include plans to develop a large, intercity high-speed rail; consolidating existing environmental legislation and ensuring that it is enforced through severe penalties; or introducing “green battalions” in rural areas.

The manifesto does not speak directly to a position on a carbon tax but rather offers the introduction of tax incentives to companies to invest in technologies for sustainable use of biodiversity.

Essential plans for key industries such as agriculture, energy and mining are missing altogether in the manifesto. Services such as waste-management and water and sanitation are also not featured in the manifesto, but for reference to improve service delivery and access for the urban and rural populations.

In general, environmental sustainability – and assumedly, climate change – are treated as separate issues, rather than mainstreamed into a comprehensive policy vision. The manifesto does not speak to the deep, system-wide changes required in order to shift to a low-carbon development model, nor does it reflect on ways to drive a just transition towards this goal.

On the up side, the UDM shows a deep appreciation for participatory processes and accountability, and places this at the core of its plans. It proposes to enhance parliamentary oversight over government action. Highlighting the shortcomings of the current electoral system, it also commits to introducing a hybrid of proportional and constituency-based representation that would foster greater accountability on the part of elected representatives.